SOCIAL PHASES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
AS PORTRAYED IN THE WORKS OF
DON JUAN RUIZ DE ALARCÓN Y MENDOZA

by

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Juan Ruiz de Alarcón was among the first dramatists to point a moral in his comedies, and the first who intentionally held this to be the primary object in the majority of his plays. In order to present his moral, it was necessary to hold a mirror before his contemporaries, with the natural result that his comedies are *cuadros de costumbres*. Upon these two obvious points his critics are agreed, though none has shown the extent to which he satirized or extolled the existing vices and virtues of this period. Such a detailed investigation is the object of this study, in the pursual of which I wish to acknowledge with gratitude and appreciation the encouragement and ever-ready assistance of Professor Arthur L. Owen.
Introduction

In the "century of the muses" in about the year 1591 was born a little hunchback destined to become later a great dramatic poet claimed by two countries—Mexico and Spain—and a competitor of the fabulous Lope de Vega. A Mexican by right of birth, but a Spaniard through lineage, he yet was without honor in the land of his nativity, and but a scant portion was his in the land of his ancestors. Though descended from an illustrious family numbering among its members warriors and conquerors, chieftains and viceroys, (1) it was not until he was thirty-six years of age that he proudly and defiantly signed his name in full with the "don" affixed, Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza.

In an age when the sensibility of humor was undeveloped and cruelty was cause for laughter; when its ethics were personal and cleverly keen and men sharpened their wits in envy and malice upon the discomforture of their rivals, Alarcón was cursed with a hideous deformity. He was a hunchback with protuberences in front and back, causing a contemporary to remark that when seen from a distance,

"one did not know whether he was going or coming".

(1) Aside from the fact that his brother dramatists held his bodily defects up to ridicule, Alarcón's handicap was greater from other angles than it would be today, for his was the age when fashion and vanity reached their culmination. Men bedecked their manly beauty in velvet and silk, lace and ruffs; a good appearance was an invaluable asset in the social life in Spain to which he aspired in vain, and almost a necessity in the political life of which he became a mean part after years of disheartening delay. He was well equipped in other ways for a government charge, and so never lost hope:

El espirar es pensar
que puede al fin suceder
aquello que se desea:
y, quien hace porque sea,
bien piensa que puede ser. (2)

He studied law at the University of Mexico in Mexico City, and in 1600, at the age of nineteen, he went to Spain. After spending two months in Seville, he entered the University of Salamanca, where five years later he received the degree of Bachelor of Canon Law. Though his father was administrator of mines at Tacoo, Mexico, and probably well-to-do,


(2) Las paradas cane, I, 3.
it seems that Alarcón depended in great part during
this time upon a fund allowed students by a relative,
Gaspar Ruiz de Montoya. For a year or less, he
practiced law without official title in Seville, re-
turning to Mexico in 1603. The following year he
completed the work for a Doctor's degree at the Uni-
versity of Mexico which, because of the elaborate
ceremony and much expense attached, he was unable to
take. He was disappointed in securing either a
chair in the University or a position under the govern-
ment, and so, in 1613, he returned to Spain, there to
begin his long and pathetic struggle for a political
post. His reason for returning is expressed in Todo
es ventura, I, 8:

Tres veces de Nueva España
pise los preñados montes
cuyos partos enriquecen
de plata los españoles;
y nunca de sus tesores
vi que una parte me toques;
que también van a las Indias
las desdichas con los hombres.
Con esto determiné
mudar de mi vida el orden
que en largas enfermedades
se han de mudar las regiones.
A Madrid vine buscando
la fortuna...

According to his testimony, his comedies were written
through the urge of necessity—that sixth sense of
man—(1) and this is substantiated in part by the

(1) Hartzeneusoh: Comedias de Don Juan Ruiz de Alar-
cón y Mendoza, Bib. de aut. esp., Madrid 1857, v. 30,
p. XIV.
fact that as soon as he received the small and insignificant, though responsible office of Prolocutor in the Council for the Indies in 1626, he abandoned his literary life. His biographer, Luis Fernández-Guerra, assumes, and very probably correctly, that the cause was a different one: he was one of the few who took his work seriously, and because of this and his humbleness due to his deformity, and the laziness of others, the work was heaped upon him. His great power of genius flowed out in innumerable menial tasks and endless details involved in government routine and in being head and hands of the Señores consejeros. Thus his time, health, and even his life were sacrificed. \(1\) He did not write quickly and carelessly as Lope did, but his work for the most part is marked by its beauty of versification, style, and language. He is exact, concise, and clear. The reader can comprehend his ideas and plots easily; hardly a scene could be suppressed in a play without impairing its movement and sense. Although Fernández-Guerra supposes that his first comedy, El semejante a sí mismo, was played on board ship as Alarcon went from Cádiz to Vera Cruz in 1608,

\(1\) Fernández-Guerra, \textit{op. cit.} pp. 455-436.
and Hartzenbusch dates its composition as early as 1601, and other critics place the date of its showing as late as 1613, his period of production would still be long when considering that his total output—including some doubtful ones—is twenty-six comedies.

In his student life he showed this same tendency, being quoted as a "deep student always carrying a book around". (2) The work of his contemporaries interested and greatly influenced him, as well as that of the Latin poets, Plautus and Terence. Contrary to the opinion of various of his critics who say that Alarcón never copied or plagiarized in the least, the writer found his most famous comedy, La verdad sospechosa, to be based in large part, though soaring far above it in merit and originality, upon Terence's Andrian, in which plays certain scenes and passages are parallel, and where the outline of the general plot is the same.

It would be hard to conceive the writer of the Alarconian comedies to have been solely a bookworm. The record of the part he played when twenty-three years old, in 1808, at the Fiesta de Alfarache, even without

(1) L. Fernández-Guerra, op. cit. p. 173.
(2) Idem, p. 32.
his picture of student life in *La cueva de Salamanca*, is sufficient evidence that he was full of fun and mischief. Here he took part in a tournament dressed in a fantastic costume and riding a pasteboard horse, and here was read his first poem, entitled "Consolead a Lady Who is Sad Because Her Hands Perspire a Great Deal", showing the beginning of his cultured style, but more clearly his humor. Cervantes was the secretary at this *Fiesta*, reading aloud the different poems submitted by the contestants.

Alarcón's formal education through which he was aided in perfecting his technique has been outlined. His real education was acquired by means of his powers of observation, his travels, his companions, his walks, and social life in Madrid and Seville, and his experiences as a lawyer in which he had daily opportunity for observing and registering. He learned to know the human heart, and the many and diverse interests which moved the people of Spain among the rich and the poor, in public and in private life, among the criminal and the sordid.

Nor was this all: there is a story that Cervantes was his companion during his stay in Seville; for a while he enjoyed the friendship, and always the influence of Lope de Vega; Tirso
de Molina was occasionally his collaborator. Says L. Fernández-Guerra: Alarcón was the first of Spanish dramatists to conceive the development of a comedy of characters; the first to cause the public to descend from the ideal and conventional world of Lope to a usual and everyday one, and at the same time to preach his doctrine of practicability and excellent philosophy. He aspired constantly to realise in his works a moral and wholesome teaching. Cervantes is given the credit for planting the seed of this later development in Alarcón's mind and works...In his Quijote he presents models of good customs, of sound morals, of nobility and chivalry, bare of exaggerations and extravagancies such as are contained in the books of chivalry. He was a healthy and efficacious medicine for the Spanish people. He indicated in El ingenioso hidalgo the direction which good comedies should follow: in substance, that they should be well ordered in teaching by presenting truth and ridiculing the ridiculous and false, admirable in their events, discreet in their reasoning, sagacious in their examples, in arms against all vice and in love with virtue. It is only natural that Alarcón should have been imbued with the doctrine of his great master, which he after-
wards put into practice to his everlasting glory. (1)

Lope and Alarcón soon ceased to be friendly. The court was teeming with aspirants to the rewards of letters; every function of church and state was celebrated by the reading of poetry. Góngora, Quevedo, Moreto, Rojas Zorrilla, Viélez de Guevara, Capellán, Villamediana, the young Calderón, Tirso, Lope and Alarcón were the leaders in all this flattering and parasitical group. All were seeking social position, fame, and a means of income by currying the favor and patronage of the powerful. It was but inevitable that they should have carried on a jealous and cruel warfare. And it is small wonder, too, that a poet from a foreign land, timid and misshapen, should have failed to be estimated at his proper value by this selfish coterie from whose magic circle even Cervantes was excluded. Lope, the idol of Spain, nearing the end of his comet-like glory and much-lauded career, scorned and satirized in envy any poet who infringed upon his domain. It was the custom of the hour for literary men to allude to each other insultingly in their works, and thus it is that Alarcón’s comedies contain many answers and challenges to his enemies. In a drama of Lope’s

(1) L. Fernández-Guerra: op. cit. p. 46.
Los españoles en Flándes, the insults became unbearably crude and ugly. Alarcón was compared to a frog in figure and nature and his deformity and stature depreciated in most odious terms. To this he did not reply until one of Lope's satellites, following his example, wrote a play called Ecos corcovados, which was offensive in its very title, and in which Alarcón was affronted in various terms and compared to a monster with many arms and one head. Alarcón, moderate and forbearing though he was, answered in the last act of Los pechos privilegiados, which he had finished up to that point, through Cuaresmo, in blind fury (1):

¡Aquí de Dios! ¡En qué engaña quien desengaño con tiempo? 
Culpa a un bravo bigotudo, rostriamargo y hombrituerto que en sacando la de Juanes, toma las de Villadiego; 
culpa a un viejo avellanado tan verde, que al mismo tiempo que está aforrado de martas anda haciendo Madalenos; 

(2)

Thus Alarcón ridicules the licentious Lope in his "green old age", who at the same time that he is be-

(1) L. Fernandez-Guerra, op. cit. pp. 325-330.
(2) Los pechos privilegiados. III, 3.
coming a "Magdaline" through his tardy priesthood is still chasing "Martas" like any callow youth; and thus he scores him for complaining of being envied when he has spent his life in envy of others. Alarcon continues, replying to the remarks against his personal appearance with this majestic speech upon the law of compensation:

Culpa a aquél qué, de su alma
olvidando los defectos
graceja con apoder
los que otro tiene en el cuerpo;
Dios no lo da todo a uno;
que piadoso y justiciero,
con divina providencia
dispone el repartimiento;
al que le plugo de dar
mal cuerpo, dió sufrimiento
para llevar cueradamente
los apodos de los necios;
al que le dió cuerpo grande
le dió corto entendimiento;
hace malquisto el dichoso,
hace al rico majadero.
Provida naturaleza,
mués congela en el viento,
y repartiendo sus lluvias,
rieja el árbol más pequeño.
No en solo un oriente nace
el sol; que en giros diversos
su luz comunica a todos;

Sólo ingenio me dio a mi, etc. (1)

It cannot be doubted that the spur of such insults caused Alarcon to write some of his best plays,—his noblest and most usual answer to his detractors: Las pareden even was his reply to his slanderers; La

(1) Ibidem.
verdad sospechosa was his expression of revenge together with his purpose to condemn lying (1); El examen de marido followed the grievous attack upon him after his collaboration with several poets in writing a eulogy on the celebration in honor of the supposed engagement of the Prince of Wales to the Infanta María, in which he shows men’s capacity for nobility even though in keenest competition with others. Las parades even is autobiographical; the hero, Don Juan de Mendoza, is small of stature and ugly, but he wins the charming widow, Doña Ana, because of his good qualities, from her handsome but evil-tongued lover. (II, 5) For, seeing his beauty of character, Doña Ana declares no Narcissus can equal him:

¿Es lo que en un hombre vale
el buen trato y condición?
--tanto, que ya en mi opinión
no hay Narciso que le iguale. (III, 13)

Because Alarcón held to a rigid and honorable policy in his writings with regard to his love affairs, the knowledge of posterity must be gleaned from general ideas and references in his works. That he loved women and that they exercised a beneficent influence upon his life and work is particularly

(1) L. Fernández-Guerra, op. cit. pp. 305-306.
evident in Las parejas ovén, La industria y la suerte, Ganar amigos, Los favores del mundo, El examen de marido. It is also true that his plays found favor in their eyes. However, in El semejante a sí mismo, his attitude regarding marriage appears to be as follows:

¿De ahí comienza la maraña?
Amor y mala ventura
en todas partes se hallan;
mas yo agora vivo libre
de que doy a Dios mil gracias. (1)

and also in Los favores del mundo, I, 7, as elsewhere,

¿Es casado?
--no, sino hombre muy discreto.

