MARTÍNEZ SIERRA

by

Myrtle Rosalie Gidinghagen

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Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures.
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INTRODUCTION

Martínez Sierra has for several years held an assured position among Spanish writers, that of one who is excellent in his art, who is one of Spain's foremost dramatists, and who, perhaps because of his ability to display the beauty in the common experiences and things of everyday life, has achieved, in addition, great popularity with both the masses and the élite of the literary world. It is in part the purpose of this paper to ascertain whether he is deserving of his reputation and of his place in Spanish letters, as well as to study the books of the author in order to learn his philosophy and his personality and to analyse his art; for he is without doubt a figure of importance in literary Spain.

First Period

Martínez Sierra began brilliantly, as is evidenced by the stir his first works made and by the estimate of them by González Blanco and Salvador Rueda. (1) But since that time he has changed radically from his earlier manner of writing; in fact, one can distinguish four rather clearly marked periods in his production, although there is some overlapping in respect to time. At the age of eighteen, (1) See Los Contemporáneos, A. González Blanco, on Martínez Sierra; Prólogo to Diálogos fantásticos, Salvador Rueda.
which is early even for a Spaniard —— the race is notably precocious —— he wrote *El poema del trabajo*, (1898) in which one finds the serious thoughts of an ambitious youth who feels that he has found the meaning of life. In this and in *Diálogos fantásticos* (1899), he shows himself a thinker, although not a profound one, for he does not deduce any new principle. Rather he has adopted the moral and philosophical conclusions of others, the truths of life that others have discovered, and related them to his own being, as if he were seeking principles by which to guide his life in order to avoid the pitfalls it opens to him as an artist. His early work betrays the illusions of youth, its idealism — the kind that a true optimist finds in life — and a sort of satisfaction with life as he finds it, for he sees its hidden joys and delights in disclosing them to others. As is natural with youth, after he has learned a great many of life's lessons, Martínez Sierra wishes to recount what he has learned from Nature, he says, and he sings them like a poet. His aim is somewhat didactic.

Martínez Sierra learned early the power and satisfaction of work. Youthful, with high ambitions and confidence in their fulfillment, and throbbing with energy and faith, he sets up the keys of life as Work and the Idea, or inspiration, which, when united after the persistent pursuit and conquest of the Idea, ultimately produce the triumph of Art. This
conception is one of his most beautifully developed ideas. When one sees Work avidly pursuing the Idea, eluded and scorned by it times without number, but persistently maintaining that it will conquer it and does so finally with all the ardor of its passion through the creative force of which Art is sure to result, one is convinced of the remarkable powers of expression and visualization of the author. He seems like one inspired, and all the more so when one realizes that in this as well as in all his works his one ideal is Art. The legend of work is "that which united men, formed nations, sanctifies power, and immortalizes the idea in art; that which creates, nourishes, reproduces and ennobles;" a true and inspired apostrophe to Work. (1)

Other ideas urge their expression. Persistence, genius, science, unity and soul will accomplish anything, but no one alone possesses such a charm. It is deserving of notice that he included soul. The human element, or more nearly the divine spark that is in every one of us, is omitted too commonly in a world in which the chief aims of existence are money-making and power. The qualities of sympathy and mercy and the ability to bear up under one's disappointments and to rejoice in one's fortunes, are surely the part the soul must play in this formula for success.

Characteristic of the intolerance and radical tendencies of youth is the idea of progress which he contrasts with the

(1) Diálogos fantásticos, p. 119.
dead stars that have left their orbits sometimes years before their last rays of light reach us. While we are still observing them, they are no longer in existence, and for that reason useless. The iconoclastic nature of youth, its impatience with custom and veneration of outworn things are set forth in the exhortation to progress, for these last are, he thinks, of no greater value than the dead stars.

Again in Sursum corda, his tendency to moralize manifests itself more prominently than usual, the simple and sincere manner of expression counteracting the danger of this becoming a blemish. Nature in her various aspects is represented as constantly desiring to do things which she cannot owing to her limitations. But she finds a way to glorify herself through her own powers by fulfilling them to the utmost. As a result, the flowers blossom forth in their radiance of colors, after the earth has imprisoned them during the winter, in order to avenge the earth. The sun urges the sad poet to clothe the clouds that hinder him with the golden robes of his genius, and adds, "cowardly soul, that which succeeds in embellishing happiness alone". (1) In a pleasing conceit he says that everything in nature aspires to reach the sky; we should take as our motto "look skyward", and lift our soul high in order to see the beauty in lowly things, for "everything looks beautiful seen from above."

(1) Diálogos fantásticos, p. 119.
Later in this period, Martinez Sierra's moralizing is not so evident; rather it is more subtle, more veiled, and more artistically expressed. In Por el sendero florido, the bell is made to express the philosophy of the play by saying: "I weep for those who drown love in their soul ... who see their brothers die and feel no pity." The conceptions are more definitely expressed in Pastoral: that happiness is the constant companion of him who will look for it, and that opportunity knocks but once. It is symbolized by the life of a youth wrapped up in the pride of his dream who spends his life searching for Queen Sol, and not finding her, drowns his sorrows in wine, only to awaken and to learn too late that she was his constant companion through life. The season of the snow symbolizes the agedness of the grandfather who starts the youth on his quest; the season of roses, the brightness, rosiness, and possibilities of youth; the season of poppies, the summertime of life when one has either won the promise that maturity had in store for him, or has failed, as Alcino did; the season of dry leaves, the harvest time of life, when nature is in all her glory, and when the fruits of life may be enjoyed. But Alcino, not having found Queen Sol, is disillusioned, knows that he has failed, and yields to dissipation. The epilogue is a winter scene representing Alcino's wasted years in which Queen Sol discloses her identity and makes his realization of his ill-spent life more bitter by saying: "Has de saber,
pastor, que una vez en la vida soy compañera de cada mortal. Pasa por mi cabaña; vovme con él; si su amor me adivina, auyo soy; si le ciega el orgullo de su sueño, finado el camino, me aparto de él." (1)

While the philosophical element is strong in much of the work of the first period, Martínez Sierra's devotion to art is more so; to the extent, finally, that he produces art for art's sake. In one phase of it he is probably not excelled — in that in which Nature is given human qualities. It is more than personification; to Martínez Sierra, nature feels, thinks, speaks, and serves as guide. She is his muse. As, however this is closely related with his pantheistic philosophy, the discussion of which belongs to another chapter, and since this quality is never completely lost even in his later works, its discussion will be deferred to the chapter on style.

One characteristic peculiar to this period is the poetic quality of his prose which is characterized by feeling, rhythm, imagery, and figures of speech. For feeling and sentiment one need go no further than Sol de la tarde, (1904), in which they are the dominant motif. Rhythm, without which poetry cannot exist, is almost constant in the prose of this period; any passage of description will show a wealth of imagery, and poetic similes and metaphors follow one another in swift succession. Only the rhyme is lacking for this to

(1) Teatro de ensueño, p. 90. (1905)
be verse. In beauty of conceptions, his "poetry" may be compared to that of Walt Whitman, one of the greatest of writers of free verse. He tells us that his fairy denied him the gift of rhyme, but that need matter little, for in his work one finds the quintessence of poetry as this one selection will show:

"Lo que interesa al alma del poeta, el soplo misterioso que ha de agitar las cuerdas de su lira conmoviendo a sus sones las fibras todas que sienten esparcidas por el mundo, es el eco profundo y sostenido de la pasión humana que saliendo caldeado del pecho mismo que agitó, hace saltar de gozo, o palpitar de angustia, todos los corazones capaces de abrigar aquel latido con cariño de hermanos."

The poet is everywhere present with his fancies, for Martínez Sierra is strongly imaginative. One of them is the color of dreams, which he compares with that of butterflies and at the same time attributes a symbolical significance to them. In the spring, the butterflies are light, diaphanous and playful: so are the dreams of children. Those of youth are golden, like the dust "which rises from the threshing floor in whirlwinds of gold when the grain is fanned". (1) He later manifests more poetic insight into the quality of dreams: "The dreams of children are white and silver-splangled; the dreams of youth have the crimson of the rose, embroidered

(1) Flores de escarcha, p. 213.
with gold; the dreams of men are purple and topaz, of the color of sunsets; the dreams of old people have the uncertain color of leaves that are about to fall, in which are fused and merged all the colors that were, the color of memories." (1)

In Flores de escarcha (1900), one observes a slightly different tone than in the two preceding works. It is probable that he felt himself unappreciated and misunderstood and for that reason named his poems — cold, melancholy, and occasionally bitter — frost flowers. Some of his bitterness is of the lot that frequently falls to a poet, lack of understanding on the part of the sneering and unresponsive world. At last he comes to the conclusion that a poet cannot accept the decisions of the world nor should he be disheartened by them, but on the other hand must respond to the call within him.

One feels that Martínez Sierra in this work does not do justice to himself, for although the prose poems are later than the others, their very coldness, prosiness of theme, and lack of rhythm and imagery prevent them from being either good poetry or good prose.

In Sol de la tarde, one sees Martínez Sierra the master of sentiment and style. Each novel is brimful of tragedy of the same quality as is inspired by the setting of

(1) Pastoral, in Teatro de ensueño, p. 58; 3rd edition.
the sun. One does not wonder at its popularity, for the emotions revealed are such as are common to all people. Each is based on love, in its different aspects. The art lies in making the sentiment real and pulsating and in avoiding the cheap and mawkish sentimentality often found in this class of novels.

Second Period

The second period is chiefly one of novels and short stories, dating from 1901 till 1910. Eroticism is the most pervading characteristic. One can easily justify the eroticism of Martínez Sierra when one realizes that the bulk of his production is based upon feeling rather than upon philosophical principles. Whatever of philosophy there is in Martínez Sierra is superficial, but it is too much to expect of one that he shall excel in both thinking and in the expression of emotion, when thinking and feeling are diametrically opposed. It is the more unusual to find it in a lyric poet, for such he is; and evidences of his poetic inspiration are found in all this period. Traces of eroticism are seen in his earliest works, as in Diálogos fantásticos, where "earth is an endless kiss that sighs in infinite enamoured dream", but it is a well-marked characteristic in Horas de sol (1901). The novel has no other purpose than to relate "como, tras cuantas horas de sol, entró un alma en perpetuo crepúsculo y como una vida, que pudo haber sido dulce sonrisa, acaso hasta so-
nora carcajada, no pasó de ser elegante bostezo." (1)

One sees Hortensia and Carlos basking in their love for each other; perhaps she is taken by the romance of it and lets herself be loved because she finds it pleasant. Carlos however, truly loves. An atmosphere of sentimentality is created which loses its charm partly because of the excessive stress on the portrayal of the emotion. The conception is a delicate one, but it is overdone in the expression, which, to be truly artistic, should be more subtle.

_Saltimbanquis_, one of the plays in Teatro de ensueño, is more advanced in the treatment of eroticism, dealing as it does with the brute force in love. There are certain traces of sensual love in Puck's insane love for Cecilia, whose love for him is ignoble, insincere and selfish. On the other hand, Lina loves Puck ardently and truly, and is full of forgiveness for the slur on her love when Cecilia returns to reclaim Puck and appears to succeed. Love is the dominating motive of the play with the emphasis upon brutal passion which becomes so strong that it is transformed into hatred sufficient to impel one to murder. This marks the culmination of his eroticism.

Another, but less prominent phase of it, is seen in Pascua florida, a work of insipid and mawkish sentimentality not worthy of the author. Evidences are found also in the account of the love of María Eugenia and Paco for each other

(1) Sol de la tarde, p. 156.
in *La humilde verdad* (1904), the treatment of which is beautiful and restrained. It is doubtful whether in all the work of Martínez Sierra there is any passage more delicate in sentiment or in expression than this:

"- María Eugenia, oye.
- ¿Qué quieres?
- Quería ... no sé qué; darte las gracias.
- ¿A mí?
- Porque eres la única que en Madrid me ha querido.
- ¿Sabes lo que yo digo? Que algunas veces valía más no conocerse. Ya ves: esta noche, después que tú te vayas, ¿qué me queda en el mundo? Ni pensar ... que, para mi, como si ya te hubieras muerto, porque tú no vuelves.—
- Paco auspira — — no vuelves, no, y aunque volvieras... Mira, cuando estés en el pueblo con tu novia y tus chicos, si los tienes, acuerdate, cuando te acuerdes, de aquella noche, ¿sabes?, cuando estuvimos paseando.
- ¿Y tú, te acordarás de mí?
- ¡Ay, Paco! " (1)

As Martínez Sierra approaches maturity, the erotic element fades in its intensity. For example, in *El amor catedrático* (1910), except for the last third, there is an entire lack of sentimentality. It is the whole-souled expression of a girl's experiences on falling in love with

(1) *La humilde verdad*, p. 289.
one of her professors; her thoughts, her life, her ambitions, and efforts to succeed in crystallography come in for their share of treatment. No effort is made by Martínez Sierra to create an erotic atmosphere, and the emotion of love is not projected on the feelings of the reader. It is in the young man that Martínez Sierra still, retains and displays his eroticism by depicting a man, Teófilo, allowing himself to dream of the possibility of Teresa loving him when he knows that she loves another and is married to him. This latter theme is continued in Todo es uno y lo mismo (1910), in which Teófilo has an affair with Maud, an English girl, both of them sentimental, yet neither serious in intentions.

Martínez Sierra early took up the short story. His first success was Almas ausentes (1901), which was awarded a prize in the contest of the "Biblioteca Mignon" - a work correct in form with little plot, but well handled, and a good portraiture of the inmates of an insane asylum. Sol de la tarde (1904), his next success, won quick recognition because of the art in the production, in style, use of nature, sentiment and emotional appeal, and because of the mastery of tragedy and climax. The fact that he studies little things and brings out the humble truths and beauties latent in them in such a way that they enchant, gives him
additional reason to be considered an "escritor perlino", (1)

Martínez Sierra's first attempt at a long novel was La humilde verdad, (1904), in the dedicatory postscript of which he states its fundamental theme: "It is the humble reality of a bit of life." Through the very nature of the work there can be little plot, but there is no cessation of interest, for the characters throb with life and reality. His costumbrista tendencies also appear.

Somewhat of the same nature is Tú eres la paz (1907). In theme it is probably the most purposeful of his novels - the creation of a type of woman, strong, virtuous, noble, loving, forgiving, thoroughly capable and an inspiration, whom he would set up as a model for the Spanish woman. The same tendency to note the ordinary happenings and to exclude thrilling and melodramatic events, characterizes this work. It errs, however, while trying to create the atmosphere of peace in the girl's personality and environment, in showing too many details and a superfluity of description.

Two short stories deserve attention not because of their plot, but because of their originality of form. In El agua dormida (1909), which is inconsequential as to thought, is told the story of the unhappy mother of a child who relates the events of her mother's life as a small girl would prattle, showing her complete ignorance and incomprehension of the sorrows of her mother. Probably no one has

(1) Salvador Rueda, Prólogo to Diálogos fantásticos, p.106
as charmingly and accurately set down a child's thoughts and her artless narration of things that she does not understand. In *El amor catedrático* (1910), it is the arrangement of the story in which Martínez Sierra shows his originality. Who else would have the same story told three different times by the three people concerned? Unfortunately not all are equally good; the story would have all its charm and none of its detractions if it ended with the first part, which is told by the girl.

Martínez Sierra cannot be ranked with Spain's great novelists because of his superficiality. His philosophy is of the kind that makes instant appeal to the masses, but it is not lasting. What he lacks is a solid kernel of thought back of his narration, a broad view of the meaning of life, as is found, for instance, in Dickens or Galdós. He has originality, the sort that gives an impression of real life by (apparently) treating common things in a common way — a difficult task which, when well done, is an indication of genius. Martínez Sierra's portrayal of real life enchants, as does Burn's. Style, in which Martínez Sierra is master, is not sufficient to make one great. He has all the qualities of a successful novelist: provides entertainment and interest, romance, although there is no ultra-romantic atmosphere in any of his work, and personality and individuality, which are stamped on his works in such a manner as to prevent imitation.
Third Period

A new period is begun when Martínez Sierra takes up the drama for the purpose of presenting his ideals or to ridicule existing ones; he writes now in a more serious vein and more purposefully, although the moral of the play is not pressed forcibly on the attention of the spectator. Good comedy, humor, and entertainment seem to be his aims.

His first attempt at real drama was in 1908 when he wrote *Vida y dulzura* in collaboration with Santiago Rusiñol from whom, as well as from Jacinto Benavente, he doubtless obtained much of his dramatic technique. A great deal of humor, comedy and sprightly dialogue surround the theme of *Juventud, divino tesoro*, in which the strength and romance of youth triumph over dissipated old age. Emilio and Clara are the most significant characters, although the character portrayal is not notably good in this work. In *La sombra del padre*, the duties of a father toward his family claim the attention of the spectators who see the worthless life led by the children, who have been neglected by their father while he has been making a fortune in the West Indies. One wonders if Martínez Sierra did not receive inspiration from "El Indiano", by Santiago Rusiñol, and translated by Martínez Sierra. *La sombra del padre* is an excellent comedy as is *El ama de la casa*, in which a character study is made of Carlota, "el ama", one of the best of Martínez
Sierra's women. In these two he shows that he has completely found his dramatic technique. *Canción de cuna*, an idyll of convent life, is remarkable for its lyric quality and its spirituality. Martinez Sierra is here at his height in idealistic expression and conception, the theme being the instinct and veneration of motherhood. Somewhat of the same idealistic atmosphere is inherent in *Lirio entre espinas*, in which he proves the statement that in the classes that one is accustomed to consider debased remain humanitarian sentiments. The thesis of *Primavera en otoño* is home life and the relation between the responsibility placed upon one by marriage and that due one's talents. *El palacio triste*, a fantastic tale, pictures the sad, boresome and joyless existence led by three young princes in a palace secluded from real life and taught the conventional, out-of-date curriculum, and the change when their sister takes them and their mother away to live as the rest of the world does and to enjoy life, beholding the wonders of nature, a life free from the petty conventionalities in thought and society. It is a plea for the simple life.

*Mamá*, which shows evidences of influence by Ibsen's *The Doll's House*, (1) treats of the proper relation between

(1) Mercedes says, in placing the blame for her failure on her husband: "Wife, .. that is what I have never been for you: your wife. True, I have been your plaything, your distraction, the pretty little animal whom you caress and scold. I have never thought. Perhaps you have allowed me to think?
husband and wife in the financial affairs of the family, in the home, and in the responsibility toward children. In *Madame Pepita*, one finds skillful satire of the weaknesses of the penniless and corrupted nobility, as well as a clear-cut character sketch of Madame Pepita to whom blue blood covered every sin.

*La Tirana* (1913) is based on a singer's persistent refusal to sell her virtue and desire to be a "*mujer honrada*", not through any greater nobility of soul than her companions have, but because of an innate abhorrence toward the idea. It is, in spite of being a musical comedy, a serious character study, well done, with little

The man thinks alone, decided alone, is sufficient unto himself; he is the master, the king; the wife to her clothes and her laughter. I have not been wise; neither have you given me any responsibility; All my life I have felt such a strange emptiness in my heart... which I have tried in vain to fill with frivolity." Compare this with Mora's judgment of Helmar: "During eight whole years and more, we have never exchanged one serious word about things. You settled everything according to your own taste... But our house has been nothing but a play-room. Here I have been your doll-wife; just as at home I used to be papa's doll child.... You have never loved me... You only thought it amusing to be in love with me." One notes a similarity of details in both plays, as money is obtained by forgery, which precipitates the catastrophe; the two husbands behave similarly toward their wives in abusing them; the mother is not considered worthy of her children, and is thereby incapacitated to take care of them. The solution is, however, different, Martínez Sierra's being more in accord with the feminine nature and more likely to make for happiness of both husband and wife. There is more gentleness and sympathy for both characters in *Mamá* than in *The Doll's House*. 

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humor and real comedy. A bit of melodrama enters when the Duke tries to force his attentions on La Tirana who scorns them and upsets the table to save herself.

*Madrigal* (1913) is a dramatization of *Tú eres la paz.*

*Los pastores* (1913), a play having little plot, is a character study of two old men, a priest and a doctor, who have been superseded by two young men of the new school. Tragedy and pathos are the key-notes of the play; each has been self-sacrificing, living to serve others, and thereby neglecting his own best interests. But it all must have been in vain, for the villagers quickly forget the services done them by the old people and flock to the side of the young and new men. Martínez Sierra clearly strives to show that the people are unwise, heartless and materialistic in turning away from the old to the new when the latter does not signify progress, but novelty. When Martínez Sierra lets one have a glimpse of his spirituality as he does in this play (and still more in *Por el sendero florido*), one feels refreshed, for it is this which makes an insignificant plot beautiful and interesting. Martínez Sierra seems to be either rapidly losing that gift or failing to appreciate its worth.

*La mujer del héroe* (1914) is a farce representing the character of what Martínez Sierra considers a typical hero and showing the nobility and forgiveness in the Spanish woman's soul. Humor and pathos are skillfully mingled.
making it a good farce.

La pasión (1914) dwells on the unfortunate love affair of a young girl who falls intentionally and with wide open eyes, being guided by the principle that everyone has a right to be happy and a right to love. It is a case of a mistaken principle which leads to disaster and repentance after it is too late. The play has great possibilities for a highly emotional actress.

Margot (1914) is a tragedy dealing with the life of a girl, Margot, of the underworld of Paris who falls in love with a man from Seville betrothed to a girl of his own class at home. When José Manuel protects her from the threats of Anatolio, her "protector", she feels that she has at last found the happiness she has long waited for. After three years of happy life together, they quarrel, and he comes back to his Sevillian love, less in love with her than ever. Margot follows him, and soon there is the tragic situation of a man under obligations to two women, the one loving most being the forsaken one. After Martínez Sierra has portrayed women as noble as Ana María and Carlota and has elsewhere represented woman as virtuous and has elevated her to a high plane, it is strange that he should choose a woman of Margot's character, represent her as somewhat redeemed of her sin through the power of love, and then force her back to her former life where she will be miserable.

1. In Tú eres la paz.
2. In El ama de la casa.
Fourth Period

The fourth period is characterized by cheaper productions, appeal to applause and box-office receipts, apparently, and a complete lack of most of that which has hitherto distinguished Martínez Sierra from the ordinary lot of comic writers. However, from this period must be separated two plays that are entirely different in nature from the rest written since 1914: his two propaganda plays Reino de Dios (1915) and Esperanza nuestra (1917), which will be treated in chapter II.

In Para hacerse amar locamente (1916), Martínez Sierra makes no effort to be other than comic, and to present laughable situations. His aim being to amuse, he chooses common characters and creates a situation in which Isidro loves Amalia, Amalia and Roberto love each other, and Páquito loves Isidro. The problem is to pair off the couples happily for all concerned. The play is a cheap popular comedy, successful, but not one that will make his name long remembered.

Of the same type, but having more grace, more cleverly arranged situations, and better dialogue is El sueño de una noche de agosto (1918). In this play, woman is no longer a model but an object of light satire and ridicule. Although Martínez Sierra is a feminist, he caricatures Rosario, a modern intolerant feminist, who however much she talks about the rights of woman and her oppression, enjoys impossible romances, one of which occurs to her. In regard to
humor and sparkling dialogue and swiftness of action, this play shows better than any other the author's talent in comedy writing. Whether one quarrels with it or praises it depends upon one's theory of the purpose of the drama.

Should the drama teach or divert? With Shakespeare, the story and the characters were the cardinal points; with Ibsen, the idea, a truth, comes first. In Spanish drama, Echegaray follows Ibsen more closely than he does any of the other world great dramatists in his drama of ideas, El gran Galeoto. Martinez Sierra in his last play, follows none of these; he is concerned solely with the skillful manipulation of humorous situations, catering thereby to the transient whims of the audience. No truths of life even lie hidden to be discovered; no character stands forth with strength of personality — an unusual circumstance in Martinez Sierra; nor can much be said for the originality of plot in this play. It is merely an entertaining play, diverting and mirth-provoking; everybody enjoys seeing such a play, but it is not literature. For Para hacerse amar locamente, the same holds true concerning what it has not; in addition it lacks even one attractive character and hearty humor; it is a cheap, vulgar production, mediocre in execution, and unworthy of the author's pen.

In judging the rest of Martinez Sierra's plays, the same standard may well be set up. In most of them there is an idea, not forcibly expressed, it is true, but it is there,
as if he were following Clyde Fitch's advice, "If you inculcate an idea into your play, so much the better for your play, and for you and for your audience." As a rule however, there is some character of strong personality dominating the situation, usually a woman. There are no notably strong men in Martínez Sierra's works. He stresses in his plays, an idea, and a character; in addition, he purposes to stir the feelings pleasurably, but all are subordinated to his hope of winning aesthetic approval. He is an artist above all things. To that end, he makes use of every possible stage device, nature and sparkling dialogue, minute stage directions, and a harmonious stage setting. As he is an artist in his non-dramatic works, so has he set up his ideal in his plays as art.
Martínez Sierra is most effective in the field of the emotions, because he feels deeply himself. No author can express adequately what he does not feel; the attempt is a failure, sometimes only too ludicrous; and only through the vivid though subtle expression of one's emotions can one hope to inspire the same feelings in others. In this respect, Martínez Sierra is a popular writer, for he appeals to the emotions of his readers rather than to their intelligence, and his ideas, though beautiful, are not profound, and consequently do not demand great intellectual cooperation on the part of his readers.

Martínez Sierra is essentially a dreamer who has so bound himself up with nature that her feelings are his. His attitude toward nature is an expression of his pantheism which is the basis of his whole philosophy. He speaks of "la luz que acaricia, la penumbra que huye suplicando, el iris que se ve y que no existe, el misterio que no es y que se siente, el alma, en fin, que va naciendo cuando nace el valle, que va riendo cuando ríe la luz, que va agonizando con la bruma que muere." (1)

Emotions are common to all. They may be played upon, stimulated, and excited, but if the author has the aim of

(1) Abril melancólico, Torre de Marfil, p. 231-2.
making people happy through their emotions, he cannot play upon them to excess. He may not dwell over much upon the tragic emotions. Martínez Sierra closely follows this principle in his method of appeal. Only in two plays does he lay too much stress upon the emotions for artistic effect, but he does so with a purpose, namely, to make a strong appeal for the amelioration of the condition of the tenant farming class, and for personal service to remedy the wrongs of the world that cannot be relieved by mere alms-giving. But it is unusual in Martínez Sierra to appeal so strongly to emotion as he does in these two plays. In his earlier writings, he used emotion for the sake of stirring within the soul of his readers a certain feeling of pleasure or melancholy, a delightful one in either mood, in order to make the life of his reader more enjoyable, and to give him for a few moments some of his own feelings. Martínez Sierra senses in nature or in events common to most people, a certain feeling which he must express. He makes a definite effort to grasp for others their emotions and to give them to them in the most delightful manner possible. He conceives it as his duty to do so, for life, he thinks, is worth living only for the moments of emotion: "Son ellos los hilos áureos que el mito griego mezcla en la trama del vivir."