At any rate, he did not marry, though he had a natural daughter, Lorenza de Alarcón.

In Las parejas ovén, and in other plays, he defends his use of "don", for which he had been ridiculed mercilessly, one poet, Quevedo, saying, "the D is not don but his half picture".(2)

...Si a murmurar te dispone
de los pegadíos dones
la regla que has de tener:
si fuera en mi tan reciente
la nobleza como el don,
diera a tu murmuación
causa y razón suficiente;
pues si sangre heredes
don que presumes y blasone

(1) El semejante a sí mismo, I, 2.
(2) Reyes: on. cit., pp. 21-22.
His ostracism from the social circles he wished to enter and the slight put upon him bit deep into Alarcón's soul; he learned that education, genius, and birth were not sufficient for success, but that the favoritism of a powerful patron and money were needed. References honeycomb his plays showing his reaction to these bitter truths. He knew regarding his poverty that

Siendo pobre, hasta la luna ha de andar por los rincones,

and as well that without public favor every qualification was valueless,

...si las voluntades no mueve la inclinación de poca importancia son provechosas cualidades,

and that favoritism was the key to all things,

Pues si a dueno que no importe entrar a servir quieras ¿qué poderoso señor para ello se ha de ayudar, si en Madrid se ha de alcanzar hasta el servir por favor?

Yet in spite of all this extraneous matter

(1) 
La prueba de las promesas, II.

(2) 
La industria y la suerte, II, 10.

(3) 
Las pochós privilegiados, I, 3.

(4) 
Toda es ventura, I, 6.
of the moment and of the author's expression of the injustice of man and fate, his plays are so skilfully knit, each speech has so legitimate a place in unfolding the plot and developing character—though so vitally charged with double meaning—that a modern reader, who must perforce miss the greater part of this side issue, does not feel the least digression or loss of force.

Alarcon's moral purpose was not understood nor appreciated by his contemporaries. His desire was not primarily to please and entertain the public, but to present his lofty ideal and inspire men to nobler living in an age when licentiousness, wild extravagance, slander and bad government were conspicuous among the many social evils. He was almost alone on an uncharted sea in this undertaking, a bold, proud captain holding fast to the helm of his love for all good things. He did not inspire by presenting the evil side alone. The beauties of friendship, loyalty, christian faith, womanly virtue, and kingly nobility are mirrored faithfully.

A glance at the social background, the history of material and moral Madrid during the period is but verification of Alarcon's picture: "In the streets, and especially in the portion
of the Calle Mayor, near the Church of St. Philip and the Puerta del Sol, the idlers of the capital, which meant the greater part of the population, loved to promenade for hours every day, preferably in coaches... This objectless promenading and gossiping was so characteristic that a special verb was coined to describe it, namely, to ruar. Everybody pretended to be wealthier, more highly placed, and better dressed than he really was; and though sumptuary pragmatics and decrees, announced by heralds in the Calle Mayor, constantly threatened transgressors with all sorts of pains and penalties, the people, especially the women, continued to defy the law in their dress and behavior. The insolent dames would wear outrageous garments; flattened farthingales so immensely wide as to be indecent, starched ruffs, pattens so high with jingling heels as to be like musical stilts, and would still insist upon covering their faces, all but one eye, the more to pique curiosity and indulge with impunity their not too delicate bandiage". (1)

Madrid drew to itself by the attraction of its court immense numbers of foreigners, and

all the available wealth in the country. There alone could the Spanish love of ostentation be indulged; there alone could bravery of dress and demenour find the attention and emulation it always seeks; there alone could advancement in any unlaborious career be found, for where all the patronage, wealth, and taste were, there also must be those who sought patronage or provided things that taste and wealth alone could buy, and so the Court—"la corte"—as Madrid was always called, shone brightly, like the last phosphorescent spot in a decaying body, and attracted by its brilliancy when all the rest of Spain was dark. (1)

Philip IV, loose of morals and careless of government, as was his father, could inspire but one desire in the soul of Alarcón—an ardent one for a real ruler. There is hardly one of his plays which does not either portray the nobility of a king or his baseness and incompetence. That his La verdad sospechosa was faithful to truth and was opportune is seen in the fact that a prominent walk in Madrid bore the name of "Liars' Walk". Philip IV enjoyed the society of painters and artists of all kinds. He and his French wife were

devoted to the theatre and literary diversions, and attended the new plays written for their approval regularly at the royal stage in the palace. Many of the king's mistresses were actresses, whose charms he had first appraised upon the boards. It is not to be supposed that Alarcón missed this weakness of monarchs in his portrayal of them; he avidly seized upon everything he saw, later to produce from its inspiration a plot, a reproduction of either its beauty of defects, a thought, a philosophy, or a moral.

Of eighteen of his comedies which are set in Spain, ten are cuadros de costumbres of contemporary life, either in Madrid or Seville. The latter, which he knew as well as he did Madrid, he pictured to be largely given over to sordid, moneyed merchants and favoritism, without regard for true nobility or birth in La industria y la suerte. His other comedies are also scenes in Spain, and though the period they are supposed to represent is sometimes as remote as the ninth century, Alarcón is guilty of committing many historical anachronisms, as are the other dramatists of his day. For the
picture he presents always, be his hero called a Greek or Roman, is of a Spaniard, and a Spaniard in King Philip’s court in the seventeenth century.

So clearly are contemporary events followed by Alarcón in his compositions, that a close student of the history of that period can arrange his comedies in almost chronological order. This Hartzenbusch has done, putting the date of La industria y la suerte as early as 1601. But, he argues, this could not have been his first; more inexperience, more mischief, more licentiousness and disorder are noted in El desdichado en fingir, La cueva de Salamanca, La culpa busca la pena. El Semajante a si mismo was written in about 1616 in the reign of Philip III, he learns from references to historical matters. (1) Supposedly because of the wide popularity of Lope’s dramas, the publishers preferred to include deliberately three of Alarcón’s best plays in volumes containing that poet’s comedies, one, La verdad sospechosa in 1630, another, El examen de maridos in 1632, and the last, Ganar amigos in 1632 and 1633. However this may have been, other poets also claimed or

(1) Hartzenbusch: op.cit., p. IX.
were given credit for several of Alarcón's comedies: Siempre ayuda la verdad was printed in a volume of Tirso's; La culpa busca la pena appeared in a volume of collected works under the name of Juan Isidro Fajardo. A number of his other plays from time to time for two centuries appeared in collections of other dramatists. For reasons best known to himself, Alarcón did not include the following of his plays in either of his editions:

Quien enseña más a quien

No hay mal que por bien no venga

La culpa busca la pena y el agravio la venganza

Quien mal anda en mal acaba

Siempre ayuda la verdad

Las hazañas del Marqués de Cañete

This last was written by nine poets in collaboration, numbering among them Alarcón. The two editions of his works which Alarcón published after retiring from literary life, with prefases expressing his feelings regarding the worth of his comedies and his opinion of the public, appeared in 1633 and 1634 respectively.

The Primera parte lists:

Los favores del mundo

La industria y la suerte
Las paredes oyen
El semejante a sí mismo
La cueva de Salamanca
Mudarse por mejorar
Todo es ventura
El desdichado en fincir

and the Parte segunda:

Los empeños de un engaño
El dueño de las estrellas
La amistad castigada
La manganilla de Melilla
Canar amigos
La verdad escarcelosa
El Anticristo
El tejedor de Segovia
Los hechos privilegiados
La prueba de las promesas
La crueldad por el honor
El examen de maridos

Hartzenbusch prints all the comedies, including the first part of El tejedor de Segovia, not Alarcón’s, which number twenty-seven. This is the first and only complete collection of Alarcón’s known works.

Though in the nineteenth century tardy but full recognition of his genius has been accorded
Alarcon, ranking him as one of the four great dramatists of the seventeenth century, in his own time he met with difficulties in presenting his plays. In a part of the prologue to his Parte segunda he addresses the public as a "bestia fiera", saying of his comedies, "No te arrojes fácil a condenar las que te lo parecieron; adúrte que han pasado por los bancos de Flandes, que para las comedias lo son los del teatro de Madrid". (1)

Though he was not given his proper place by his contemporaries and was completely overshadowed, his merit did not go unrecognized entirely at court. For mention is made of the red billboards advertising his plays, and his dramas were played in the royal theater before the king. Some of his productions, as for example El tejedor de Segovia, were instantly popular. (2) It is but natural that his twenty-five or so comedies should not have made for great popularity—when he did not write them primarily to entertain—beside the 1500 of Lope's, the 300 of Tirso's, and a large number of the 400 Calderon was to produce. He is accorded mild favorable mention by a few contemporaries, Lope

(1) Hartzenbusch: op. cit., p. XLVIII.
(2) L. Fernández-Guerra: op. cit., p. 355.
himself in his Laurel de Apolo, devoting the whole of six short lines of doubtful praise to him. It will also be remembered that he was sufficiently prominent to be asked to commemorate in verse the festivities in honor of the Prince of Wales.

His modern critics are many, and all agree as one with Alberto Lista in that none shall deny him nor dispute with him the palm of the originator of the moral comedy. (1) Menendez y Pelayo gives him credit for opening a not very wide but a deep furrow as a moralist poet, with the moral of caballeroes, the only one which the public of his time would have suffered in the theatre. He further believes that his figure will remain forever where Hartzenbusch put it, in the temple of Menander and Terencio preceding Corneille and announcing Moliere. (2) Hartzenbusch also credits him with being the first dramatist consciously to write with a moral purpose as his object and concentrating his best efforts to it, saying that the moral comedy

(2) Menendez y Pelayo: Historia de la poesía hispano americano, Madrid, 1911, pp. 63-64.
which seeks to inculcate in the spirit of the spectators a wholesome and useful maxim, now by means of the representation of a principal character, and now by the combined action of all the figures comprehended in the tale, on very rare occasions appeared on the Spanish stage, where moralizing was done more by chance than by intention. (1) Fitzmaurice Kelly adds the weight of his opinion: "His first titles to glory are his skill in creating characters and his elevated moral objective...merits rare in his time". (2) And so the Conde de Shack, "the nobility of a great soul and the sublimity of thought are impressed in all his poetry; he paints with predilection whatever elevates and makes man sublime". (3) Luis Fernández-Guerra, perhaps his most thorough critic says, "Alarcón was two centuries in advance of his contemporaries in his art of developing the true comedy of characters, with a doctrine and a fecund teaching; and thus he was also the precursor of the modern romantic drama. He influenced Moliere and no doubt Schiller". (4)

(1) Hartzenbusch: op. cit., p. XIII.

(2) Fitzmaurice Kelly, Historia de la literatura española, Paris 1904, p. 438.


(4) L. Fernández-Guerra: op. cit. p. 355.
It would be difficult to find a critic who did not agree upon this point, though none has made a detailed study showing the extent of the poet's moral treatment of life in its different sociological aspects.

That during the century after he died Alarcón's works practically died with him in Spain is a fact none of his critics point to with pride. And it is a still deeper cause for shame that Alarcón's greatest drama should have become popular and famous through a very inferior imitation of Corneille in France called the Menteur, and an imitation of the imitation in Italy by Goldoni called El mentiroso.

But such is the case, and thanks to the honest Frenchman who gave credit where it was due, La verdad sospechosa meets with applause in the twentieth century on the stage in Spain, and has been, with others of Alarcón's plays, translated into French, Italian, and German, since like the Quijote, it belongs to all ages and all nations.
Chapter I

Society—the Type.

The King

...Las leyes
en las manos de los reyes
que las hacen, son de cera;
y puede un rey que intenta.
Que valga por ley su gusto... (1)

Four distinct types of characters are presented by dramatic poets of the Golden Age: the king, surrounded by the conventional and artificial atmosphere of servility and flattery; the gallant swearing eternal fealty to his monarch, raving with jealousy because of his lady love, or seeking vengeance for an affront to his honor; the lady, guarded by brother of father, yet managing somehow by the aid of the cunningest of plots and circumventions, disguises and confidential best friend, to evade all the locks and keys and male relatives and enjoy a bit of moonlight and love—causing perhaps a duel or two; the servant, sometimes buffoon, usually companion and friend, and always humorous and running over with philosophical advice.

Such are the general outlines of the characters who play the various roles on Alarcón's stage,

(1) Los pechos privilegiados, 11, 13
yet his presentation of them is not always conventional. Contrary to those of his contemporaries, his men and women step out of the realm of fantasy, impossibilities and stereotyped puppets and become living, realistically drawn human beings. Occasionally they become even more: Don García of *La verdad sospechosa* is not only a young man belonging in Spain in the seventeenth century, but is a well known individual today in any nation.

In addition to these characters an occasional viejo grave in the person of a father appears, and twice a mother is mentioned incidentally. Never a priest.

Alarcón was intent upon social, moral, and political reform; through the noble or base example of his characters and the results of their actions for good or for evil he attempted to inspire and elevate and teach. For this reason the personages in his comedies are drawn near the likeness of those high and low in the political and social life of the court. With this addition of a high moral purpose, he is more than a poet of characters and customs.

Nowhere does the author show more deeply his feelings towards the trend of public affairs and the necessity for reform than in his delineat-
tion of the character of the king.

Philip III, and Philip IV, though themselves more weak than wicked, caused Spain to be cursed with the "wickedest and gayest court since the time of Heliogabalus". (1) Histories reek with the adventures of Madrid's young men; of the buscona who paraded the street and of more virtuous but indiscreet young women who rode around in coaches with veiled faces; vocabularies are exhausted in describing the magnificence of festivals and entertainments both public and private; and worse than all, in order better to indulge in the pursuits of pleasure,—be it prayer, the chase, the bull-ring, the theater, or his mistress,—the king gave over almost entirely the management of government affairs to favorites. The vicious effects of this régime are thus traced by Cejador: ... the Spaniarda heretofore somewhat wont to be servile to great kings, are now entirely subject to favorites, small in spirit if great in ambitions and pretensions; the Spanish spirit is becoming softened; valor is losing its steel; adventurous life and traversing the globe are changed for a courtier's life in palaces and gardens; warfare is forgotten and in its place are hours and days of feasting, discourses and processions...

(1) Hume: op. cit. p. 47.
The favorite adlacles the people, gilding their chains of slavery. In this way disappears the natural in politics and life, its place being taken by the artificial and the urbane. (1)

In ten of Alarcón's comedies appears the character of prince or king. The outstanding qualities which he emphasizes are the ruler's licentiousness and the willing ear which he lends to an unscrupulous and flattering favorite, together with the instability of the favorite's position. Thus readily might Philip or his favorites, Lerma or the Count-duke of Olivares, have seen themselves neatly mirrored. The poet tenses down the ugly picture somewhat in Los favoritos del mundo where the king is of a nobler mould, patterned on Henry IV, 1449, (2) and by frequent references throughout his works to kingly justice and prudence.

In Los pechos privilegiados the author expresses a lofty ideal of what a king should be, but his portrayal of him as he really was corresponds to the cold daylight picture of history. The king, about to enter into a royal marriage, is madly in-

(1) Cojador: Epoca de Filipe III, pp. 40-41

(2) Hartzenbusch: op. cit., pp. 509-510.
fatuated with Elvira, one of two sisters. He wishes Rodrigo, his favorite, who loves the other sister, to act as go-between and bring about the consumation of his dishonorable purpose. Rodrigo, placing no value upon his position as favorite on such terms, declares,

Si yo no le he merecido
por mi sangre y mi valor,
muy caro daís el favor,...
a precio de honor vendido;
que ése es modo con que suele
levantarse a la privanza
del Rey, sólo quien no alcanza
otras alas con que vuele;
Mas no quien pudo llegar
por sus partes a subir,
y merece con servir,
y no con lisonjear.

Rodrigo's soliloquy which follows expresses still more forcibly Alarcón's sentiments:

¿Esto es servir? ¿Estos son
los premios de la fineza,
los fines de la grandeza,
los frutos de la ambición?
¿De modo que la razón
no ha de ser ley, sino el gusto
y cuando el Rey no es justo
quien conserva su privanza
viene a dar cierta probanza
¿de que también es injusto?

The king's new favorite, Ramiro, is eager and ready to urge him forward in his desires; the two break into Elvira's room at night, only to be routed by her protests and an eavesdropping father

(1) Los pechos privilegiados. III, 1.
(2) Ibidem.
and brother. Frenzied by his passion and the evil counsel of his favorite, the king is unable to give up his mad pursuit of Elvira whom he next attempts to steal from her family. At length, rather than see a rival claim her, he becomes her husband.

The moral teaching of self control is clear throughout--learned by the king through the respect, high dignity, and honor of his subject who brings to him the realization that

Al fin es forzosa ley,  
por conservar la opinión,  
vencer de su corazón  
los sentimientos el Rey. (1)

Unhappy was the virtuous young woman whom the king chanced to fancy and who became the object of his desire. And how much more unfortunate she, if, as in El desdichado en fingir, she herself loved another. Fearing to incur the prince's wrath, Ardena instructs her lover to pose as a long absent brother, when they can be secretly married and live in safety. The scheme miscarries with many attendant troubles for the pair, not the least of which are the appearance of an extra feigned brother upon the heels of whom follows the real brother. No method is beyond the king's power or jealous cruelty. Through the advice of his favorite he orders the murder of the lady's supposed brother whose

(1) Los pechos privilegiados, III, 4.
presence protects her from the king's importunities(1).

This unlimited power of kings, and their belief that what they did could not be wrong was a faith that dominated Spain during the greater part of the sixteenth century. If Philip II ordered murder to be committed, or the Emperor seized private or ecclesiastical property for his own purposes; if hundreds of inconvenient political persons were consigned to a living tomb in the galleys or dungeons of the Inquisition, we may be assured, says Hume(2), that no qualms of conscience were felt in consequence by the first two sovereigns of the House of Austria.

This spirit of absolutism had not entirely died out in the reigns of their successors. Alarcón further portrays it in Canar amigos wherein we see the king command his favorite to bring about the death of a certain Don Pedro who has loved a lady of the court well but not too wisely(3); in Los pechos privilegiados where the spectacle of a king attacking a faithful subject in a fit of jealous rage is presented, and in which comedy the central theme is this sovereign's obsession regarding the divine right of gratification, expressed tersely in scene 13, act II:

(1) See also La amistad castigada, III, 1, and El dueño de las estrellas, III, 26, 27, 28, 29.
(2) Hume, op. cit., p. 15.
(3) Canar amigos, II, 2.
En los reyes
la palabra es ley...
y que puede un rey...
hacer lícito lo injusto
y hacer honrosa la afrenta  (1)
in quien enseña más a quien, which is a repetition of
El desdichado en fingir; and in Siempre guía la verdad,
a comedy in which the king's vengeance miscarries and
poetic poetic justice triumphs when a horrible murder
at his hands happily befalls the guilty instead of the
innocent person.

Though history confirms the fact that the
kings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with
or without the sustaining power of the divine right,
abused their power, it also shows them to be not with-
out kindness of heart. Thus Alarcón, in his picture of
the king who would order a subject to be assassinated
for displeasing him, also endows him with the quality
of magnanimity—when under the right influence; Ganar
amigos ends in a perfect welter of noble and generous
acts for friendship's sake, not the least of which is
the king's pardon of four criminals (2). And though
prudence was not a striking quality of these kings, it
manifested itself at times (3).

(1) Ganar amigos, II, 13. See also los pechos privile-
giados, II, 3; Pues lo que manda el Rey nunca es injusto,
(2) Ganar amigos, III, 8.
(3) ¿No hay mal que por bien no venga, III, 2.
More restrained throughout, and more noble than in any of the foregoing plays is the picture of the king presented in Los favores del mundo, the inspiration whom is supposed to be Henry IV, 1449, (1) Don García-Ruiz de Alarcón, the hero of the piece, has been searching for Don Juan who insulted him six years before and whom he at last finds in Madrid. In the duel which follows García, though victor, spares his opponent's life. For this generous act he receives the favor and highest praise of the prince, who says, and thereby reveals his own greatness:

Mas haber hecho la hazaña
que hoy, García, hicisteis vos,
que ser príncipe de España...
que más honra os vino a dar
el vencer y no matar
que el matar y no vencer. (2)

The Gallant

Pasé su calle de día,
roncé su calle de noche;
con terceros y papeles
le encarecí mis pasiones. (3)

The gallant is the type who glorifies all drama and fiction of his day. He swaggers and struts through the comedies of the Golden Age in ruff and rapier ready to show his mettle and spirit at the slightest pretext.