1. Esperanza nuestra.
2. Reino de Dios.
3. La vida inquieta, p. 102.
Martínez Sierra believes that it is the province of the drama to supply these moments of emotion. In the drama, life should be portrayed simply, under the guise of dialogue which through its simplicity and naturalness will be able to move the heart of the audience to anguish or joy, hope or anger. The art lies in not letting the audience know how it is done. They hear a few words that suggest a sympathetic emotion, but they do not remember the words; rather, they recall the emotion, which is what the author wants. Whether it be the author's aim to move an audience to action, or merely to inspire each individual with a certain emotion, the principle is the same. On reading Martínez Sierra's dramas, one experiences a feeling of the joy of living, a cardinal theme in his works, or a bittersweet emotion, which is none the less enjoyable.

In his novels, Martínez Sierra does not aim primarily to move people to a certain action; on the contrary, he appeals to the brain through the feelings chiefly to impart to them a certain emotion. He wants his readers to be conscious of his appeal when reading his novels, using for this purpose incidents and experiences common to the life of all, as well as expressing his sentiments through nature, which inspires him with a certain emotion that he hopes to make others recall. In this respect, he is an intellectual emotionalist. This quality of intellectual
emotion is rather new in Spanish literature, one which forms a link between the poets of the present generation, like Rubén Dario, Santiago Rusiñol, Juan Ramón Jiménez and Eduardo Marquina. As Martínez Sierra expresses it, these intellectual emotions are "como la palpitación del alma de toda nuestra generación." The term is not so contradictory as it might seem, although general conception has it that emotions arise from the heart, Alfred de Vigny says: "El corazón no es más que el eco del canto que resuena bajo la divina bóveda de la cabeza." This same quality has found its expression, though to a lesser degree, in the Lake poets of English literature, more especially in Wordsworth's

The Daffodills:

"For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodills."

Illustrating from the different poets of Spain, Martínez Sierra more fully explains this term: "Por este 'soñar no sé con qué' de Antonio Machado; por este 'llorar por nadie y por alguien' de Juan Ramón Jiménez; por la trágica lamentación sobre la juventud que huye, de Rubén

2. Quoted by Martínez Sierra, Idem, p. 18.
Darío, están representadas en su más alto grado de perfección esas emociones intelectuales de que venimos hablando.

Martínez Sierra, however, can impart this sort of emotion better than any other, when describing some twilight emotions:

"Sin duda la vida de la humanidad sobre la tierra tiene días de siglos, y nuestra generación ha venido al mundo en una hora mundial de puesta de sol. Ya sabéis qué serenidad y qué silencio caen sobre los campos y aun sobre las ciudades cuando se acaba el día; cómo se purifica la luz, cómo se recortan las siluetas, cómo los ruidos se alejan en el aire, que parece de éter, cuando se acaba de hundir el sol. ¿No habéis estado muchas tardes en el balcón dejando navegar la mirada sobre el incendio que ha quedado a Poniente, y no habéis sentido como si al alma le naciesen alas, y como si, al mismo tiempo, la serenidad de la tierra prendiese las raíces de todo nuestro ser interior, para no dejarle volver adonde las alas recién nacidas quisieran llevarle? ¿Y no habéis entonces suspirado sin saber por qué? Pues bien, ésta era una emoción intelectual... ¿Y no habéis otro día, de verano, sentádas a la orilla del mar, también a la hora de ponerse el sol, mirado hacia Poniente? Y la luz moribunda, ¿no...

1. Quoted by Martínez Sierra, *El agua dormida*, p. 20
tenía de fuego y púrpura el agua? Y no parecía que la conjunción del cielo carmesí y del mar bermejo era infinita, y que la hora aquella y su hermosura no habían de acabarse nunca? ¿Y por ventura, anegado vuestra facultad de gozar en aquel pleno torrente de belleza, no habéis sentido necesidad de auxilio, y mirando corazón adentro, no habéis ido a buscar una evocación humana — recuerda de cariño o de pena — digna, por grande, de servir de nave a vuestra emoción para navegar sobre la hermosura del mar hecho fuego, y no la habéis hallado ni en la evocación de aquel a quien más amáis, ni en la de aquel otro que sospechéis que os ama más que nadie? Y dejando la tierra, por incapaz de contener vuestra inquietud, ¿no habéis levantado los ojos al cielo, y habéis clamado: ¡Señor, Señor!, y habéis vuelto a bajarlos, porque tampoco el cielo tenía nave que prestaros? Este alarido y este desconcierto, y el suspiro que se os salió del pecho al levantaros para volver a casa fueron tres hondas emociones intelectuales de puesta de sol."

The emotion best expressed in Martínez Sierra is that inspired by twilight or by the setting sun, a time of day which is symbolical of tragedy and anguish of soul, of the time when a human being sees its soul in its bareness, free from prejudices and conceit; of the time when sorrow is keenest and grief bitterest. To some it is a time of

1. El agua dormida, pp. 20-21
gentle melancholy, of peace and calmness, one when they receive their greatest inspirations, and when they seem to be psychic and not physical beings, a time "which brings the desire to unbosom one's heart by singing." It is because Martínez Sierra is able to sense keenly and to express effectively these two main emotions that he can make one sigh and even weep desolately, even without speaking to one of misfortunes of love, can interest one deeply in dramas and comedies that end neither in death nor in marriage; in tales without conflict and novels without complication, because to the excitement of the event he prefers the inquietude of the hour, and the reader, without being aware of it, prefers it also, through that law of affinity or mystery which makes poets, in their own time, understood only by other poets, women and children.  

Sol de la tarde was written in response to this emotion of twilight. Golondrina de sol, one of the novels of this group, in a description of a long-dried river bed newly filled with water, shows the grief of two old people who again were living the period of their youth in that of a gypsy lad who, hearkening to the call of his instincts, fled back to his old haunts.

"¿Veis el cauce, ya seco, de un río que acaso en tiempos fue gran río? ¡Qué callado está! Parece que su

1. Abril melancólico. Torre de Marfil, p. 233.
2. El agua dormida, pp. 21-22.
oficio sea únicamente mirar al sol, beberle la luz con las mil bocas de sus grietas, y dejarle pasar; mirar las estrellas, ver cómo salen y cómo se esconden, y esperar que salgan otra vez.

"Pero vienen de lejos aguas imprevistas, llenan el cauce, y ya veis qué tumulto!, espumas, ruidos, desgarramientos: las secas orillas beben con ansia la linfa bienvenida...

"Pasaron días: acostumbróse al agua al cauce y el cauce al agua; la corriente va quieta ... se olvidó el mundo que hubo tiempos .. en que el caudal de arenas era su caudal único.

"Y así la vida de los dos viejos tras la llegada turbulenta del rapaz gitano."

And the final words:

"Era un río ... Eran una vida ... Era un alma vagabunda, que una noche de Agosto se huyó con sus hermanas..."

In a different vein he writes about the soul:

"El alma surte como una fuente y canta como un ruisenor. ¿Por qué canta? Porque en cuanto se asoma al mundo, se encuentra cara al cielo.

"Vamos a contemplar el cielo, cuerpo mío, alma mía; abrid los ojos, cuerpo y alma, que va a amanecer."

It is rare to find a man who analyses and projects emotions effectively, who wraps his readers in them, and who at the same time is a philosopher. This is not to deny the

3. La vida inquieta, p. 69.
existence of effort on Martinez Sierra's part to determine the meaning and purpose of life; in fact, he has finally come to the conclusion that life has no transcendental purpose. "It would be absurd if it should turn out that we had come into this world for something either determined, or preconceived, or even useful. The longer I live, the more convinced I am of the perfect uselessness of living... A time of great sadness for every conscious being is that, sooner or later, more frequent or more exceptional, but inevitable, in which, suspending the accustomed activities, one becomes aware that life is a thing completely useless, and only tolerable through hope, rather through the chain of hopes of an inquietude that never arrives..... It seems a little strange that anyone has had the caprice to create men for the mere pleasure of seeing them move over the green, blue or gray surface of a planet, to move without being conscious, and to be happy and grieved and to laugh and weep for things that do not merit it." This sort of philosophy does not make him disappointed with life for he says that "life is a most pleasing piece of uselessness."

With this sort of philosophy of life, Martinez Sierra has worked out his way of living a quiet, leisurely yet

1. *La vida inquieta*, p. 3
3. *Idem*, p. 3.
joyful existence. It is a restatement of the Epicurean manner, sensual, materialistic, somewhat skeptical, yet with all, clothed with spirituality, dealing with the idea of knowledge for its own sake, life for the sake of living it, with its joys, and especially with its sorrows, but with care as to the manner in which it is to be lived. At times he is skeptical, rather pessimistic; at other times, happiness and lightheartedness radiate from his works. Martínez Sierra himself maintains that his attitude is not pessimistic. In a debate between the soul and the earth over the theme "all the roads of the world can lead to triumph or to death," the earth claims that they lead to the triumph of death; the soul considers that it has won when the earth has given it its full dream and that the love of the life of the earth will make one immortal. Here Martínez Sierra refers to the one universal soul which (he believes) has always and will always exist as it is found in nature, doing away with the idea of the immortality of the individual soul. If the earth triumphs, the soul returns to nature, and is swallowed up in it, perhaps to reappear in some other incarnation. In this instance, the earth wins, for though the soul is king of its own dream, all dreamers finally rest with the earth. It is difficult for one in whom the Christian faith in immortality has been instilled to admit that this phase of a pantheistic philosophy is not skeptical or pessimistic.

1. La vida inquieta, pp. 66-69
In another discussion over the final triumph of either life or death, Martínez Sierra shows the opposite belief, and one that is not pessimistic when life wins by saying:

"Como soy eterna, cambio constantemente la pedrería que se ciñe a mis sienes y que adorna las franjas de mi manto; y así me alzo unas veces en los cielos, circundada con diadema de soles, y me arrastro otras veces por la tierra prendiendo mi ondulante cabellera con humildes luciérnagas: y cuando desdeñosa arrojo los despojos de mis galas, te lanzas sobre ellos, y al mirarlos inertes, creyén-dolos pedazos de mi esencia, exclamas orgullosa: ¡Murió la vida! .... Mira, de entre esa masa hedionda a que llamas tu imperio, renace mi potencia creadora, y millares de seres han sacado su vida de la materia que creiste muerta."

His attitude toward solitude shows pessimism, or at least a lack of spirituality:

"Amor, amistad, simpatía, no son sino ilusiones o visiones con que nos empeñamos en consolar nuestra soledad ....Bien venido el más fiero dolor si nos trae, siquiera sea sólo un instante, la seguridad de que hemos dejado de estar solos."

Another reflection on the way life is spent is spoken by Puck:

"La vida entera se pierde en recordar y en padecer."

1. Diálogos fantásticos, p. 159.
2. La vida inquieta, p. 78.
3. Las golondrinas, p. 102.
The touches of pessimism in his work serve to set off the underlying current of his philosophy: the joy of living. In this life there are many pleasures, joy in rest and in activity of every type, in leisure and in meditation, and in the ordinary happenings of daily life, as is illustrated in La humilde verdad. While one has life, one should make the most of it; let one study in the libraries, or experiment in the laboratories; let one investigate all science, make new discoveries, uncover lost cities, and dispute old theories; let one gain all knowledge. For what purpose? For the pure and inexhaustible pleasure of its possession, its intense voluptuousness; for "es la sola capaz de hacernos pasar absolutamente 'distraídos' sobre las espinas indudables de este valle de lágrimas."

His idea of happiness differs from the generally conceived one:

"Es sádano que la humanidad entera se agite como endemoniada en busca de una felicidad que positivamente está en la quietud."

Nature meditation, leisure, truth, and that sort of poverty in which one finds merely the bare necessities of life, are the only true sources of pleasure. Leisure is to him "la más sutil y refinada de todas las humanas virtudes. El único medio de ganar la vida es irla perdiendo consciente y reposadamente en el supremo saboreo del ocio." He would

1. La vida inquieta, p. 7.
like to live in Andalucía and enjoy its idleness; by toasting in the sun one seems to lose some of his animal nature and gains a sort of sweet stupefaction and a delightful fever. It seems as if the soul were walking through the open pores of the body, thereby giving the soul an opportunity to come in immediate contact with the outside world and to inform it of the only truth in life that we know.

One can sympathize with Martínez Sierra in his desire for leisure. Happiness is the commonly accepted aim of life, and if it can be found through leisure, one cannot help desiring it in order to enjoy life's full store of pleasures. But even then, too much leisure is disastrous to one's self, tending toward slovenliness in one's mental activities. The philosophy of leisure is obviously not for the masses, but for the élite of the intellectual world. To a certain extent, he reverses his opinion in Esperanza nuestra and Amanecer, in which he preaches the doctrine of work.

True happiness, he believes, cannot be found in haste. "If one wishes to keep his spirit in quiet, he must travel slowly and without any preconceived route, resting in unaccustomed places and taking from them merely enough to continue the journey." In this way, one may hope to find the truth and to live in accordance with it, which is the

1. La vida inquieta, p. 73.
2. Idem, p. 18.
only rational purpose of life, in the accomplishment of which philosophy and science are of no aid. If "the only positive right of people and individuals is the right to be happy," a vision of what true happiness is and the place in which it is to be found is needed. Martínez Sierra thinks that few are happy when they might be so at little cost, "only by having the soul tempered to support the truth serenely." La pasión calls attention to the wrong conception of happiness. Isabel was unable, like most people, to associate an idea or an act with its certain consequences, even after she had been shown the folly of her desire and its probable results.