(1) Hartzenbusch, op. cit. p. 510 (Juicios y observaciones sobre las comedias).
(2) Los favores del mundo, I, 9.
(3) La verdad sospechosa, II, 9.
A gay, fashionable young blood, fond of ostentations finery and display, there is nothing in the world to occupy him except the pursuit of his idle pleasure, his amorous adventures, and the seeking of satisfaction of "his honor". But this is sufficient to keep him a very busy person; love to him is synonymous with intrigue, and intrigue of the most complicated, original and devious nature calling for a lively imagination and an active brain, and incurring risk, danger and excitement enough to charm and lure him into the wildest escapades. He lacks principle in his regard for woman's virtue, for since his lady is so barricaded, winning illicit favors from her is a natural and irresistible challenge and ever-present temptation to his unrestrained and fiery spirit. Quite frequently his most ardent desire is the lady's hand in marriage—which in the moral code of the age was an instant remedy for any irregularity that had gone before—but it does not seem possible for him to dispense with this highly colorful and entertaining interlude. For then, what really would he have to occupy his time? A barrier is a challenge to a man in any age.

Underneath this gay fellow's care, nevertheless, beats a noble and courageous heart, capable of the utmost loyalty to king, friend and faith. He defends to the death his family honor and name, and his lips are
sealed with regard to his indiscretions or the betrayal of a trust:

Advierte que entre los nobles se tiene a término bajo decir a nadie el favor.  

Alarcón's picture of society is never that of the Picaresque novel, of rogues, cutpurses, and vagabonds. His rogue and thief are dressed in silk who in the end revert to type, true to their birth and breeding. The immoderation of youth with its vehemence and abandon, as illustrated in _La Cueva de Salamanca_, is satirized and yet condoned—as society today accepts the sowing of wild cats as a necessary evil. Says the _Letradó_ in _La verdad sospechosa_, I, 2:

En Salamanca, señor, son mozos, gastan humor, sigue cada cual su gusto: hacen donaire del vicio, gala de la travesura, grandeza de la locura, hace al fin la edad su oficio.

But one sordid character and one coward appear:—also the only one with an occupation—in the person of the moneyed merchant from Seville who possesses none of the qualities of a gallant and who is painted in a deep saffron hue.

As he satirized the profligacy of the king, so does Alarcón that cardinal vice in the sub-

(1) _Siempre ayuda la verdad_, I, 19.
ject. In eleven comedies, in addition to those cited when referring to the king, the lady's home is invaded by a too ardent lover; in four, El desdichado en fingir, Quien engaña más a quien, El semejante a sí mismo, and Quien mal anda en mal acaba, the whole force of the intrigue is centered upon the accomplishment of this one object. In las paredes even a lady of faultless character is dragged from her coach on the highway by a rejected suitor and barely saved from assault by two noblemen pretending to be her servants. In La Cueva de Salamanca, Ganar amigos, La industria y la suerte, Siempre ayuda la verdad, and Los empeños de un engaño, after much flashing of swords, exchanging of cloaks, whispering from balconies, bribing of servants, guarding of streets by faithful friend or servant—all the machinery of circumvention and intrigue in perfect working order—at the traditional hour of midnight the gallant gains access to his lady's boudoir or garden. In the latter case (see e.g. Siempre ayuda la verdad and La industria y la suerte) the lady herself is a conspirator. For this reason the offense is so much more serious that the moralist poet brings upon one pair a most hideous end, and upon the other a dis-tasteful marriage. Otherwise, the young man's attempt is entirely unsuccessful, except for one case in Ganar amigos, save for the satisfaction in knowing
that the object of his adoration is virtuous; and since the fact is not established that he did not intend marriage, the lady's hand is his unvarying punishment. When actual seduction is the offense, as in El tejedor de Segovia, death is his portion.

Unbridled passion is but at the head of a long list of vices charged to the gallant's account. Attendant upon his love affairs troops his addiction to intrigue, pursuit of vengeance in dueling and murder, lying, treachery, inconstancy, jealousy, slandering, extravagance, and vanity. Having had our fill of the licentious youth in the study of the king, one delightful comedy, No hay mal que por bien no venga, will suffice to trace the most important remaining aspects of the galán as a type.

This is a very humorous comedy in which Alarcón deliberately ridicules the manners and actions of the gallant by creating a character who is his opposite. The heroes are the exceptional young man who would not sacrifice his comfort for the sake of gallantry and the nobleman-rogue. The two, instead of engaging in a scheduled duel, cement a fast friendship in the grand style of the seventeenth century. A beautiful dama, a father, avaricious, and cautious—with regard to sons-in-law—a traitorous prince, and a grate-
ful king each plays his little part in the intrigue
so that in the end may be achieved the rogue's reform,
the young man's comfort, and in short, a happy ending
for all—except for the prince who goes to his dungeon.

Don Juan is the protagonist of the poverty
stricken nobleman (see also Todo es ventura, I, 18),
who pawns his estate in order to expand lavish sums in
gallantry. He mourns that he has lost the favor of his
lady, even after all his feasting, bestowing of gifts,
and entertaining. Beltrán, his gracioso, replies with
a story of a poor man, which presents the state of af-
fairs in Spain somewhat more humorously than the histo-
rical account. The picture will not seem extravagant when
we remember that the indigence of one king of this period
was so great that he had to pawn his overcoat for food!(1)

...Ese pues poco dichoso,
tan pobre en un tiempo fue,
que por alcanzar apenas
para el sustento, jugaba
/la mochura, y se adornaba
todo de ropas ajenas.
Riñó su dama con él,
y en un cuello que traía
ajeno, como solía,
hizo un destrozo cruel.
El dueño cuando entendió
la desdicha sucedida,
a la dama cuellicida
fue a buscar, y así la habló:

(1) La Fuente: Historia de España, Madrid, 1850, Part III,
Bk. III, p. 292.
"Una advertencia he de haceros, que si acaso os enojás otra vez, y es que rindís con vuestra galán encueros: que cuando la furia os viene si vestido le embastís, haced cuenta que rindís con cuantos amigos tiene."

In true Spanish philosophy Don Juan blames "vile fortune" for his poverty, declaring that neither danger nor fear shall withhold him from repairing it by the theft of the old man's gold. While he carries forward his plot of stealing the chests of money from the bed chamber, it will be interesting to see how the poet satirizes the extravagant styles, dueling, amusements, dwellings, methods of courtship, of partaking food,—in short, all the affectations and artificialities of the galán type.

The extravagance of the entire Spanish people reached such a point of wickedness that national ruin was imminent. A pragmatic—one of many—was issued by Lerma in 1623 ordering all houses to be level and uniform; the creation of a house for the seclusion of women who lived scandalous life; that no one but married women could ride in coaches, and these not covered, and that no one could accompany them except their fathers, sons or husbands...that

(1) No hay mal que por bien no venga. I, 2.
trimming on women's clothing be moderated, and above all was given out the famous pragmatic of the ruffs on men's collars, prescribing the measure and size which they should be, the quality of the cloth, etc.(1)

In a scene resembling somewhat the one in The Taming of the Shrew where Petruchio casts aside the garments brought to his Catherine, Don Domingo don Blas refuses first the hat his hatter brings, and then the cape from his tailor. Note how deftly the author brings out the points mentioned in the pragmatic just issued:

Sombrerero Ved si la forma os agrada deste sombrero.
D. Domingo Primero
Sombrerero se ponga el suyo.
D. Domingo Sí hare', pues lo mandéis.
Sombrerero ¿Yo mandé hacer coroza o sombrero?
D. Domingo No hubiera desagradado a ninguno sino a vos; que es pintado, vive Dios.
Sombrerero Pues no le quiero pintado sino a mi gusto, y de lana.
D. Domingo Esa es razón muy liviana. ¿Cualquier uso no empezó por uno?
Sombrerero Sí.
D. Domingo Pues ¿por qué si uno basta, no podré comenzărle también yo?
So ¿Que me ponga queréis vos debiendo ser el sombrero para no cansar, ligero, uno que pese por dos?

(1) La Fuente: op.cit., pp.413-414.
D. Domingo
Sastre

..............................

¿Qué es menester?
La medida
de la capa.

D. Domingo
Sastre

Llegad pues.
¿Queréisla así?

D. Domingo

¿Hasta los pies?
¿En que tengo yo ofendida
e los pies
el arte que ejercitais,
que con medida tan larga,
a que sustenta una carga
de paso me condenáis?
La capa que el más curioso
y el más grave ha de traer
modesto adorno ha de ser,
y no embarazo pesoso, etc.

Sastre

Siendo así no ha de pasar
de la espada.

D. Domingo

Así ha de ser:
Vos tendréis menos que hacer
y yo menos que pagar.

(1)

Of the houses and time and place for eating
his remarks are equally witty and characteristic, but
they have no bearing upon the present phase of this
study save the moral they point towards the curbing of
extravagance.

Next we see Don Domingo con cara hasta la
espada, sombrero muy bajo y de muy poca ala y valona
sin golilla(II, 3), dispensing with the preliminary,
and as I have pointed out, indispensible and arduous
prologue to legitimate courtship, a-courting the very
same Leonor upon whom Don Juan's heart is set. As is
the way of women, she made him wait, but when she
apologizes he answers,

(1) No hay mal que por bien no venga. I, 13.
See also La culpa busca la pena. I, 11.
No ha sido incomodidad; que la aguardaba sentado. (1)

This dry answer is a perfect satire upon the artificial and flamboyant gallantry customary in a like situation. Now the Spanish gallant followed also an unwritten law of desiring madly one lady and of becoming instantly jealous, with unbuckled sword ready for action, if another man so much as glanced at her. When our comfortably garbed Don Domingo sees a very pretty cousin with Leonor he decides that, falling in his suit, it might be reasonable to fall in love with two ladies, each a little bit, instead of one with all his might.

When he announces without any artificiality that he has come to declare his love and repay a visit from her father, the lady is shocked by the "madman's" simplicity and decency. (Since he was a few hundred years ahead of his age we cannot blame her.) She tells him that a lover who declares his suit face to face with his lady thus nakedly depreciates instead of honors her. For, he must understand, that in order to merit one word or one sight of her, the dawn must find him beneath her window, uttering his plaint of love, more times than the sky has stars. To his query as to the (1) *Idem*, II, 3.
utility of such a procedure, she continues her enlighten-
ment as to the proper method of courtship, ending by say-
ing that he who will not suffer must not expect to de-
serve. Don Domingo can endure no more; he wants to
know if all of his gifts, services, feasts and gallant-
ties, and even twice paying the rent of the house next
door that he may dwell near her are worth nothing. Un-
wittingly he betrays Don Juan's roguery in collecting
rent upon this house which does not belong to him, and
Leonor leaves in a fury. Her father enters with an
invitation from the prince.

For, like Philip III's favorites, the hap-
less Duque de Uceda and his unfilial son, Lerma, the
prince unable to wait for succession upon the natural
course of death, is planning treason against his father
and means on this occasion to sound the influential sub-
jects. The conversation which follows continues the
satire, setting forth the extravagance—paid for out
of the pockets of wealthy nobles—in feasting, tourney-
ing, and bull fighting so common at Court in spite of
the fact that the king was penniless. Bull fighting is
severely scored:

D.Domingo Tal favor...
¿Cuándo yo lo he merecido?
...............................
Mas vos haced que me den
a la sombra la ventana.
D.Ramiro ¿Qué ventana? Estáis errado:
Cañas habéis de jugar.
D.Domingo Eso llamáis convidar
Errado habéis el recado.  
Convidar dice, Ramiro,  
fiesta en que tengo que holgarme.  
Que habiendo yo de cansarme,  
no es convite, sino tiro.  

D. Ramiro  
Pues también a torear  
De parte suya os convido.  

D. Domingo  
¿En que le tengo ofendido  
que quiere verme rodar?  
Apenas caiga me hallo  
de gobernar solo a mí.  
¡Y iré a gobernar allí  
al toro, a mí, y al caballo!  
No hay cosa de que me asombre  
con más razón que del uso  
que la ley del duelo puso  
entre una fiera y un hombre.  
Si a mi posada viniera,  
Ramiro, el toro a buscarme,  
aún entonces el vengarme  
puesto en razón pareciera;  
mas si yendo yo a buscallo  
no estando del ofendido  
eto es tan cometido  
que hiere solo al caballo,  
y no a mí, por que el cruel  
fuero del duelo me obliga  
a que arriesgado le siga,  
y me acuchille con él?  
Si a un hombre que tanto vale  
como valgo, determino  
defiayar, un padrino  
que las armas nos iguale  
al campo llevo conmigo.  
¿He de retirar con la espada  
contra fuerza aventajada,  
siendo un bruto mi enemigo?  
Doy que yo llegue a matallo:  
¿Es bien que arriesgue la vida  
uno por vengar la herida  
que un toro le dio a un caballo?  
Entre dos hombres jamás  
pongo paz por no arriesgarme;  
¿Y un caballo ha de obligarme?  

Hay cosa más desdichada  
que un hombre medio aturdido  
bañado en polvo el vestido  
y con la gorra abollada  
esforzarse y no acertar  
con la guarnición, turbado  
el color, y rodeado  
de mil pícaros, buscar
As Don Domingo steps forth from the house

Don Juan is sitting, "raving with jealousy" and expressing his fear. In a well worn Aloncian belief, since Leonor has favored the new suitor for a husband.

D. Ramiro
D. Domingo

Para serlo hasta ser que mas limaje que tener. Pues que no tiene en el mundo mas linaje que tener.

(2) Idem, II, 4.

Forthwith and immediately if true to type, there would have been a duel when Don Juan asserts his right of priority and challenges his rival. Oh very well, very well; in words to that effect in vogue in the 17th century--replies Don Domingo, who reasons according to the 20th century, "why fight when there is only one life and

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D. Ramiro
D. Domingo

Luego de tratar con ellos quien servir a su Altessa, que sospecho que estén con necesidad...
there are many women?"

When Don Domingo is imprisoned in Ramiro's house after refusing to be a party to the prince's scheme, he is found there by Don Juan in search of the gold. A plot against the king! Forgotten is dueling, forgotten is gold, forgotten is comfort! The Spanish pendantor in regard to the king is not a subject for jest. From this point on until the end of the comedy satire is dropped, the poet in glowing language portraying the loyalty, honor and nobility of the true Spaniard in defense of his king, an obligation which he held second to none.

The Lady

Aunque yo, a decir verdad,
de los humanos placeres
en nada mas que en mujeres
apetezco variedad. (1)

Alarcón seems to express two different opinions of women, and for this reason his critics do not entirely agree in their estimate of his portrayal of feminine psychology. For example, his biographer takes the following view: Alarcón impregnates his works with a delicate, amorous tint...To him nothing was so beautiful as a man's companion, and all aspects of nature. He satirizes the buscona and can find no

word of praise great enough for a good woman. He even finds excuses for the weaknesses of women. He points out the sad motives which lead a woman to the extreme of profaning her charms.

He presents most beautiful pictures of constant women, discreet, honorable, brave, full of tenderness and abnegation, sometimes from the lower ranks of society, and again from the highest. The type which he had in his heart is the most beautiful ideal. It is only known that he loved a great deal and that his feelings were reciprocated. (1) Elsewhere Fernández-Guerra continues, "He observed all classes of women, the loose woman, the married, or pretending to be married woman who scandalized the court with her evil way of living; the continual issuing of orders and decrees concerning manners, ceremonies, coaches, jewels...the ferocious quarrels among the first ladies in all this grandeur, the banquets, gifts, etc."(2)

Hartzenbusch says: "His ladies sin in being prosaic and egoistical...Anarda in Los favores del mundo as doña Ana de Mendoza in Las pardesdso oen and doña Ana Ramírez in El tejedor de Segovia; the

(1) Fernández-Guerra, op.cit. p. 193.
(2) Idem, pp. 230-231.
Marquesa in El examen de Maridos, and the two ladies, aunt and niece, in Mudarse por mejorarse, have beautiful features, amiable and virtuous characters, and perhaps some magnificent traits; but the greater part of the women painted by Alarcón seem of petty nature and ordinary appearance; they do wrong in cold blood, their mischievousness lacks grace; they say they love, and their love is not seen: a grave defect, because it renders lukewarm many scenes, well handled and poetic otherwise. Perhaps Alarcón because of his bad figure was not very well treated by ladies in general, receiving only the exceptional appreciation of some good lady such as the doña Ana of Las paredes oyen, a name which because of that he repeated with a certain affection in his works." (1)

The critics do not make an important classification. There is ample proof in Alarcón's comedies to substantiate both his good and bad opinion of woman. What man is there but has two opinions of them? One he derives from experience, feeling, and observation of women—the ones who actually enter into his life; the other from his observation of woman—the sex—and his study of her in contemporary and past literature. If there enters into the first bitterness, he will develop doubtless into the type of man soured on woman; if his (1) Hartzenbusch, op.cit. Prólogo etc. p. XXXVI.
experience with them is happy, or even neutral, he will then be the normal type of man, who, while he respects the good and fine in woman, can and does analyze her defects as a sex. This latter type never fails to have a good word for the fallen or most debased woman. I would unhesitatingly place Alarcón in the normal class. It is his powers of observation that are abnormal, not his opinion of women. He says, of himself presumably,

...en mi son

católica la razón

y epicúreo el apetito. (1)

His portrayal of woman does not indicate that he ever entered into the comfortable and finer relation between the sexes only to be found in a happy marriage. He never touches upon the maternal side of the feminine nature, which, had he been happily mated, and deformed as he was, could not have failed to appear both in his life and his works. Nor does he ever portray motherhood. And while his ladies can be inflamed with a consuming passion and suffer torments of jealousy, as a type their greatest desire is not so much the sweet joys of love itself as it is to be married at any cost. On the other hand, on many occasions his heroine turns from her lover because she learns of some grave fault

(1) Todo es ventura. III, 9.
in him.

Though Alarcón has painted the gallant as almost without moral scruples in his fashion of following his passion headlong, he redeems this picture of society in his portrayal of women. Many are the scenes in which she is pitted against the man in a heroic and victorious struggle for the preservation of her virtue, even when she loves him. The poet renders tribute in El dueño de las estrellas to her valor, and makes clear his belief that a woman need never surrender her virtue unless she so wills by relating a parable of a wise decision of a judge in such an instance. (1) Nor does she need a guardian, for

A la mujer que es honrada, 
no la tienen tan guardada 
inexpugnables paredes 
como su propio valor. (3)

In two comedies, El tejedor de Segovia and Los empeños de un engaño, believing in the age-old promise of marriage the secondary woman character is seduced; but Alarcón exclaims in justification, "¡Tan mal resiste una mujer querida!" (3)

The supporting character is never as colorful or vivid a personality as the leading woman. She

(1) El dueño de las estrellas, I, 12. (?)
(2) Ibidem.
(3) Siempre ayuda la verdad, II, 6.
acts as a foil or direct contrast. She is the worst side of woman, frequently envious, jealous, traitorous to her friend, avaricious, deceitful, stooping to any petty device to steal a lover or seek revenge. Seldom does the author allow her to escape without just punishment, always pointing the moral that evil reaps its harvest of disappointment or death. He does not point to or satirize any cardinal vice of women as a whole.

In not one of his dramas does the principal woman sin in any grave fashion; her weaknesses may be pictured, such as jealousy, fickleness, love of money—or she may even take part in an intrigue to secure her lover for a husband. On the other hand, she is an example of high pride of race, virtue, wit, reasonableness, tenderness, and spirit.

Alarcón's women do not ever measure in force, personality or interest with his men. And why would this not be so regardless of the opinion of the author as to women? The Golden Age was a man's age, as it was an age abounding in vices and singular virtues. Also, as in all ages, the average woman was barred from participation in the former, and the latter—the colorful battle, the duel, the tournament—were also outside of her realm. Alarcón did not create imaginary
women. There has never been in all history a type so susceptible for a dramatist's uses as the gallant of this period, but the same cannot be said of the young unmarried woman. All the privileges accorded women were free only to the matron. Two of Alarcón's best out of his few really good women characters are the charming and vivacious widow in *Las paredes* even, able to come and go as she pleased, and the staunch and valiant wife in *El tejedor de Segovia*, in which comedy he eulogizes the companionship of woman: (I, 21). *Toda es ventura* contains his highest praise of women:

No reina en mi corazón  
otra cosa que mujer,  
ni hay bien, a mi parecer  
más digno de estimación.  
¿Qué adorna primavera  
de fuentes, plantas y flores;  
quién divinos resplandores  
del sol, en su cuarta esfera;  
quién purpúreo amanecer,  
quién cielo lleno de estrellas  
iguala a las partes bellas  
del rostro de una mujer?  
¿Qué regalo en la dolencia;  
en la salud, qué contento;  
qué descanso en el tormento  
puede haber sin su presencia?  

and his condemnation of other poets who injure them:

Según eso, ¿cómo quieres  
que yo, que tanto las precio,  
entre en el uso tan necio

(1) *Toda es ventura*, III, 9.
de injuriar a las mujeres?
Que entre enfados infinitos
que los poetas me dan,
no es el menor ver que están
todos en esto precitos.