Martínez Sierra has the poet's idea of happiness. While life can be enjoyed through activity which, he says, "is blessed, because it is like a fruit that is born anew each hour, a fruit that tastes at the same time of desire and possession," much greater happiness is to be found in one's dreams. To him, as to all poets, dreams are a necessity. In them one can see the recollection of former joys which have grown more pleasing through the passing of time, and also of deeds that have not existed except in one's mind. The danger lies in considering one's dreams life. If one can avoid the confusion, he thinks "the great secret of life lies in living it as if it were a dream." "Life is the reward of living; by living it is merited and enjoyed."

1. La vida inquieta, p. 23.
2. Idem, p. 42.
3. Idem, p. 46.
A philosophy of this kind quite naturally leads to skepticism and doubt. He is uncertain of the reality of life. He asks: "Am I? Is this world a world? Do I think? Do I love? ... in a word, who knows? Happy this philosopher if he reaches the certainty of not being, and if the resolution not to see more than the surface gives him rest. O for a faith in which everything sinks and drowns and goes to sleep!" Life is incoherent and vague. But it is not to skepticism so much as to a sort of pantheism that this philosophy leads. Concerning the cremation of the dead he has written one essay which betrays his lack of belief in the immortality of the individual soul. He dwells upon the horrors of bodily decomposition, a thing which would be avoided by cremation. For in the scattering of the ashes to the winds, after the flesh has been purified by fire, he imagines a returning of the soul as well as of the body to form again part of the nature which produced it:

"And if the love of the survivors or of the soul itself which inhabited that body go to seek it in evocations and visits, let them find it ineffably mixed and confounded with the smile of all nature, and let them in a consoling fiction imagine the clear brilliancy of the eyes in the running water and the red of the lips in some rose."

He continues his pantheistic reflection: "Have you not

1. La vida inquieta, pp. 33-34.
2. Idem, p. 58.
felt many and many times, whenever you are in contact with nature, even if it be only through the simple action of going out in the morning on the balcony and breathing the free air, an inner longing for dissolution, for fusion, for mingling with the universal life which that air announces to you? Have you not enjoyed the sensation of a pair of tiny wings born in each atom of your body? And plunging into the glory of your bath, much more if it were in a river, still more if in the living and cool immensity of the sea, have you not felt as if your flesh wished to disappear and to unite endlessly with the water and to lose itself with its substance and be water, water under the sun?"

Martínez Sierra considers that nature has a soul, and that it is the same soul that is in human beings, that there is but one soul, and that nature and humanity are parts of this one universal soul. "What is that which we call the soul of things, the soul of the landscape, sister, without doubt, of our own soul, since love awakes in it, but an unknown sister of which reason is ignorant and with which the intellect is not acquainted?.... Nature, clear as a crystal and diaphanous, flees from every permanent form, and for this reason is royal in beauty; and that is perhaps the secret of that ineffable anguish which the contemplation of her produces in us, of that realization of insufficiency before beauty, of that torment which in the moment of

1. *La Vida inquieta*, p. 60
greatest pleasure the beautiful that God has made causes in 1 the delighted soul ... When the soul is a child and undeveloped, this torment does not trouble it: ignorant and sister of the earth, it knows how to break itself into atoms, and as if sleeping, to let itself be rocked by the solemn swaying of the undefined: it reats in the peacefulness of the meadows, reflects in the water that flows, and soars on the wings of birds." He believes in the landscape and in the soul of the landscape as he does in his own soul; and he thinks that this belief alone is worth the pain of living. The spirit never contemplates the earth without pleasure.... The relation of one spirit with another usually brings disillusion and aloofness, but the relation of the soul with the earth is most intimate when most frequent.

"The soul forgets itself, the passionate dissension of life and soars free, with outstretched wings, letting itself be swayed under the sky, in the light, in the air, its inner eyes wide open. Perhaps in the soul there is somewhat of the earth so that the earth may attract us so powerfully." 3

This pantheistic quality finds reflection in his style.

Martínez Sierra considers that the first duty of every man is tolerance. "¿Tenemos derecho a poner nuestra mano sobre una ilusión? ¿Acaso podemos ni debemos llegarnos al misterio de cualquier humano pensamiento sino con reverencia

1. La vida inquieta, p. 105. 4. Idem, p. 145
3. Idem, p. 111. 6. See Chapter IV
temerosa? ¿Acaso sabemos con qué voz habla la verdad?
¿Quién ha venido a revelarnos la razón de la sinrazón?
Cada alma es un templo, porque allí donde existe un misterio el a sí propio se levanta un altar: pasemos sin quemar incienso, si es que nuestra razón no nos deja creer; pero nunca derribemos el ara, que tal vez sobre el ara está el espíritu, y ¡ay del que peca contra el espíritu!

Next to nature, words are his most intimate friends. They are constant friends, discreet companions of our solitudes, evokers of music and of wonderful thoughts. He enjoys repeating beautiful words as he delights to look at flowers: there are words as valuable as a good reminiscence to soothe the melancholy hours; there are words that are vague as hopes, in which the signification is a transitory thing. "Bendita palabra, que has traído al otoño toda la gloria de la primavera, y bendita contigo toda la perlería de tus hermanas: las que dicen amor, cuando al alma le duelen desengaños: las que dicen frescura de agua que corre, y sombras de frondas sobre el agua, cuando va el cuerpo bajo el sol, por los caminos polvorientos; las que dicen penumbra, cuando duelen los ojos cansados de mirar la luz de medio día; las que dicen amanecer, y tibieza de hogar cuando hay escarcha y nieve; las dulcísimas que saben decir jardines de encanto y rayos de luna, siempre que nosotros, poetas, sentimos hambre y sed de sonar."

1. La vida inquieta, p. 48 2. Idem, p. 93. 3. Idem, p. 174
Martínez Sierra began his theater on the principle that the purpose of the theater is to divert, but in his later plays, he has to a certain extent, reversed his position, and has written two propaganda plays. In Esperanza nuestra, he makes a vigorous attack against existing social conditions and preaches a socialistic doctrine. The play is based upon the claims of the tillers of Don Carlos's estate to one-fourth of the profits from the sale of certain lands, which is due them because their work has made the land valuable. What right has a man to sell the land that has been worked by the very life and strength of the people who have rented it, thereby making it of more worth, when by selling the land, the tillers are deprived of a means of livelihood, and are obliged to emigrate and are given no compensation for their labor or for the inconvenience which they are subjected to? Martínez Sierra thinks that the agricultural classes are greatly oppressed in this respect and that reform is urgently needed. He therefore enunciates a theory dividing the profits of (in this case) agricultural enterprises on a basis of twenty-five per cent to the laborers and seventy-five per cent to the owners of the land. Lorenzo justifies the claims of the laborers by saying: "the land is yours; the work is theirs; the fruit of the work is yours and it is theirs."  

1. Esperanza nuestra, p. 86.
Later, he harks back to the equality of man. "The land is our indivisible orchard. From it we are obliged to take, in equal proportions, bread and doctrine for our children... God demands that we implant his kingdom on earth; ... the land is of all and for all. The bread is his who sweats over the furrow in order to make it yield."

Again, in *Reino de Dios*, he is opposed to any condition in which some live in luxury and others starve, which condition is an abnormal one, due to the grasping nature of mankind. In Act three of this play, a situation is created in which the children in an orphan asylum are half starved. The children rise in rebellion and refuse to eat the improperly prepared food. The blame is here cast upon the administrators of the orphanage who have misappropriated the funds which were given for the food of the children. He pleads for a more awakened sense of public duty toward public institutions and their inmates. Mere giving, while necessary, is insufficient. "Poverty is a crime, abandonment is a crime, because bread belongs to all, and the land of God belongs to all, and it is a crime that there are children of God without bread or roof, and he who withholds is the executioner of the one who needs, and he who closes his eyes with indifference while others are dying of hunger is an accomplice in the death of his brother."

1. *Feminismo, feminidad, españolismo*, pp. 39-40;
2. *Idem*, p. 52.
Thus he pleads earnestly for personal service, which is the only means of remedying such ills. Sor Gracia urges the children to do their part to bring the kingdom of God upon the earth, for "those who have suffered the injustices will be those who know and who will want to make the laws just." The road is not easy, but it is required of all to traverse it. "It is necessary to give one's life ... all of one's life, even the last drop of blood, even the last heart throb, ... to remedy the crimes of the world."

She herself lives the kind of life that she preaches. She chose to lead the life of a nun because of its chances for service. Personal service is her watchword, not the kind that money can buy, but that which can give "happiness and illusion; that can laugh with the unfortunate, in order that they may even for one moment imagine that they hope, that they desire, that they are still in the world for something, that they are human beings." With this ideal in view, she lives in an asylum for old people, where her tenderness, cheerfulness, and humor make happy all those whom she attends; then in a maternity home where she tries to encourage the girls to live down their dishonor by facing the situation squarely and repentantly and to inspire them to live clean and wholesome lives. Although her health breaks down, she does not consider the life she

2. *Idem*, p. 60.
leads a sacrifice, for her heart is in her work. She tries to inculcate the ideal of personal service in the hearts of the children whom she cares for in the orphan asylum. She appears also in a novel, written much earlier with the same characteristics, making life as beautiful as possible for the blind children who are in her charge.

Lorenzo, too, hears the imperious call to service in order to remedy the pitiful rural economic conditions. "I have seen that our wealth is made of misery...I have seen men hungry, sullen, indifferent, degraded by poverty and ignorance...I have seen the land impoverished, leprous, hungry like them...It has given me sorrow for the land, father, almost as much as for the men! All this poverty is criminal, because it is unnecessary! These men who do not now look it, are perhaps the most intelligent race in the world. This barren land is the land of Spain, fertile like no other. Now there are no barren lands! Science and labor have conquered them entirely. The man who knows and desires draws bread from the rocks...I cannot save all Spain, but I am obliged to attempt the salvation of that piece that is mine and which is near me...I want to be with them, to make them understand that the man who bends over the furrow can have as elevated a mind as he who counts the stars! I want to preach to them by word and by example, that work need not be servitude but is power, that they have not a

1. Los niños ciegos.
right, but an obligation to live healthfully, happily, and with abundance... that to resign one’s self to poverty is not a virtue but a crime... that the future of the world is in their hands... that they must carry their heads very high."

From the standpoint of one who has Spain’s best interests at heart he pleads for the education of the masses. He looks to America for help, hoping that America’s democratic idea of education may be taken up by Spain. The need he feels, is very great. In *Feminismo, femindad, españolismo*, he urges compulsory universal education. "There are children in Spain who do not know how to read...; there are vagabonds who in the street receive every kind of bad example... What are we going to do with them, or what are they, as time rolls on, going to do with us?"

In *Esperanza nuestra*, he satirizes the attitude of Spain toward the education of the masses. Pantaleón says, "Yes, and the worst is that, as they have no books, because there is no money to buy them, they teach them to read with the newspaper, and explain to them the purpose of Congress, the ministers, the soldiers, and the rural police; and for what purposes elections are held; and why votes are sold; and the wherefore of strikes; and then the children go about repeating it, and all the village is informed about

what there was no need of their knowing." But Lorenzo denies this, saying: "He who denies knowledge to people is as much a criminal as he who kills them with hunger.

...To know, to study, to learn...Knowledge and conscientiousness, the only thing that is to save Spain."

Martínez Sierra considered work of enough importance to devote his first book to it: El poema del trabajo, in which he glorifies the work of nature and man. During the years that he has been writing he has not changed his opinion of the value of work, rather, he has emphasized and restated his position. Esperanza nuestra gives due prominence to the idea in characterizing four of the personages. Enrique wishes to live only from what he can make honestly as a journalist espousing the causes he considers worthy. To Carmita, the idea of living from the profits of speculation and heartless treatment of tenants who have worked to make her rich is unbearable. Nené finds the leisure to which she is forced unendurable; to break the monotony she indulges in a clandestine love affair, but decides that a sad love cannot be cured with a mean one, and to save herself from the evils of loneliness decides to go to France as a nurse where she will feel that she is of some use. But it is Lorenzo who really sees the democracy and the saving power in work; the vision is his. That the attitude toward work must change is indicated in Pan-

1. Esperanza nuestra, p. 98.
taleón's philosophy which is typical of the national attitude: "Wealth is having, for work has always been poverty. The proof is that he who has something does not work; and everybody wishes to have in order not to work."

Two of Martínez Sierra's plays deal with home life. The first, Primavera en otoño, met with great success. The problem concerns a singer who after her marriage has left her husband for the stage; leaving her daughter to be brought up by the father. She is urged by both daughter and husband to leave her roaming life of excitement and to live with them. Should she, a woman of talent, forsake the life in which she finds pleasure to live where she mistakenly thinks that there is no love, where there is incompatibility of temperament, and where she can not be independent, merely to be conventional? Has she not a fight to live her life with a promise of fulfillment of its possibilities, with all its joys and triumphs and freedom? Or has she, because she married, a duty toward her husband and daughter as urgent and inflexible as that toward herself, obligating her to live with them and be a true wife and mother? Elena decided that in all justice she must give up her art, mother her daughter and live with her family. Martínez Sierra thinks that she had a right to make the most of her talents for a time, but since she had already married, it was her duty some time to settle down and be a real wife and mother. The play portrays Spanish ideals of motherhood and conjugal fidelity. Don Enrique shows more patience than is usual in

1. Esperanza nuestra, p. 82.
the Spanish husband in regard to his wife's independence; he thoroughly believes that a wife's place is in the home, but if her interests are in something else rather than at home, the husband has no right to detain her; only love gives such rights and if love is not recognized, it has no claims.