After which he takes up their defence; at the same
time satirizing his contemporaries, principally Lope
and Quevedo, and stating just what women's worst faults
are in his opinion:

Pues, ¿a quién no ha de cansar
uno que da en grasejar
siempre a costa de casados? (Quevedo)
Dáse el sufrido, el paciente...
Hermano poeta, calla,
y mira tu si en batalla
mataste moro valiente.
La murmuración afean, (Lope
y están siempre murmurando;
siempre están enamorando,
y injurian a quien desean.
¿Qué es lo que más condenamos
en las mujeres? ¡El ser
de inconstante parecer?
Nosotros las enseñamos;
que el hombre que llega a estar
de el ciego dios más herido,
no deja de ser perdido
por el tramo variar.—
¿Tener al dinero amor?
Es cosa de muy buen gusto,
c o tire una piedra el justo
que no incurre en este error.—
¿Ser fáciles? ¿Qué han de hacer
si ningún hombre porfía,
y todos al cuarto día
se cansan de pretender?
¿Ser duras? ¿Qué nos quejamos,
si todos somos extremos?
Difícil lo aborrecemos,
y fácil no lo estimamos.
Pues si los varones son
maestros de las mujeres,
y sin ellas los placeres
carecen de perfección,
¡mala pasma tenga quien
Fernández-Guerra states that Alarcón censures the vice of the buconn in fulfilment of his civilizing undertaking when he contemplates the host of them in the Court who exercise their tyrannical rule upon lords, rogues, and mosqueteros; but that he does not rise up against them and even takes up arms for them. (2)

One of the greatest causes for shame in a woman was to be too easily won or to show symptoms of love unless urged to do so. Alarcón draws attention to this as a vice again and again, and often severely scolds the young woman for her immodesty and forwardness. Listen to a virtuous Don Juan in La industria y la suerte:

Reportate, vuelve en ti;
que estoy confuso y corrido
de ver que hayas excedido
de tu obligación así.
¿Tú, doña Sol. ¡Caso fero!
Desta suerte sales fuera?
Por Dios, que no lo creyera,
y lo dudo aunque lo veo.
¡Tú, doncella principal, has de rogar, aunque mueras,
a un hombre!.....

How well the lady has learned her lesson can be seen from Aliana's speech in La manzanilla de Melilla, where she feels 'twere better, indeed, to die than to be the

(1) Todo es ventura, III, 9.
(2) Las paradas oven, I, 16.
first to discover her passion:

...no es razón
que la mujer, aunque muera,
se arroja a ser la primera
en descubrir su afición;
que el hombre debe primero
dar cuenta de sus pesares.

Once more the god of love is to blame for
weakness and vice. For, as in the case of the galán,

nearly all the evil the poes portrays in her eminate
from this source. The list continues: curiosity, vanity, love of publicity, unreasonableness, and cruelty are numbered definitely upon it.

If bitterness or acidity tinge Alarcón's

remarks beyond those of a mere observer of women, it

is in his numerous references to their preference for

for men with money. However, the very fact that the author

confines his uncomplimentary portrayal of women to remarks

about them or to the secondary plot and does not create

any evil character in the main plot is sufficient evi-
dence in the opinion of the writer that he believed in

the virtue and sweetness of womankind. In his most auto-

biographical comedy, Las paredes even, doña Ana gives her

hand to the poor and uncomely don Juan instead of to her rich

suitor. The very rich man of La industria y la suerte, con-
trolling the opinion of the whole town and championed by the

father, is refused for the sake of seventeenth century love-
in-a-cottage—or its equivalent.
In all the plays of this epoch frequent mention is made of the pedigueneas, the picaraque type of woman. The Latin poets even before this introduced the same "give me" and "bring me" female. (1) She is constantly the recipient of Alarcón's satire. For example, he alludes to this capacity of women in El semejante a sí mismo (2) where he cites as one of the seven wonders of the world the woman who does not ask for money.

There are no outstanding women characters to add to Hartzenbusch's list already quoted save the old nurse Jimena in Los pechos privilegiados, who is the only maternal character Alarcón portrays. She fights for her foster child with the force of a lion for her cub, and has a loyal and a royal heart within her humble breast.

Since in El examen de maridos for once the dramatist waives the rights of the male sex and presents the woman as the leading character, engaged in "woman's only business"—the selecting of a husband—the qualities he presents in this comedy should give a rather definite idea of woman as he saw her in his day. Briefly the story is as follows: Carrying out her father's will, doña Iñés examines her suitors upon

(1) e.g. Terence, The Self Tormentor, III.

(2) See also Toda es ventura, I, 14; Mudarse por mejorarse, I, 11; Los favores del mundo, I, 7.
their merits, not listening to the dictates of her heart, like a Portia. She improves the opportunity with sparkling wit, giving her decisions and her reasons for each. She disdains one because he is overdressed, another because, though noble and rich, he is avaricious; another because he is quick tempered; another because he is a widower and foolish enough to marry again; another because she does not like his name, and so on until there are but two left—the man she loves in spite of his faults and the man she likes because of his merits. In obedience to her father's desire she decides in favor of the perfect one. However the intrigue, slander, and characteristic cattiness of the second lady have by this time come to a head; the faults of the man she loves are proven to be fabrications, justifying the instinctive and blind impulse of her heart; and the man she chose on the basis of his merit magnanimously releases her, being by this time caught in the wiles of the other lady.

Womanliness, sweetness, brains, wit, and reason—save where instinct is stronger—characterize doña Inés, forming, as the dramatist builds his plot, a concrete picture of a desirable and attractive woman. By her side in the shadow lurks doña Blanca, the reverse of woman's loviness.
Some pungent Arceconian remarks about woman-kind appearing in the comedy are quoted below, as well as a few selected from the other comedies:

Deceit:

Toda mujer es a engañar inclinada.

III, 8.

Instinct versus judgment.

que en la elección de mujer el peor es el que vence.

III, 13.

The woman scorned.

Sierpes apacienta el pecho de una mujer ofendida.

I, 16.

Stubbornness.

Antes que mi pensamiento se mudara el norte frío.

I, 19.

Talkativeness.

quien fía a una mujer, con red intenta prender las aguas que el Hilo envía.

II, 2.

Love of money.

que a la mujer rogando, y con el dinero dando...

La verdad sospechosa, I, 3.

Intrigue.

Como en su centro están las trazas en las mujeres.

Idem, I, 9.

Fickleness.

Necio el que espera firmeza en la mujer y en la mar.

El semejante a sí mismo, III, 5.

Variableness.

si es un ángel por lo santo es demonio por lo esquivo.

La industria y la suerte, I, 12.
Inconsistency:

Que empresas y que imposibles
no intentaran las mujeres?
Bien dijo un sabio que son
lo mas flaco y lo mas fuerte.
El tejedor de Segovia, III, Part I.

The servant

No es criado el que te doy
mas consejero y amigo. (1)

As in the Greek and Roman comedy, the servant
was an indispensable part of the Court life of the
Golden Age. Without his aid and advice the love of
master and mistress would have lost its clandestine
romance and its glory of careless and impudent youth.
Often of good birth, he served as the other half of
his master’s soul—companion, confidant, adviser, and
shock-absorber. He is to the Spanish drama what the
soliloquy is to the Shakespearean. His master’s life
held no secrets from him. Was his master bent on
adventure, he accompanied him; was it mischief, he
shared its pursuit; was it love, he became the go-
between and guard; was it cursing, his back was bent
but his own tongue ready. This evolution of the
gracioso in the Spanish drama and his being conver-
ted into a servant, more or less discreet, is credited
to Alarcon. (2)

(1) La verdad sospechosa, I, 1. See mudarse por mejorarse, II, 12, “que bien dices!” etc.
(2) Reyes, op. cit. p. 263.
The footing of familiarity between them oftimes led the servant to tease his master, with whose extravagance he was well acquainted. It was a dull ge-between who through his cupidity and cunning could not fill his pockets with gold and adorn his person in a coveted suit, more times than not, just come from the tailor. And to him who knew just how to play upon his master, there fell even richer spoils in the form of jewelry or diamonds. (1)

At times the servant made so bold as to give restraining counsel (2), and if his master were grief stricken or sad he did his best to divert him; his own humor failing, he racked his brain for other means. (3)

Alarcón did not subscribe to the practice of kicking and cuffing servants around. He expresses himself forcibly upon the subject in Ganar amigos:

Por esto me cansa el ver en la comedia afrentados siempre a los pobres criados... siempre huir, siempre temer... --Y por Dios que he visto, Encinas en más de cuatro ocasiones muchos criados leones y muchos amos gallinas. (4)

(1) See Siempre ayuda la verdad, I, 4; La amistad castigada, II, 7; and La culpa busca la pena, II, 7.

(2) El tejedor de Segovia, I, 5, for example.

(3) Idem, III, 4.

(4) Ganar amigos, III, 8.
He gives credit for a servant's good qualities to the master, saying like master like man, in *La prueba de las promesas*:

".............mas creed que aunque es sirviente Tristan es al menos bien nacido: y esto a mi crédito sobra; que en cualquier tiempo la obra a su dueño ha parecido."

(1)

In return for considerate treatment the loyalty of the servant is often deep and steadfast. In *Todo es ventura*, Tello is too poor to pay his servants and bids them leave. Tristan touchingly refuses when his master tells him his day will soon come too:

"No llegará, vive Dios; que aunque despedirme quieras por pobre, donde tú mueras hemos de morir los dos."

(2)

Occasionally a servant proves disloyal or traitorous when his master does not set him a good example, as in *El semejante a sí mismo*:

"Que en traición es bien pagalle a quien compra con traición."

(3)

The superstition of servants serves as a medium for much humor. A common and very laughable one is portrayed in *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*. Tristan is afraid his good luck will bring him bad luck. His

(2) I, 1.
(3) II, 4.
master has promised to let him buy any suit in the store which suits his fancy for their joint wedding day, whereupon he exclaims,

Si lo voy a sacar  
según nací desdichado  
o el mercader ha quebrado  
o tú no te has de casar. (1)

When his master expresses faith in the future of these matters, Tristán insists,

..........................es  
mi fortuna tan ávara  
que sí en zapatos tratará  
nacieron todos sin pies. (3)

Upon discovering later that the lady has indeed proved fickle to his señor, he cries in chagrin,

Que ha causado mi vestido  
este mal de corazón. (3)

It is his wisdom and strong christian faith which sense the devil's magic in his human accomplice and tool, the doctor who has bewitched the girl. In revenge, Mephisto keeps changing the value of gold in a bag Tristán is sent to deliver, until the christian servant bethinks himself to sprinkle holy water upon the coins and thus insure himself against further trickery. His love for his master mounts in wrath against the man who is stealing his sweetheart:

Pues vive Dios, que ha de ser  
Doña Aldonza su mujer  
o verse a mis manos muerto.

(1) Quien mal anda en mal acaba, I, 8.  
(2) Idem, I, 8.  
(3) Idem, II, 10.
And though the devil taunts and makes sport of him throughout the comedy, Tristán in the end makes good his threat.

The drunken servant is introduced in *El dueno de las estrellas, Todo es ventura*, and *El senor a si mismo*. In the last of these Alarcón makes the only direct reference to Mexico to be found in his comedies, in which he describes the drainage system of Mexico City and how it came to be perfected. (2)

After hearing so much attention given to the subject of water, the *gracioso* takes occasion to discourse wittily upon the relative values of that fluid as compared to his favorite beverage. The author evidently considered it very foolish to indulge in wine too freely, for Sancho asks his master,

Dime, Señor,
¿Cuál te parece peor: emborracharse o ser loco? (3)

However, Alarcón's intention to condemn drunkenness, if judged by the mildly humorous and brief treatment of it, was not very pronounced.

The lady's servant lacks the humor and originality of the galán's. She too acts as adviser

(2) *El senor a si mismo*, I, 1.
(3) *Idem.* III, 8. See also *B.A.E.*, v. 20, p. 77, "Negro vicio", etc.
and confidant, sometimes prudently, at others aiding
and abetting the deceit and intrigue, instigating,
watching, listening, spying, carrying letters and mes-
sages between the pair, this latter service a very lu-
crative one for both the man and maid servant. In
common, also, they possess the traits of cupidity,
jealousy of unequal favors (best example of this latter
in Todo es ventura), vulgarity (El desdichado en fingir),
lying, gossiping, talkativeness, flattering, and du-
plicity. It was customary in these comedies of capa
and escada for the servant's love affairs to parallel
his master's and thus his life was but a reflection on
a lower scale of the high life in the Court.

Altogether the gracioso, as evolved by
Alarcón, is a delightful many-sided character, a com-
bination of sagacity and wit and humor, with a never-
failing supply of proverbs, epigrams, and anecdotes with
which to correct or regale his master on all occasions.
He also serves the author as a perfect medium for the
expression of his own penetrating observation and in-
terpretation of life, human foibles, and society.
Chapter II

Society—the Individual.

The Liar

De aquí, si lo consideras
conocerás claramente
que quien en las burlas miente
pierde el crédito en las veras. (1)

Every age of a nation is characterized by
its own peculiar spirit, a mould in which all ordinary
mortals are shaped, and which is relieved only by the
strong individual character. Thus, in general, Alarcón's
comedies present a composite picture of society, which
he attempted to correct through his gift of mirroring
its members and customs. In all of his comedies he
points to those ugliest of sins, lying and slandering,
but he reached the height of his creative genius when
he personified these vices in the characters of don
García (La verdad sospechosa) and don Mendo (Las paredes
ovén), who, though falling generally into the types of
the time, stand out clearly. The Marqués don Fadrique
(Ganar amigos) and Tello (Todo es ventura), though not
so well known, being somewhat submerged in plot, portray
almost equally well the friend and the parasite.

Although La verdad sospechosa was borrowed
largely from the Andrian of Terence in characters, plot,
and spirit, it was Alarcón's own conception to create

(1) La verdad sospechosa, II, 16.
from the pale suggestion of the Roman youth, Pampphilus, his bold and dashing don García whose name will ever by synonymous with that of a liar.

So fundamental is the universal human fault of unveracity that all of us have been tempted—and most of us have yielded in some degree. And who has not known a liar? Don García thus had the advantage at the outset of a large and keenly sympathetic public. The first need for production in industry is a ready market; with such a one as Alarcón had for the reception of La verdad sospechosa, it is almost inconceivable that the comedy should have remained in obscurity until Corneille acquainted Spain anew and the world for the first time with its incomparable and unique merit. For nowhere in literature is the liar and braggart drawn with a truer appreciation, humor and understanding. He is the young and imaginative type, whose love of notoriety and desire to outdistance all others lead him to exaggerate everything he does, and to embellish with extraordinary likeness to truth and minuteness of detail many things he does not do.

Fresh from the University of Salamanca don García comes home to Madrid. His father and the family fortune await him. With his pockets full of
gold and dressed in such gallant fashion as to rival the very sunrise, he and his new servant, Tristán, sally forth to view Madrid. They stroll down the fashionable Platería, and there with the impressionableness and impetuousity of youth García falls in love with the first pretty face he sees. Evidently the lady is impressed by his splendor, for she stumbles when about to enter her coach. Immediately to assist springs García, and soon she learns that he is a fabulously rich foreigner from the Indies—more, that he has loved her for a year in adoring silence!

Presently García, by this time heady with the spirit of youth and his own importance, meets don Juan whom he had known in Salamanca, and who is bursting to communicate the news of a magnificent party given on the river the night before. Upon learning that the participants in the festivities are unknown, García claims both the lady and the party and launches into an exceedingly ready and wonderful description of a feast worthy of Alexander the Great. When don Juan is sufficiently eclipsed and awed, García carelessly remarks that this was only a childish feast prepared on the spur of the moment: just give him time...

Tristán cannot suppress his wonder; he questions his master as to his purpose in fabricating
thus the fictions he has heard. The philosophy of the liar is revealed:

Ser famosos es gran cosa
el medio cual fuere sea.  

(1)

But why the lie to the lady when she must soon learn the truth if he is to follow his suit?

Cuando lo sepan
habré ganado en su casa
o en su pecho ya las puertas
con este medio...

(2)

All well and good, now the matter of the feast?

Fingilo porque me pesa
que piense nadie que hay cosa
que mover mi pecho pueda
a invidia o admiración...

(3)

In the meantime don Beltrán has learned of his son's reputation in Salamanca, and when Tristán confirms the terrible truth the old man's consternation and grief are pathetic. Though he has just lost his elder son, he declares he would rather see García dead than committed to this fault. (1,2) He immediately arranges a marriage for his son, deciding it is safer to have the matter settled before García becomes notorious in Madrid. He happens to choose the very girl with whom García is in love, but alas! García has confused her identity with that of her friend. Don Bel-

(1) La verdad sospechosa, I, 9.

(2) Ibidem.

(3) Ibidem.
trán acquaints García with his plan, at the same time taking him to task about lying. How well depicted are the honorable sentiments of the old Spaniard! How kind and fatherly he is! Hardly have his words of admonition died upon his lips when García, declaring (1) that whoever said he lied is a liar, begins the ingenious manufacture of all the circumstances relating to his marriage in Salamanca, thus blocking his father's arrangements. The old man's disappointment and the embarrassing position in which García does not hesitate to place him are pathetic, but this does not prevent his credulity from being extremely laughable. Proud of having saved himself and of thus having demonstrated the efficacy of his prowess, don García cannot refrain from gloating,

¡Qué fácil de persuadir
quien tiene amor suele ser!
yé qué fácil en creer
el que no sabe mentir! (2)

The lies he has already told are working like yeast: the girls are doubtful and confused since he seems to be courting them both, and when they discover his identity his lies are also uncovered; the timely arrival of a friend barely averts a duel with don Juan, who is jealous and suspicious because of

(1) See Idem, II, 13, "Siempre ha sido" etc.
(2) Idem, II, 10.
the unknown lady at the feast whom he suspects to be his sweetheart; his father's interest in the fictitious wife and her family calls for further tangling of the web. Through it all García retains Tristán's good will, who, however, marvels at his dexterity, observing,

El que miente ha menester
gran ingenio y gran memoria. (1)

This matter of the duel with don Juan is one of many occasions in which the author chooses to condemn the duel; here he makes it ridiculous. Curiously enough, the prevalent idea of the day was that the knowledge of the art of "crossing swords" was absolutely essential to all who wished to be included in the category of fine gentlemen. Actuated by motives of pride utterly false, the galán considered it beneath his dignity either to acknowledge, apologize, or retract, and held that the slightest offense to his "honor" must be atoned for at the point of the sword. Outside the gates of Madrid, or in any retired place in the vicinity of the metropolis "gentlemanly satisfaction" might be demanded and received at any hour of the day or night. Failing to appear at the appointed time branded a man as cowardly and ignoble. (2) Duelling amounted to such

(1) Idem, II, 3.
(2) No hay mal que por bien no venga, III, 1, 2.
a passion with the young bloods that it was prohibited under severe penalties. For this reason García refused to acquaint even Tristán with his challenge from don Juan, holding that he who told of an impending duel wished either to be prevented from participation or helped in it—both cowardly acts. Don Juan is thoroughly "satisfied" by García's explanations and declares there is no further grievance. With characteristic Alarcónian humor the situation which duelling has reached is ridiculed in García's answer. No! he came to fight a duel and nothing but a duel will satisfy him. Has he not been insulted in the mere challenge?

The duel was interrupted, but García cannot resist the temptation to play the hero when Tristán asks him what happened between him and don Juan. Calling Tristán the "secretary of his soul" García tells of overcoming his rival in a minute recital displaying his knowledge and skill in the art of combat. The psycholo-

ogy is true to life, for this is exactly why a child lies if you tempt him with a question. García would have stopped there, but Tristán dangles a further opportunity for lying before him when he asks, "Y murio?".

No sooner has García finished telling how he most cer-
tainly cleaved don Juan's skull in twain and left him weltering in his blood than the gentleman in question appears around the corner in the full bloom of health
and vigor! Tristán's charge at his own credulity is the most humorous point in the comedy. The comedy of the scene is continued by Tristán's reaction in sarcasm and García's violent efforts to retrieve (III, 8).

At last don García's lies all collapse like a house of cards. He is not only shamed in the presence of all, but he loses the hand of the woman he loves and had all but won, and is forced to marry one whom he does not care for. His very truths are suspicious, for like the shepherd in Aesop's fable, the natural result of lying is that nobody believes the liar at last. His bewilderment and surprise at the state of affairs is genuine and true to human nature:

¡Estoy loco.
Verdades valen tan poco!

To which Tristan takes delight in replying,

En la boca mentirosa.

Still dazed, García exclaims,

¡Que haya dado en no creer cuanto digo! (1)

Alarcón then states the moral of the drama through Jacinta's words:

¿Qué importa que verdad sea,
si el que la dice aís vos?
Que la boca mentirosa
incurre en tan torpe mengua
que solamente en su lengua
es la verdad sospechosa. (2)

(1) La verdad sospechosa, II, 16.
(2) Idem, III, 6.
A satire entirely of plot is La prueba de las promesas, in which the dramatist points out the evil of promising much and fulfilling little, which is but another form of lying. His conclusion is

El más largo prometer no iguala el más corto dar. (1)

A liar somewhat akin to don Garcia, though not developed to a similar extent, appears in La manzanilla de Melilla in the character of Pimento. (II) Situations like the one in which don Juan appears alive are found in El desdichado en Fingir (III, 12) and in Quien mal anda en mal acaba (III, 13). There is not a comedy in which lying in some form is not pictured.

The Slanderer

Que cada cual entre sí dice, oyendo el maldiciente: "Este, cuando yo me ausento lo mismo dirá de mí. (2)

Perhaps equally great, though more national and hence lacking the universality of La verdad sospechosa, is Las paredes oven. Some critics are of the opinion that Lope's El premio de buen hablar suggested the subject for this comedy, but, as in the case of La verdad sospechosa, Alarcon's method of development is so different and original that no comparison is injurious to him.

Don Mendo is pictured with a bitterness

(1) Mudarse por mudarse, II, 13.
(2) Las paredes oven, III, 5.
not discernible in the characterization of García. The latter is a braggart who harms himself most of all, and his lying is highly picturesque and amusing—not mean. He lies to save himself when necessary, but usually from the sheer joy of carrying off all the honors and exercising his imagination. Who of us would recognize the small brother or son could we overhear his estimate of himself in recounting some deed of prowess under the stimulation of an admiring audience of still smaller boys? The satirization of don García is directed at all liars; that of don Mendo is more restricted. The slanderer could never be made other than despicable and little; he destroys others and usually escapes himself. Don Mendo—short for mendacious—is the Whited Sepulchre. Alarcón, great of soul, must have suffered frequently because of his insignificant body and poverty. For this reason no doubt he stresses the value of worth and character as far surpassing mere physical beauty (1) and often portrays the handsome fellow as being rich and vile.