The theme of *Mamá* is the relation between husband and wife and that of parents to their children. Mercedes is a woman who has failed in her duties as a mother; but the fault has not been entirely her own. She is a frivolous woman, happy, light-hearted and gay, who has not been taught the duties of a mother, nor had the opportunity to play the part of one for many years. As early as possible, her two children were sent away to school, leaving her with nothing to do but to amuse herself and entertain her husband. Extravagant, lacking in a sense of honor in financial transactions, a social butterfly, she does not seem to be a homemaker nor capable of being one. She unfortunately has not had the companionship of her children to make her feel her dignity as a mother, and when they finally come home to live, they are disillusioned in their home life and in the love that they thought would be waiting for them. She has been allowed to live an independent life, to amuse herself as she sees fit, and to be her husband's wife only in name. Santiago has likewise been negligent in his duties, but only as a husband. Wrapped up in his business affairs, his
devotion to his work makes him careless of his wife, and leaves her free to find excitement and romance with another man. Moreover, he has never fully appreciated his wife of her possibilities, as sending the children away to school to keep them from their mother's influence would show. This sort of family relation is what Martinez Sierra attacks in this play. Children miss parental care when they are sent away to school as much as the parents miss the benefit of their children's influence over their lives. In this instance, the need was equally great in both cases.

For the development of Mercedes' character, nothing could have been more vital than that her children be allowed to live with her. The ideal relation is one in which both husband and wife are equally well informed of the economic status of the family, when the wife has the confidence of her children and is able to be an inspiration to them and to heal their heart wounds, and when the father is more interested in his children's welfare than the mere paying of bills would testify, and when he makes himself so necessary to his wife's happiness that she can pay attention to no other man. Martinez Sierra adroitly hits a number of evils in this play.

In La sombra del padre, a father's responsibility toward his family is the theme. Has a father done his entire duty toward his family when he has supplied all their wants, although in order to do so he has had to live so far from them
that he has had no opportunity to influence his children? Don José believes that the mother alone should be responsible for the bringing up of the children; by providing the money he is freed from all other responsibilities toward his family. This can even take the place of showing his affection for his wife. The result of the theory that he has put into practice is that his son is involved in an affair with a married woman, one daughter is married to a drunkard, and the other daughter is on the point of eloping with a villain. There has been too much wealth and not enough parental control; the mother is without authority and her influence is held in little esteem. The blame is not laid on the mother, but on the father because he has absented himself from the place where he was needed in order to give his family money and social position, which they have not known how to use. It is a case of mistaken ideals. Youth needs a strong hand to guide it, one that has authority and for which it has respect, and in which it feels confidence. A father who fails in these respects fails entirely and is but a shadow. More association between parents and children, to mould their character, is necessary for the best development of one's children, is Martínez Sierra's thesis in this play.

The one element around which novels and plays are generally woven is the love element, but although all of
Martínez Sierra's have this element in them, it is the primary theme in only a small part of his works. In *Golondrina de sol*, one sees parental love; in *Margarita de la rueda*, fraternal love and sacrifice; in *Madrigal* and *Túeres la paz*, a love made up half of passion, half of maternal instinct; and in *Margot, La pasión,* and *Para hacerse amar logamente,* unreasoning love. Love between man and woman is natural and usual; sometimes it runs smoothly, as in *El amor catedrático*; but at other times human frailties and stubbornness enter in and confuse and upset its natural course. Under such circumstances a tragedy results. Even then, though this love is unconventional, it is considered sacred and deserving of respect, but the end is never happy. It seems as if some adverse fate were guiding the life of the individual, urging him on in his wilfulness, yet punishing him for yielding. This sort of love, when it is found in Martínez Sierra, is portrayed not for the purpose of describing and drawing a lesson from it, although there is one hidden, but to portray a character's emotions and response to love. It is not the type of love that is emphasized, but the character in relation to that love.

A case in point is *La pasión* (1914), sequel to *El agua dormida*, in which the same situation is suggested. The type is that of the wayward woman who has lost her honor and her virtue through the intensity of her passion along with what she claims as her right: "Ha venido una al mundo para
querer y saber que se quiere ... Por una hora de sentir que es mío, doy la vida, y no es nada! ¡Una hora!, y morirse para no despertar si era sueño, para no recobrar la razón, si era locura...

With Isabel, the desire for self-expression dominates her whole life; she is a wilful, inexperienced girl madly in love with a man who, unknown to her, is not of a character to make her happy, dissolute, worthless, and insincere in his love for her. It would make no difference to her, however, if she had been sure of his character, for to her, love is the supreme thing; it will give her life, and she is willing to suffer grief for later joy. She has her way, despite many protests from Pascual, her guardian. She has her hour, and comes to grief, awakening to find that her happiness was a dream and a madness, for she learns that he has since married another woman. She did not realize before that she might not be able to die or to lose her reason, if love should fail. Nor did her mother before her, when she fell. The faithlessness of the man Isabel loved passionately overwhelms her, as does his suggestion that in spite of his marriage their former relationship can still continue; this insult to her love, soul, and honor is too much for her, and she bids him good bye forever. She is now a repentant woman, and the stigma of society is on her; she is a social outcast. Unlike Magda,

*La pasión*, p. 66.
*Idem*, p. 65.
in Sudermann's *Die Heimat*, she no longer sees herself justified. Magda owed to her lover all the joy of her life, even the highest, the mother's love; not so with Isabel; her child is an annoyance to her; a reproach and a sorrow. Magda rises above her disgrace. To us it seems as if Isabel never will, nor will she ever be happy. And life is more bitter to her when she realizes that her child will have to face life as she herself did. "Si hubiera un filtro para asegurar la felicidad de los hijos, aunque hubiese que correr el mundo con los pies sangrando para encontrarle. ¡De qué vale haber dado la vida a una criatura, si, ni aun dando la vida por ella, puede uno asegurarle que será dichoso!"

In *Tú eres la paz*, one sees a love made up half of passion and half of maternal instinct. If either of these were lacking, one could not justify Ana María in marrying a man like Agustín, far her inferior in moral and mental stamina. Each quality is seen in her unfailing love for him during his long absence, and in her sorrow on learning that he no longer loves her. The mother love appears in her forgiving him for being unfaithful and in contuing to love him in spite of it, so much that she is happy to mother his child by her rival. A love without this maternal instinct would not forgive such lack of fidelity nor the far greater insult, though unintended, to her love when Agustín had promised unfailing love to Ana María, only to leave

1. *La pasión*, p. 82.
her for Carmelina, who beckoned last. The idea of vengeance — distinctly non-maternal — at first rules, until Agustín shows penitence, for he is able to see what Ana Maria can do for him and he loves her as truly as he knows how to do. She forgives him because she loves him. She is one of that class described by her poet lover as "las que se dan el gusto de envolver al cuitado en una especie de protección maternal que las diviarte tanto y cuanto."

A purely intellectual love is that between Teresa Alcaraz and her professor of Crystallography, Don Raimundo de la Gala. With Teresa it is at first a profound hatred for the man who ruthlessly tears down all one's gods and faith and boldly forces science upon his students as the only true way to truth and knowledge. With acquaintance, this hatred, this desire to tear to pieces, changed into a desire to succeed brilliantly in the science. The professor is attracted to her because of her brilliancy, but more because of her feminine charm and falls in love with her, in a kind of love that the thinks he could renounce at will and which he calls a "voluptuosidad cerebral." Teresa's love is the deeper, the two elements of it being love for the personality of the man and a desire to be a help and an inspiration in his work.

1. Tú eres la paz, p. 289.
CHAPTER III

Feminism

To us in America, feminism is triumphant; the movement has accomplished much for woman's position in business, in the professions, before the law, as a citizen, and socially. But in Spain, much progress is yet to be made before the Spanish woman can attain to the position held by her American and English sisters. The reason for this is to be found in the history of Spain, which was peopled by Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans, by all of whom woman was sheltered and considered to be far inferior to man in all the things in which man took the first place. Even the right to an education equivalent to that of man was and has always been denied to the Spanish woman. Except in rare instances, woman was not given the opportunity to show of what she is capable, nor was it desirable that she should do so. With the coming of the Goths, equality in rights and duties was established for man and woman, but the customs of the Moors and Jews prevented woman from enjoying this equality by excluding her from the world and forcing ignorance upon her.

On the whole, the Spanish woman has not become sufficiently displeased with her position to rise up against prevailing conditions, in which woman is still not given the opportunity of equal study with men, in which economically she is not independent, in which she has no political recognition, and in
which she has a humiliating social position. As yet, the feminist movement has not a great following, but a part of its success may be attributed to Martínez Sierra, who, in a number of plays and in his Cartas a las mujeres de España and Feminismo, feminidad, españolismo, has devoted much energy and thought to aiding woman in advancement of her position in Spain. As Martínez Sierra has made his conception of the American woman the ideal of his plays, so has he adopted North American feminism, "el que está fundado en ideales más prácticos, el que ha elegido medios más sensatos y más eficaces para llegar a conseguir sus fines, y el que mejor puede adaptarse al espíritu español y al concepto general de la vida que tiene la mujer española ... Es claro, burgués, práctico y transparente. Podría decirse que es 'el feminismo de las amas de casa'".

The term feminism generally connotes at first, suffrage; that, however, is but a small part of its significance. Martínez Sierra defines it thus: "El feminismo quiere sencillamente que las mujeres alcancen la plenitud de su vida, es decir, que tengan los mismos derechos y los mismos deberes que los hombres, que gobiernen el mundo a medias con ellos, ya que a medias le pueblan, y que en perfecta colaboración procuren su felicidad propia y mutua y el perfeccionamiento de la especie humana." Martínez Sierra believes

1. Cartas a las mujeres de España, pp. 13-14
2. Feminismo, feminidad, españolismo, p. 20
in woman suffrage, in woman's duty to vote in order to make the laws better, to enforce the laws, and to make new laws pertaining to her rights and responsibilities. He grants woman's right to suffrage, but stresses more her duties and privileges which by virtue of her position she must fulfill. It is his conviction that the Spanish woman is asleep to the significance of her position legally, economically and socially as well as to her sphere of influence.

He asks for a broader education, equal to that of man, in which she may develop to the utmost of her ability, greater social freedom, equal rights with men, economic independence, regardless of whether the woman be married or single and if she has an estate in her name, that she have the right and training to administer it to the best advantage. Independence should be the aim of the Spanish woman.

This cannot, of course, come at once. Woman must prove through demonstration her strength in these matters, which she can do for herself by enlarging her interests, increasing her knowledge through wide reading, and serving others. Let her enlist in movements for the protection of women and children, advocating an eight-hour day for women and child labor laws preventing, regulating, and protecting child labor. Woman in Spain has always been supreme in the home, but unfortunately she has not played her part as well as
she should. Let her learn to cook and serve nourishing food, to keep a home-like house, and to take greater care in bringing up her children to be useful and noble citizens. For this she needs complete culture and independence. Her influence on the coming generation will then be a wholesome one, and one that will aid in doing away with many undesirable things in the social life of Spain, among them the double moral standard. Martínez Sierra firmly believes that the only chance for the moral betterment of Spain lies with the women; he has equal faith that the women can do it. She also has duties toward society in general which can be fulfilled by serving on woman juries, becoming interested in prison reform, doing social welfare work and charitable work through the recognized efficient agencies, for all of which woman is by nature especially adapted.

As a means of facilitating the progress of the feminist movement, he urges the organization of women's clubs which will accomplish much in giving woman greater freedom than she now enjoys and opportunity for further culture, for welfare work and for giving voice to the protests of groups of women against vicious practices in national or civic affairs. Through these clubs women can exert the only other influence as great as theirs in the home.

Martínez Sierra makes an effort to plan things so that women of every interest and social class may be benefited by and participate in the feminist movement. Cooperative stores in which women may sell their handiwork at a fair
profit, providing excursion and camping trips for the poor of the cities, and good health crusades are among the things that he suggests that women take interest in arranging. Throughout both books he stresses the fact that woman can gain her independence only through work and efficiency. He advocates feminism especially because through it woman can best fulfill her duties and responsibilities as a mother. The fate of a nation depends upon the type of men and women that are reared. Thus it is an ethical and a patriotic responsibility that he puts upon the mothers of Spain and one which the feminist movement alone can accomplish.

As a part of his interest in feminism, he has created several characters in his novels and plays to whom he has given, in whole or in part, the characteristics of what the Spanish woman ought to be. She is copied from his idea of the American woman and adapted to the Spanish nature. She is independent, straightforward, capable, unselfish, lovable and forgiving, a purely feminine being, which was not always the case with the heroines of the classical drama. Through these characters he idealizes womanhood, glorifies motherhood, sympathizes with woman in her trials and makes her triumphant over them and rejoices with her in her joys.

Mariana is the forgiving woman. Too much attention and immediate fame turn the head of José María, the hero, and cause him to become dissatisfied with what he has. It

1. In La mujer del héroe.
is expressed through his faithlessness toward his wife and his disregard for her wishes which is shown by defying her will when she tells him that if he once leaves her, he may never return. She is sufficiently capable to dare to be independent, having made the living for the family heretofore while he loafed. Being of the stronger personality, she is able to withstand all his efforts to reinstate himself in her graces until he is carried in wounded. The love for him that has not died in spite of his faithlessness returns then and she forgives him. In her, Martínez Sierra has embodied the noble characteristics of the woman of Madrid who, although mistreated by her husband and conscious of his failings, remains true to him and loves him in spite of it all. He praises her for "la honradez fundamental, la prudencia, la fortaleza sazónada de gracia, la abnegación, la generosidad y el clarísimo instinto de justicia que forman el alma agridulce, brava, áspera, y admirable de la admirabilísima mujer madrilena."

Motherhood has not been portrayed more ideally in any of Martínez Sierra's works than in Canción de cuna, in which Sor Juana de la Cruz is the leading character. She has the love for Teresa that every normal woman has for a waif who needs mothering; in addition she bears the same maternal love for every child; it is an instinct within her that is common to all regardless of circumstances.

1. La mujer del héroe, p. 115.
"Que toda mujer, porque Dios lo ha querido, 1
dentro del corazón lleva a un hijo dormido."

From childhood on she had expressed her love for children by caring for her younger brothers and sisters, and it was this instinct that led her to take up the life of a nun, for it had been merely transferred to the Lord. "Whenever I take communion I try to think that I am receiving our Lord as a little child, and I take and press him like this to my heart, and then it seems to me he is so little and so helpless that I can't refuse him anything. And then I think that he is crying, and I pray to the Virgin to come and help me quiet him. And if I were not ashamed, because I know you would all laugh at me, I'd croon to him then, and rock him to sleep, and sing him baby songs. 2 It is she who tends Teresa, the homeless child of unknown parentage who was left at the convent, and it is she whom the girl loves most, for she has been like a real mother to her. It is a great blow to her when Teresa leaves to be married. Though her love for the girl has not in any sense supplanted her love for the Lord nor has it made her any less devoted, there is a great emptiness in her life. It is the normal loneliness that each mother feels when her daughter leaves her to enter a home of her own. Martínez Sierra deliberately chose a convent as the scene of action because he wished to show how general the maternal instinct is; that no woman's

life is complete without having had an opportunity to express it even though she be one who has renounced all the pleasures of this world.

In Carlota one sees a capable housewife, a woman who possesses all the qualities needed for that position, active, smiling and happy, tactful, business-like, energetic, loving, considerate, sympathetic, and helpful, with a high ideal of a woman's and a wife's position, of which she intends to make the most. It need make no difference that she is a step-mother. Through her common sense and tactfulness she wins to her side her two step-daughters who before her marriage admired her greatly but who since took a dislike to her because they feared that she would deprive them of some of their freedom. The house, which was very untidy and in which it was impossible to find any given thing when it was wanted, is quickly set to rights. She makes her husband happy, brings him into closer relation with his business affairs, systematizing them and making his business more efficient. She is a well-poised woman. Her motto is: "The first thing that a woman has to be is a woman, a mother from the time that she is born until she dies." She exerts a wholesome influence over the girls when once she has won them over to her side. Gloria's artificiality is bared and corrected; Laura sees her folly in begging a man...

1. In El ama de la casa.  
2. Idem, p. 223.
to run away with her, both girls realizing at last that the only real pleasure is found in doing something that is worth doing. Carlota demands respect and is blessed with a nature that is sure to receive it. Dignified, yet possessing a saving sense of humor and all the delightful qualities that Martínez Sierra attributes to the Spanish woman, she is worthy of idealization. Her ambition is to give her husband a home where it will also be home for his children who, though they go far away from the parental roof, will always realize that there is a home waiting for them at any time.

La Tirana is an unusual type of "mujer honrada", a singer in cheap music halls, who is forced to keep her virtue in spite of resolutions to be like her companions who fare better than she for having sold their honor. Through her insistence to maintain her right to remain decent she is obliged to leave one position after another. That she has not dissipated is due not to moral convictions but to an innate inability to yield herself in spite of her determination to do so. Fortunately for her happiness, she is rewarded with a happy marriage.

Ana Maria is a bright, happy, capable and loving woman who finds happiness in nature and in serving others. That she is motherly is shown in her treatment of her grandmother.

1. In La Tirana.
2. In Tu eres la paz.
In addition, she endeavours to keep up the grandmother's cherished hope that Ana María and Agustín marry by writing letters that Agustín himself should have written during his long absence from home. It is a hard blow to learn from him what she had already imagined, that he loved another. She associates with him, however, without letting him know that she was hurt, until he tells her with all the sincerity of which he is capable that he loves her. Her happiness is unlimited until the next day when the third person of the triangle returns to reclaim him and he weakly gives in. His bitter and sincere repentance after he decides that it is not Carmelina that he loves but Ana María leads her to forgive him, for she knows that he is not master of his own will. Convinced that he loves her and knowing that she cannot help loving him, she marries him, giving as another reason for what might be a foolish step: "Las mujeres no podemos vencer esta picara compasión que hace que cuando el ídolo se nos cae del altar le recojamos en los brazos como a un hijo." One cannot say, however, that Martínez Sierra's thesis is that love is all that matters, unless that love has been tested by time and experience and has been found to be unfailing. With her capability and sweetness of character and somewhat hypnotic influence over Agustín, which she knew that she had, she could assure her

1. Madrigal, p. 166.
own happiness. Once having taken the step, she is not of the kind to look back and regret, but to prevent if possible, further failings.

There are qualities in Martínez Sierra's treatment of women and in his representation of women's thoughts that cause one to infer that he himself must have a strongly feminine element in his nature, or that a woman is helping him in his work. Ana María possesses in common with him the quality of feeling akin to or of being under the spell of nature, a characteristic which is generally considered feminine perhaps because of its delicacy. One needs no title above the following to know that a woman is speaking; it reflects clearly through its rhythm and its fancies a feminine spirit behind its expression:

"La risa es como rosa abierta en su rosal, y todas las flores del mundo se ríen, se ríen, se ríen, ¿lo oyes? siempre y a todas horas; cuando a medio día les da el sol, cuando de madrugada las baña el rocío, cuando a la tardeanta viene el jardinero y riega el jardín, y caen las gotas de agua sobre las corolas que tiemblan? ¡claro que tiemblan! ¡ya lo creo que tiemblan!...pero tiemblan de risa; si hasta cuando pasa el viento y las deshoja se deshojan riendo; pues que, el rastro de pétalos rojos sobre el verde del césped o sobre el amarillo de la arena, no es ruidoso, armonioso, insolente, fragante como una carcajada?"

L. La vida inquieta, p. 221.
The refinement of thought, of expression, the complete lack of the brutal, and the painstaking care to achieve perfection in his art alone betray a somewhat feminine mind. The faithful representation of a child's thoughts, as in El agua dormida, and the insight into a woman's soul as revealed by Sor Juana de la Cruz in Canción de cuna and by Teresa Alcaráiz in El amor catedrático, betray more than a keen observation of feminine nature, and also a verbatim reproduction of a certain woman's thoughts under definite conditions imposed by the author. What would be more natural to suppose, since it is known that he married a brilliant woman and since rumor has it that he and his wife collaborate, than that she is the real heroine of his works, and more particularly of El amor catedrático in which he shows this feminine quality most.

The atmosphere of reality in this work is remarkably natural. Many authors have described girls and their emotions on falling in love, but compared with this, most accounts seem to be covered with an artificial romantic coloring:

"Verle esta humilde servidora tuya y perder el equilibrio intelectual, fue todo uno: todas mis indignaciones de la víspera, todas mis antipatías, todas mis ansias más o menos destructoras resurgieron en tropel; creo que toda la sangre del cuerpo se me agolpó a la cara; zumbaronme desforadadamente los oídos; me temblaron las manos; sentí en el..."
corazón una punzada extraña, como si me le atravesaran por la punta con una aguja de coser esteras.

Teresa says that every woman peoples her castles in the air with children and husband, in that order, and adds that her dreams of her husband are not of what he will be like, but of what he must be, doctor, lawyer, merchant or engineer. In her dreams her daughters have in their lives everything pleasant that was in her own and what she has seen desirable in those of other girls but could not herself have; her sons are what she would like to be were she a man. Her air castles show this preference toward her dream children probably because of a vague realization that her influence will be more lasting upon her children. It is not until a girl's first serious love affair that there is any appreciable difference between her dreams of her sons and her husband. From then on the order is reversed, and the husband receives the attention: the woman then dreams of her place in his career. Much the same order of things is revealed by Teresa:

"Ella se mira dueña y señora en el amable reino familiar, moviéndose ordenadamente en la actividad de la vida doméstica, dentro de la cual caben todos los perfiles de frivolidad, lujo y bienestar que en su especial matiz intelectual le sugiera. Los hijos son pequeños, alegres, sanos,

1. El diablo se ríe, El amor catedrático, p. 98.
saltan, gritan, abrazan, lloran, ríen; la madre los reprende, los consuela, los viste, los halaga con lecciones y cuentos.....—Puesto a soñar una mujer, tanto placer le saca a las futuras lágrimas como a las risas por venir, que ya es lugar común en poesía lo de que la esperanza y el recuerdo todo lo doran y platean a luz de sol o a opalo de luna. —Entre todo este tráfico de sonrientes anticipaciones, el marido va y viene, habla tal vez, acaso sonríe; pero como si estuviese dentro de una nube. Está en el sueño porque es elemento indispensable para la edificación familiar; pero la soñadora no le ha visto nunca la cara....ni ha deseado verla."

Many other passages could be cited from this work that show evidences of feminine inspiration.

1. El diablo se ríe, El amor catedrático, p. 102.
CHAPTER IV

Style

Martinez Sierra's greatest claim to distinction rests upon his style. Commencing his literary career with art as his aim, he has continued in its realization. The most distinctive feature is his use of nature, the qualities that he attaches to it and its predominance in his work showing his particular genius in the portrayal of nature. It is more than a mere personification that is lifeless and cold; rather, Nature and all her forces live and are imbued with a soul that is striving to express its identity through human functionings. As a result of his pantheistic philosophy, nature is humanized to the extent that in this type of natural description, terms applying ordinarily to the portrayal of human emotions are used with perfect appropriateness in describing nature and natural phenomena.

In his three earliest works, Nature is the spirit that is speaking and teaching. Through her soul, which, he believes, is a part of that universal soul of which we also are a part, she has thought, felt, experienced, and learned during the ages that she has existed, and is now a willing and capable guide. The Sun, speaking to the disheartened

1. See Introduction, p. 3.
2. See Chapter I.
Poet says:

"Yo amo a la tierra con amor de siglos, y cuando cae la tarde, pongo en el postrer rayo que le envío mis más tiernas caricias. ¡Cuántas veces las montañas de nubes que hoy te abruman se oponen a mi paso! Pudiera deshacerlas, dispersarlas, y no lo hago. Mis rayos las ciñen y las doran con fanja radiante, y los hombres contemplan, asombrados, los soberbios palacios que fingen con mi ayuda."

And Nature speaks her own praise of her kingdom:

"¡Sabios maestros!...Mi reino entero es lección viviente y vivificadora. Mira y escucha. Las cumbres de los montes se levantan erguidas y miran a los cielos, anhelando alcanzarlos. Las plantas todas nacieron en la tierra, y sin embargo, a los cielos se elevan; las que son fuertes, con soberbia arrogancia; las que son débiles, se ensor- tijan, se abrazan a las ramas, se cuelgan a los troncos, pugnando por subir....Poeta: mira a lo alto, que sea tu alma aroma y nube de incienso; deja a tu cuerpo prisionero en la tierra....¡pero sube! ....Dame la mano, sube conmigo, poeta....mi poeta, mi cantor siempre amado...y escucha mi lección....¡Sursum corda!"

A more subtle expression of this humanization is found in his later development lasting, however, only until 1913 and ending with La vida inquieta. Nature is still his muse and inspiration; through observing her beauties

1. Diálogos fantásticos, p. 119.
2. Idem, p. 121.
and wonders and through subjecting himself to her spell, he has become her mouthpiece and has seen her soul which to most of us is hidden. It is because he feels himself akin to Nature that he succeeds in this type of natural description. Nature is no longer a teacher as she was in Poema del trabajo, but a companion who feels and has moods. Since this quality is peculiarly Martínez Sierra's and is probably his most distinctive characteristic, a number of examples follow. The words in italics apply equally to human beings.

"El cielo tan pronto sonreía con azul beatitud como arrugaba el entrecejo, poniéndose gris, color de enfado, color de tedio; y la tierra siguiendo matiz por matiz las veleidades de su soberbio amigo, ora sonreía, ora bostezaba. Así sucedieron a los días lúgubres de Diciembre, las frías serenidades de Enero, y las revueltas locas de Febrero, y llegó Marzo, el que amparado con la belleza de cuanto promete se permite el insolente lujo de no cumplir nada." 1

"En la noria, las gotas caídas de los cangilones se habían helado, y sus cristales informes y turbios se divirtían, sacando de los rayos del sol irisaciones mortecinas. ....Extendían los árboles sus ramas negras como viejos que se desperezasen al sol, y la parra se alargaba por el muro posterior de la casa, retorciendo troncos y sarmientos, abrazando las paredes en un espasmo de desesperación." 2

1. Pascua florida, p. 84.
2. Idem, p. 49.
"Ibase despidiéndose el verano con morosidades de buen amante, y así los días de la segunda mitad de Septiembre habíanse ido sucediendo como adiós en tibias y lentas ternuras, los otros febriles y asfixiantes."

"El mar, que era uno con el cielo, se alegró como el cielo, porque salía el sol, y sus aguas, alborozadas como niñas, dijeron sus mejores canciones. El sol seguía caminando ..., el ponía su clara sonrisa sobre el ramaje, y las frondas cantaban de gozo."

"Pasó el verano: vino el otoño a desnudar la tierra, llevándose las hojas, a vestir el cielo con imperiales pompas de fuego, y de topacio en la hora solemne de las puestas de sol; llegó después Noviembre, el que llora a los que fueron, y Diciembre, el que finge con sus lumbreras de Navidad los fuegos del sol que se ha huido, ..., y después de los hielos y de los vendavales, asomaron allá por Abril, aún vestidas de luto las violetas."

Although this device is not used too frequently by Martínez Sierra, it marks the culmination of his gift in natural description, of which he perhaps consciously makes use in order to embellish and individualize his style.

One wonders if he was not inspired in this type of description by Santiago Rusiñol, whom, however, he probably

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1. Pascua florida, p.185
2. Sol de la tarde, p. 180
surpasses, if one may judge from the Oración al sol poniente by Santiago Rusiñol, which is included by Martínez Sierra in the collection Sol de la tarde.

"Adiós, astro del día, rueda de aurora, estrella encendida, que bajas solemnemente a los abismos sin fondo, como custodia majestuosa!

Antes de descender a los espacios infinitos, caldea con tus resplandores las altas cimas que te contemplan, y envía tus besos de oro a la frente nevada de las sierras, que la tierra necesita el encendido amor de tus labios para adormirse a la sombra que dejas al ocultarte......

Es el instante en que se abrazan las notas muertas del día y las nacientes de la noche ... Es la hora misteriosa en que los ojos buscan la mirada para leer en ella promesas, consagradas ante la santa agonía de un sol que se pone .. Aún te recordarán las nubes largas, y enlutadas que tornan en procesión deliciosa de tu suntuoso entierro."

Martínez Sierra is generally concerned with nature in its relation to human beings; it is what Clarín called emoción del paisaje, a phase of pantheism in which nature feels and radiates the emotions of the people who are placed in relief against it. The snow, the clouded sky, the grayish atmosphere and walls of the building and the orchard, and the white peaks and slopes of the mountains, the snow-capped shrubs and trees, in Pascua florida typify the si-

1. Sol de la tarde, pp. 7-9
lence and monotony of the village of Fuenclara, as well as symbolize the life full of quiet but poignant grief of the aged schoolmaster.

Pastoral makes use of nature in expressing its symbolism. The different seasons of life are introduced by a description of the same season in nature, one of which foretells Alcino's disappointment and failure to find Queen Sol: "Es mediodía. En la planicie, que está cubierta de mies madura, ponen las amapolas el triunfo de sus pétalos rojos; el cielo, placa de azul esmalte, está bañado en sol, y la planicie, espejo de los cielos, refulge. Son los caminos polvorientos y la fatiga pesa sobre los caminantes; las cigarras, ásperamente, cantan la gloria del verano."

The tragic element in Por el sendero florido, the hard-heartedness and lack of sympathy of the villagers who fear the plague, are heightened and to a degree foretold by the gray and traveled road, and the implacably blue sky which stares fixedly at the earth, which express the harshness and disinterestedness of nature in the grief of Dinko over the death of his wife.

When "la monja maestra", in anguish over the loss of her faith is approached by one of her pupils who has likewise lost hers, and is seeking help to regain it, she is like

1. Teatro de ensueño, p. 75.
the palm branch cut off by the wind and falling to the earth like a broken wing and remaining there. And the wind causes the bell in the tower to implore and sob like the pupil. In this type of description he is effective, because he knows on just what strings of the reader's soul to play. His study of the psychology of emotion has not been in vain. His descriptions express nature's moods and tell a story in much the same way as a symphony does.

There are times when Martínez Gierra describes nature merely to express his joy in observing it; at such times the human element that he generally finds in nature is forgotten, or submerged in his appreciation of it:

"El cielo está pálido, vestido de tenuísimo azul, sobre el río hay niebla; sobre la arena flota una frescura diáfana; vamos a aquel peñón cubierto de musgo; hay junto al musgo en una hendidura, una mata de claveles silvestres; en ella una flor; gran cáriz verde y cuatro pétalos de un blanco apenas rosa; al pie del peñón brota una fuente, el agua va tranquila. ¡Qué silencio! Del cielo está cayendo paz; la tierra está exhalando paz; paz y paz se encuentran en el aire y engendran gozo. Cuando va a amanecer, el alma vibra, el corazón late de prisa por la emoción del día que aún no ha nacido. La luz es frescura; luego se hace carmín a Oriente; luego oro pálido, y entre el oro asoma el disco del sol. ¿De dónde viene el sol? ¿Ha salido del agua del río?
¿Estaba en la sierra, dormido en la negrura de los pinos? Viene de lejos; dicen que viene de otro mundo. Ello es que trae prisa de alegrar la mañana... el primer rayo, dardo de luz, ha pasado volando sobre el arenal, ahora está en la veleta de la torre, y las campanas, para hacerle fiesta han echado al aire su vocinglería, y el cielo está sereno, claro y azul.

The poet's keen observation of nature combined with a pantheistic and poetic conception of the coming of night makes this description beautiful and one of the most poetic:

"Dicen que la noche es velo que cae de lo alto. No cae de lo alto: la noche va subiendo del suelo al cielo: es como un aliento de la tierra, como un ascender de su tristeza con que venga a su modo el gozo de la luz que ha estado todo el día cayéndole del sol: la sombra nace en lo hondo del valle; inunda las praderas como agua mansa, ahoga la silueta de los árboles, y se desparrama trepando monte arriba: de la vertiente pasa a las cumbres, y de la cumbre al aire pero no puede llegar al cielo. Aunque sea de noche, el cielo sigue azul; los que le han visto negro no han sabido mirarle...."

A conspicuous element of Martínez Sierra's style is his adjecitivation which for the most part is beautiful and

1. La vida inquieta, p. 69
2. Teatro de ensueno, p. 45.
artistic. When he first began to write, his adjectivation lacked spontaneity; it was forced, studied with an evident desire to be unusual. One notices, also, a tendency to be explicit in details and an effort to make his descriptions replete with imagery in the hope of making a picture clear. The result sometimes is that the impression is made more vague and confused than if some of the less significant details had been left to the reader's imagination and the cardinal image placed in bolder relief. This tendency, though somewhat corrected, is still evident in his later descriptions. He notes all, in his joy at beholding it, thinking that the reader will likewise enjoy it. Typical of his early style is the following:

"Caía la tarde; allá en la línea del horizonte, donde poco antes se fundían en armonioso desvanecido el azul turquí del cielo y el verdoso azul del mar, destacabase ahora vigorosamente ancha franja de luz, deslumbradora atmósfera de innumerables partículas de oro, en la que el sol se mecía lenta y majestuosamente antes de sumergirse en las rizadas aguas, que reflejaban temblando su imagen y que al haber ansiosas sus últimos rayos, adornaban las crestas de las olas con irisada diadema de cambiantes colores, de plateado y refulgentes escamas."

None but an artist could describe the coming of twilight as simply and as forcefully as in the following description. The impression is clearer than in the preceding one, and is more natural—although the adjectivation is

1. El poema del trabajo, p. 15 (1898)
more unusual:

"Es el crepúsculo tan sereno y tan placido que parece que el día se está durmiendo: los pinos del barranco negrean ya, y el mar, de azul que era, vase tornando violeta y gris; estábase quieto, con las aguas ligeramente murmuradoras, pero al hundirse el sol en ellas comienzan a agitarse y a espumarajear contra el acantilado."

Martínez Sierra as a rule describes landscapes at length, with numerous details, all of which, however, lead to the making of a single impression; as, in Tú eres la paz, some four pages are required to describe the grounds and house in which Ana María lives, in such a way as to give the impression of peace and quiet as a harmonious background for her character. These long descriptions would be tiresome were it not for the fact that Martínez Sierra is seldom concerned with the landscape for its own sake, but rather usually in connection with some human element. He is as effective, however, in his short descriptions, as the following one will show; it is a setting for the life of the old shepherd:

"Es la noche del último día del año. El bosque está cubierto de nieve, y sobre su blancura surgen los troncos negros de los árboles, como columnas de ébano; las copas desnudas cruzan su ramaje bajo el cielo, que está sereno.

Aparece la luna y pinta su luz pálida, sobre la nitidez del suelo, sombras azules. Todo es silencio y parece llegado el reino de la paz."

From the time of his first production until 1908, when he took up the drama, Martínez Sierra is essentially a poet, albeit in prose. His is the poet's soul nurtured with nature and emotion. His "poetry" is the spontaneous outburst from his soul which expresses itself in rhythm, music, and poetic imagery. Figures of speech, especially metaphor and simile, are found in profusion through the works of this period; nor are they lacking in his later novels. When Martínez Sierra speaks of "el alma, cadena armoniosa de arpegios sonantes", of "el Preludio que se elevó en los cielos lentamente, como nube de aroma, desprendida de áureo incensario, arroba las almas con la magia de sus mil notas"; of "las hojas que pálidas y lentas caen en silencio de los tristes árboles, ensueños de alma que el amor agotó y anhela triunfos"; and of "las estrellas, diamantes prendidos en estuche de terciopelo", one begins to understand the strength and flexibility of his imagination which sees such subtle likenesses. But let one search as one will, among all the poetic passages in Martínez Sierra's works, -- for there are many such --- one will not find a more nearly perfect bit of poetic inspiration than in the Preludio to Aventura:

1. Teatro de ensueño, Pastoral, p. 57.
"Hila tu rueca, araña, que hace sol, que es verano; hilos de seda blanca, hilos de luz, tejed vuestra mañana en la zarza; hila tu canción, fuente, hila tu canción, que el aire abrasa, que la tierra quema, que es verano; hila tu cristal, que es verano, arroyo que cantas, arroyo que corrés, arroyo que vas sobre el prado verde, bajo el cielo azul; hila tus trinos, ruiseñor, que es verano; deja la noche, deja la luna, deja la dulce canción melancólica, sé alondra, sé alondra; y tu alondra, refila tu cantar sobre los trigos bien tostados, sobre las amapolas, sobre el rojo pezón de las moras que tienen prisa por estar maduras.... ¡Hila tu rueca, araña; hila tu trino, alondra; arroyo, fuente, río, río, agua que corrés, hila tu canción!"

Another element of Martínez Sierra's style is his dramatic technique. In judging its value, the standard set up by Sir Arthur Pinero for playwrights may be used:

"Theatrical talent consists in the power of making your characters not only tell a story by means of dialogue, but tell it in such skillful form and order as shall, within the limits of an ordinary theatrical representation, give rise to the greatest possible amount of that peculiar kind of emotional effect, the production of which is the great function of the theater."

1. El diablo se ríe, Aventura, p.9; La vida inquieta, p.158.
After a period of apprentice ship with Santiago Rusiñol and Jacinto Benavente, Martínez Sierra has stated his theory of the purpose of the drama and the method of accomplishing it:

"La obra dramática es imagen de la vida: de emoción a emoción no hay más que palabras en escenas, sones que lleva el viento....Y cómo ha de conseguirse suscitar la emoción en el teatro? Como en la vida, sin que el público sepa ni cuando ni por qué ...El público no debe conocer los resortes que mueven a angustia o a gozo, a esperanza o a ira su corazón: sólo debe sentir el efecto; pero el autor ha de ser soberanamente consciente por sí y por aquellos cuyas almas va a tener pendientes de los labios; ha de saber como el estremecerse del amor, del dolor, de la dicha, aletean en palabras vulgares; cómo se desenvuelven en espirales de silencio; cómo en una frase ingeniosa puede ir la amargura grande, en una lágrima el grande gozo; cuál es la fresca sílaba que evoca toda una sensación de amanecer, y cuál el ritmo sereno y tibio que deslía en el aire, sin hablar del otoño, toda la tristeza otoñal; ha de saber todo esto, después de sentirlo hondamente, si es que quiere hacer pasar la vida bajo la frivola apariencia de una charla sen

The three main elements in the production of this emotion are action, characterization, and dialogue. In Martínez Sierra's plays there is generally little action, only a simple 

1. See supra, Chap, I, p. 24
2. La vida inquieta, pp. 102-103
plot of no marked originality, but sufficiently interesting, that is just a tool (except in his musical comedies which we can dismiss as they have no place in literature) which provides situations in which the leading character is portrayed, as in Canción de cuna, or an environment in which that character creates its own situations and reveals its own nature, as in Primavera en otoño. Plot is usually subordinated to characterization. Whatever of action there is illustrates the nature of the character.

Thus Martínez Sierra's plays are generally of characterization with action sufficient to prevent loss of interest and to create sympathy for his characters. His titles show that he is a dramatist of character: El ama de la casa, Mamá, Madame Pepita, La Tirana, Los pastores, La mujer del héroe, Margot, and in that line he has done his best work. It is well for the final judgment of his work that he has seen fit to develop his talent in characterization, for in the last analysis, the permanent value of a play rests upon that. Not only is the leading personage of the play well characterized, but so are all the others individual people with their own peculiarities, like Doña Marianita with her invariable "¡Ay, Señor, qué pena!" used on every occasion and Doña Barbarita, who considered herself an angel toward each of her three husbands and therefore a model wife. Each char-

1. See supra, Chap. III.
acter is a distinct personality not likely to be confused with another in the play.

One means of characterization of which Martínez Sierra avails himself with a considerable measure of success is dialogue which is habitually well characterized. This is seen in the following passage in which the novitiates are trying to gain permission for more diversión:

"Maestra

Alabado sea Dios. Como saberlo, no lo sé de cierto; pero me figuro que lo que desean es que, atendiendo a la festividad, la reverenda Madre les conceda un ratito de parleta. ¿Es eso?

Novicias

¡Sí, sí, sí!

Sor Marcela

¡Viva nuestra Madre Maestra!

Priora

¡Silencio, silencio! ¿Aún no tienen bastante con lo que esta mañana llevan hablado?

Vicaría

El apetito siempre pide más. Es corcel indómito, y ¡ay de quien le afloja las riendas! Si en mi mano estuviera, no daría ocasión a posibles deslices. El Apóstol Santiago dice bien: "¡Aquel que diga que por la lengua no delinquió, miente!"

Sor Marcela

¡Ay, Sor Crucifixión, no quite su reverencia la voluntad
a la Madre!

Vicaria

¿Servidora? ¡Qué vale mi opinión en esta casa!

Priora

¿Me prometen no ofender al Señor con murmuraciones ni palabras disipadas?

Novicias

Lo prometemos.

Priora

Siendo así, hablen cuanto gusten, hasta la hora de rezo.

Novicias

¡Gracias, gracias!

Nothing more quickly characterizes a figure than to let him speak in dialect. Martínez Sierra does this to a small degree in dealing generally with the life of the lower classes, as in La mujer del héroe, where it is always in keeping with the environment of the play. He might have used it more than he has; for instance, who would expect the puppet players in Saltimbanquis to speak Castillian? Dialect would be more natural, but the author might offer the plea that this play was not written for stage production but as closet drama, were it not for the fact that its later revision as a musical comedy is likewise in Castillian.

1. Canción de cuna, pp. 18-19.
Though the chief purpose of dialogue is to convey necessary information clearly, Martínez Sierra does not stop with that. He has given it a charm of its own, grace, vivacity, wit and swiftness. In regard to brilliancy, he is at least on a par with the other Spanish dramatists. The following selection from _El pobre cito Juan_ (1912), a humorous one-act comedy, illustrates his ability:

Antonio

Tiene usted un ceñoito de salirse siempre con lo que se propone.

Mariana

¿También adivino?

Antonio

Quien mucho quiera, ve de muy largo.

Mariana

Pero se dicen que el amor es ciego.......

Antonio

Eso era antes: ahora ya le han batido las cataratas.

Mariana

¡Pobrecillo! Para lo que va a ver en esta vida!

Antonio

Muchas cosas buenas, empezando por usted.

Mariana

¿Y acabando?

Antonio

Por usted también, después de dar la vuelta al mundo.
Mariana
¿La vuelta al mundo?
Antonio
¿Quiere usted que la demos del brazo?
Mariana
Mire usted que iba a ser muy mala compañera de viaje.
Antonio
¿Por qué?
Mariana
Porque le pido muchísimas cosas a la vida.
Antonio
Pídame las usted a mí y las tiene usted mucho más seguras.
Mariana
¿Todas?
Antonio
Todas.
Mariana
¿Y si están muy lejos?
Antonio
Se buscan,
Mariana
¿Y si ya no las hay?
Antonio
Se inventan.
Mariana
¿Y si hay que morirse para lograrlas?
Antonio

Se muere uno y después resucita. Puede usted estar segura de que yo no me marcho de este mundo mientras esté usted en él.

Mariana

¿Aunque me case yo con otro?

Antonio

¿Con Juan?

Mariana

No, con Juan no me caso... pero el hombre que se case conmigo se ha de hacer cuento de que Juan y yo somos la misma cosa. ¿Se ríe usted de Juan?

Antonio

No, señora.

Mariana

Porque le advierto a usted que delante de mí no hay quien le ofenda, y que donde yo vaya tendrá que ir él, y que si hay un pedazo de pan para mí, con él hay que partirlo, y que mi casa es suya, y que siempre que me necesite me tendrá a su lado.

Antonio

Y puede que se queje de su suerte.

Mariana

Puede. Y, además, que no hay que tener celos ni tonterías... ¡Juan es Juan!

While Martínez Sierra is excellent in dramatic technique, which is the saving grace of most of his plays and the crowning glory of his best, his reputation as a stylist depends rather upon the style of the period of his young manhood, in which it is most graceful, clear, and poetic.
Martínez Sierra began his literary career precociously as a figure of importance. With his doctrine of indefatigable work and the inspiration which he seemed to have, he bade fair at an early age, to be a great figure in Spanish letters. For the ideas which he set forth in *El poema del trabajo* are unusual thoughts for a young man to have. That he was of intellectual calibre was shown at once; although he was not at that time reasoning deeply. With him it seemed to be a sharp inner vision and perception of a number of truths, the nuclei of which were gained from wide reading but which he had made his own through experience and stamped with his own individuality. In *Diálogos fantásticos*, the same situation obtained; there was no appreciable advance. In *Flores de escarcha*, the intellectual quality seemed to be abandoned and introspection to have taken its place. From that time on, his importance as an intellectualist decreased and yielded to the sensitive quality in the man. Of mediocre rank are the three following short novels, but he retrieved himself in *Sol de la tarde*. A new quality entered his work; after a period of intellectualism, he became spiritual. The emotions of the human soul are the subjects of this book, as well as *La humilde verdad* and *Teatro de ensueño*. The spiritual quality in the portrayal of Dinko's grief, in *Por el sendero florido*, is its lasting merit. It does not appear
again until 1911, in Canción de cuna, and in 1913 in Los pastores, after which it disappears almost entirely. Its loss is a disappointment; its possession lent him a mystic atmosphere. This element it is that makes a beautiful story out of an insignificant plot, one which every one recognizes, appreciates, and bows before in witness of its worth, however pleasure-loving he may be. Why Martínez Sierra has discontinued it can only be conjectured. He may himself be becoming more materialistic and his own spirituality may be dimmed, thereby incapacitating him to continue in such production. Or, he may be catering to a public which wished to be amused. It seems clear that in his later plays he is accepting the dictates of his audience, lowering his own level to that of the stage, instead of trying to elevate the stage to his. He is a popular playwright: all his plays are applauded; his income is not be be despised. The latter seems the truer judgment, with the possibility of the former having a slight share in it.

Martínez Sierra is essentially an artist, an aim which he enunciated in his first work. It is a part of every work, though it has changed in its expression, it is still his aim and is seen in the finish applied to everything he has written. In his early work, it appeared especially in his use of nature, in his style, in the symmetry —embodied perfectly in Pastoral — and in the general good taste in treating of the emotions. In his plays, he accomplished
his aim through excelling in dialogue, characterization and action. This dramatic technique is the result of talent plus effort. He is a professional writer who has taken pains to win aesthetic approval.

Unfortunately, however, the finish that has won this approval is not sufficient to make him a great man in his art. He verged on greatness in his "prose poems" and in those works in which his idealism is most evident. In them he showed the thoroughness and the universality of his art: in them is seen the difference between art and consummate craft, because they produce within the reader some abiding emotion distinct from that revealed within the books themselves. But little of his later work invokes this emotion, perhaps because of the lack of an adequate idea, for an idea must be revealed through art to make it great.

Martínez Sierra succeeded too easily. He liked to write and wrote to reveal that which was urging expression in his soul. His pantheistic philosophy and insight into nature are not artificial but natural: they show close observation of nature as if he were impelled, through the pure joy of beholding it, to examine it with his poet's soul. His device of applying to nature certain words generally applicable only to human beings may possibly be artificial, but it seems not to be so. But his habit of mind is not philosophical: there is little richness of thought and little
reflection. His observation was for recollection, not for meditation. Parts of *La vida inquieta* are verbose with little thought behind them, written either for effect, to show his ability in natural description, or to show his own joy on beholding nature. His love for words is partly responsible for this failing.

His reputation was made on his early works. After Martínez Sierra had been writing for eight years, González Blanco deemed him worthy of extravagant praise. He considered him "un hombre cerebral". Since then, Martínez Sierra has taken the road of least resistance, intellectually at least. Success came without great and prolonged effort, and it spoiled him. It is human nature to be satisfied with what everyone else likes: genius, however, transcends vulgar approbation and hearkens to its own call. Yielding is a mark of degeneration. A failure would have been a blessing to him. Since 1911, Martínez Sierra has written nothing of the highest rank. Can it be that he has exhausted his inspiration?

This is not to belittle that in which Martínez Sierra deserves praise. His style excels because of clearness, polish and imagery. González Blanco considers him a colorist of the Andalucian school. He seems to be more nearly a follower of Santiago Rusiñol who in his painting and in one phase of his literary art is a colorist. He seeks to give an impression; as in *Tú eres la paz*, peace is the motif. There

1. See Chapter IV, p. 73
is no difficulty of style; it is easy to read and particularly graceful.

His novels are of value because in general they are based on a character or an idea, the requisites of a good novel. The incidents are of interest, not in themselves, but as details in the development of the character or the idea. Here, again, he is not a complete success, the measure varying according to the significance of the idea. From this estimate must be excluded the collection El diablo serie, which were written merely for diversion.

A defect is that he saw but imperfectly into human nature; otherwise he would not have rested content with depicting noble women only. True, not all of his women are noble, but none of his men are. Even the best characterized men have failed in some respect, for example, Santiago in Mamaná, Don José in La sombra del padre, and Don Enrique in Primavera en otoño. A possible exception is Don Antonio in Los pastores, in whom there is some nobility of character shown through sacrifice.

It is too soon to judge of Martinez Sierra's ultimate rank. Whether his later works will overshadow the abundant and real merit of his early period cannot be foretold, nor can one ascertain whether any of his works will live. Canción de cuna and Teatro de ensueño bid fair, however, to live because of their universality of appeal.
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edition ...... Madrid, 1911
Teatro de ensueño, third edition, Madrid, 1911
La sombra del padre, comedia en dos
actos ...... Madrid, 1911
El ama de la casa, comedia en dos
actos ...... Madrid, 1911

1. This list contains in chronological order those
of Martínez Sierra's works which I have been able to
see. The titles of the remaining are as follows.
They are for the most part unimportant:
Hamlet y el cuerpo de Sarah Bernhardt, poema en
prosa, 1905.
La tristeza del Quijote, ensayo, 1905.
Motivos, crítica lírica, 1906.
La feria de Neuilly — Sensaciones frivolas de
París, 1907.
Aldea ilusoria, cuentos, 1907.
El peregrino ilusionado, viaje sentimental, 1908.
Vida y dulzura, comedia en tres actos (en colabo-
ración con Santiago Rusiñol), 1908.
Pasión lunática, novelas cortas, 1911.
Granada, Guía emocional, 1911.
La familia real, comedia lírica en dos actos y
cuatro cuadros, 1911.
La adúltera penitente, — Date (?) .
Hechizo de amor, comedia de fantoches, en un acto y dos cuadros ..... Madrid, 1911
Primavera en otoño, comedia en tres actos
La casa de la primavera, poesías ..... Madrid, 1911
Madame Pepita, comedia en tres actos, ..... Madrid, 1912
Mamá, comedia en tres actos ..... Madrid, 1912
El enamorado, paso de comedia ..... Madrid, 1912
Solo para mujeres, conferencia contra el amor, pronunciada por una de sus víctimas ..... Madrid, 1913
La vida inquieta, glosario espiritual ..... Madrid, 1913
Los pastores, comedia en dos actos ..... Madrid, 1913
Juventud, divino tesoro, comedia en dos actos, ..... Madrid, 1913
Madrigal, comedia en dos actos ..... Madrid, 1913
El palacio triste, cuento fantástico ..... Madrid, 1914
Lirio entre espinas, comedia en un acto ..... Madrid, 1914
El ideal, comedia en un acto ..... Madrid, 1914
La suerte de Isabelita, comedia lirida ..... Madrid, 1914
El pobrecito Juan, comedia en un acto, .... Madrid, 1914.
(El enamorado, paso de comedia .... Madrid, 1914)
Las golondrinas, drama lírico en tres actos .... Madrid, 1914
La pasión, comedia en dos actos .... Madrid, 1914
La mujer del héroe, sainete en dos actos .... Madrid, 1914
La Tirana, comedia lírica en dos actos .... Madrid, 1914
Margot, comedia lírica en dos actos .... Madrid, 1914
Amanecer, comedia en tres actos, .... Madrid, 1915
(Las golondrinas, drama lírico en tres actos .... Madrid, 1915)
El reino de Dios, elegía en tres actos .... Madrid, 1916
El diablo se ríe, novelas .... Madrid, 1916
Abril melancólico, novelas, .... Madrid, 1916
Sol de la tarde, novelas, third edition .... Madrid, 1916
Cartas a las mujeres de España .... Madrid, 1916
Navidad, milagro en tres cuadros .... Madrid, 1916
Feminismo, feminidad, españolismo .... Madrid, 1917
Esperanza nuestra, comedia en tres actos .... Madrid, 1917
Tú eres la paz, novela, fourth edition .... Madrid, 1917
La humilde verdad, novela, third edition .... Madrid, 1917
Para hacerse amar locamente, comedia en tres actos .... Madrid, 1917
Sueño de una noche de agosto, novela cómica en tres partes .... Madrid, 1918
Canción de cuna, comedia en dos actos, sixth edition .... Madrid, 1918
Primavera en otoño, comedia en tres actos, ...Madrid, 1919
Lirio entre espinas, comedia en un acto ...Madrid, 1919

II. Critical Material Examined:
González Blanco, Andrés, Los contemporáneos, apuntes para una historia de la literatura hispanoamericana a principios del siglo XX, Paris, 1906.
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