In Las barricadas even he particularly wished to show that the slanderer is a vicious and odious member of society, and that the tolerant and kind man is

(1) Todo es ventura. II, 5.
worthy of esteem. In spite of the fact that don Mendo is rich and prepossessing, he makes himself hateful by his biting words; on the contrary, don Juan is all moderation and courtesy, and is very humble because of his poverty and poor appearance. Both are in love with doña Ana, a charming and sensible young widow, who, though her husband has been dead three years, is still wearing mourning and living a quiet, retired life. Ignorant, therefore, of son Mendo's real character, she has fallen in love with his winning manner and good looks. Judging by appearances, also, she appreciates don Juan scorning the idea of his suit. On the night of the fiesta of San Juan, a great religious festival, she secretly leaves Alcalá and comes to her home in Madrid. Sad because of memories the night brings back, she listens by a window to the sounds of revelry in the city. Suddenly she hears the voices of don Juan and don Mendo discussing her in the street below for the benefit of the Duque de Urbina who has never seen her. This scene and the preceding one(I, 18, 19) are the most skillful, and certainly the most humorous, in the comedy. Both portray the contrasting natures of the two men, not only when speaking of doña Ana, but in the mention of everything they point out to the stranger as they walk along Calle Mayor. The more don Juan praises
her, the more don Mendo censures her. With horror she hears him say she is stupid, ugly, old, constantly in need of beautifying lotions... Still further confirmation of his double dealing falls into her hands when she reads a love letter he has written her cousin, Lucrecia, with whom she finds herself unfavorably compared in the missive. Her heart begins to turn to her champion, and she sighs, wishing he were handsomer. Her maid reproves her:

Pues, ¿cómo! ¿en eso repara una tan cuerda mujer?
En el hombre no has de ver la hermosura o gentileza:
la hermosura es la nobleza su gentileza el saber.
Lo visible es el tesoro de mozas faltas de seso,
y las mas veces por eso topán con un asno de oro. (1)

Coupled with his evil speaking, don Mendo is also the meanest of liars. Believing don Juan or the Duque has told doña Ana of his slander, he immediately reverses the situation, setting himself forth as being injured by them because he defended her. Not suspecting the source of her knowledge, he thus makes his cause hopeless. She dismisses him.

Fearing she will suffer harm on the road between Madrid and Alcalá on the return, don Juan and the Duque disguise themselves as coachmen. Any lin-

(1) Las paredes oyen, II, 4.
growing affection which doña Ana might have entertained for don Mendo is completely turned to repulsion, when in a jealous rage he halts her coach, accuses her of fickleness, and is only prevented from doing her violence by the "coachmen". Gratitude melts her heart to don Juan, and at last fully realizing his worth, she gives him her hand.

Very carefully has the poet established the fact that doña Ana's change of heart was not due to fickleness, a quality he never attributes to his ideal woman. This is one characteristic of his scheming, light lady,—her changeableness almost ranked by the side of her heartburning jealousies and maddening enviousness. The entire comedy of Mudarse por mejorarse is given over to a humorous portrayal of this evil, in which the poet teaches the lesson that "what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander." (1)

Doña Ana is one of the author's few fine women characters. She is altogether human, womanly, and natural. Like all of his women, she is able to dismiss a lover with firmness and cleverness,—and much dispatch. Don Juan has humbly declared his hopeless love, to which she replies in a scene so typical of

(1) Idem, edited by Bourland, Intro. p. XVIII.
Alarcón's swift manner of ending scenes (as well as a lover's declarations) that I shall quote it:

Doña Ana  Pues, señor don Juan, adiós.
Don Juan  Tened, ¿no me respondéis?
Doña Ana  ¿De esta suerte me dejáis?
Don Juan  Yo lo he dicho, y vos lo veís.
Doña Ana  ¿No decís que vuestro intento
no es pedirme que yo os quiera,
porque atrevimiento fuera?
Don Juan  Así lo he dicho y lo siento.
Doña Ana  ¿No decís que no tenéis esperanza de ablandarme?
Don Juan  Yo lo he dicho.
Doña Ana  ¿Y que igualarme
en méritos no podéis,
¿Nuestra lengua afirmo?
Don Juan  Yo lo he dicho de este modo.
Doña Ana  Pues si vos lo decís todo
¿Qué queréis que os diga yo?

A secondary purpose of this comedy is to tell women that it is not only manly beauty which should attract them, nor only wealth, but the qualities of nobility and breeding and the beauties of kindness and trustworthiness, leaving it to foolish women to become enamoured of a good looking ass, even though he be a golden one. This is Alarcón's most personal comedy and this is his most personal grievance. The bitter belief that Cupid's arrows were surer of aim if gilded is repeated in a discordant note in every comedy. It is true, however, that he never attributes this cold preference for riches to his principal lady.

A third purpose, already suggested, is to answer Figueroa's insulting slander of Alarcón's person through the gentleman, poor in fortune though rich in virtue, to whom he gives his name and figure. In a like way, though not so vigorously, he answers those who accused him of having a bad breath, and other secret faults, in El examen de maridos, (III, 3), and in La prueba de las promesas, (I, p.435, B.A.E.)(1).

His central purpose of showing that slander is the handmaiden of lying, intrigue, and envy is not confined to Las paredes even alone. Again and again the creeping shadow of slander follows faithfully the noble character. Even a beautiful woman is cause for constant gossip, he declares in La prueba de las promesas (II):

Algún testimonio fue
de cualquier lengua envidiosa;
nunca vi mujer hermosa
perfeta en lo que se ve,
que no oyese murmurar
della, que alla en lo secreto
padece algún defecto
difícil de averiguar:
que por dichoso y galán,
envidioso te imputarán
lo que la verdad no puede.

(1) See also Sancho's dream, El semejante a si mismo,
III, 8: "Condenáronle a juntar", etc.
The Parasite

Ser amada es natural
lisonja, y nunca se ve
que a nadie, aunque mal le este
sepa la lisonja mal.  

Though Alarcón did not dedicate any one work entirely to the portrayal of that type of courtier ungenerously called the parasite, there is a liberal assortment of ingredients prepared for our use in the different comedies, from which we can easily make up his character. We find him to be the protegé or hanger-on of greatness, a more or less degraded fellow designed as a foil to his betters. He lives by flattering his way to favors, and sometimes by the grace of fortune. He is a peculiar product of the period in which Alarcón lived when all men strove to be gentlemen, and honest labor and the trades were considered plebeian. Each rich nobleman was surrounded by his miniature court made up of light-hearted and too often light-headed idlers of the day who spent the greater part of their lives in the capital living upon his bounty, and who seldom imposed any great restraining upon themselves. Even men of letters depended largely upon the protection of some powerful noble whom they repaid by poetic tributes. As has been noted (See p. 8.), the rivalry at court was keen and envious. Alar-

(1) La amistad castigada, II, 12.
ón himself strove by complimentary references, usually indirect, to gain and keep the good will of his patron, the Marquis of Salinas, and his constant repetition of certain names,—Villagomez, Aragon, Herrera, Lara, Manrique, Figueroa, Guzman, Mendoza, etc.—is but a form of flattery to gain the good will of certain powerful nobles. He frequently refers directly to the reigning king in glowing praise, as for example:

Mirad que estais a la vista
de un rey tan santo y perfecto
que vuestras yerros no pueden
hallar disculpa en sus yerros. (1)

But if Alarcón followed the custom in his struggle for existence and a just hearing, he was not to be compared with those about him. He felt a bitter scorn for the favorite and flatterer, whom he felt was only once removed from the beggar:

Los que vivís de embustir
de mi podéis aprender:
primero habéis de saber
lisonjear que pedir. (2)

Tello, the protagonist of the parasite, is best seen through the medium of Toda es ventura, in which he is unique and individual only in his reaction to the unparalleled circumstances which repeatedly throw good fortune in his way. At the time of writing

(1) La verdad sospechosa, II, 9.
(2) La manganilla de Melilla, I, p. 306, B.A.E.
this comedy, according to Fernández-Guerra, Alarcón was out of joint with fortune, disheartened, short of funds,—needing some return for his literary productions,—yet seeing the foolish by favor of court procure whatever they wished while all doors were closed to him. (1) The story is brief followed:

A nobleman, being in financial straits, dismisses all of his retainers because he is unable to maintain them longer. Among them is Tello,

¡Sin amo y sin un real
sumando todo el caudal
en un vestido y un cuello!

who states Alarcón's own situation and state of mind in these terse words:

Amigo no lo tenías
ni aún conocido en la corte;
pues si a dueño que os importe
entrar a servir quereís,
¿qué poderoso señor
para ello os ha de ayudar,
si en Madrid os ha de alcanzar
hasta el servir por favor? (3)

Presently Tello, profiting by luck and everybody else's trouble or mistake or predicaments, quite unintentionally and without any effort of his own save the ability to receive gracefully, has every good thing heaped into his lap. He is even forced to

(1) Fernández-Guerra, op. cit., p. 201.
(2) Todo es ventura, I, 2.
(3) Ibidem.
marry the woman he loves, and who would have been otherwise unattainable, through the jealousy of his two powerful rivals, who would rather see her go to Tello than either of themselves, in their ignorance of his passion. Like the ubiquitous lie of don García (La verdad sospechosa) which crops up at every turn, so Tello's fortune brings him profit time and again for things he does not do. Through his patron's praise it is clear that this habit of building up a false reputation was a common one at court,

En vos, Tello, no han entrado
las costumbres de la corte;
que en ella los ilusioneros
que cercen a los señores
diciendo lo que no hacen,
en obligación los ponen...  

(1) Todo es ventura, I, 8.
The Friend

No hay más tesoro en el mundo que un amigo verdadero. (1)

If the heart and character of an author were to be judged by his work, and if it is true that his moral make-up is found in his writings, we would believe that Alarcón was a man worthy of the highest appreciation because of his noble traits and the generosity of his soul. One of his comedies is enough to formulate this idea in the mind of the reader; in it shine eminently the magnanimity, the elevation of sentiments and the heroism of friendship. There is not perhaps another dramatic piece in any language which paints with greater truth and beauty these qualities, which rarely are found united in one sole individual; and if the comedy of Gana amigos is judged according to these principles, it is truly ideal. (2)

The Marques don Fadrique embodies the finest qualities possible to the human soul: the capacity to forgive a grievous aggressor, and to lay down his life for a friend. True to the codes of valor, honor, and love belonging to his day, because he has promised to befriend a youth fleeing from his pursuers, don Fadrique

(1) El examen de maridos, III, 16.
(2) Hartzenbusch, op. cit. P. 541, Bernardino García Suelto. La colección general de comedias escogidas, Madrid 1826.
continues to do so even after learning that this same youth is his brother's slayer; released from his promise of protection, he engages the young man in a duel--only to spare his life in the end; he endures the blame and disfavor of his king rather than betray the real offenders in several serious crimes; and, at last, he faces the penalty of death, having already suffered imprisonment, for these crimes of which he is innocent.

The rule of his life has been to make a friend whenever possible, and in the following of this rule he not only displays great-heartedness and nobility, but tact and discretion. On one occasion, though he had already decided to cease his attentions to a certain lady, he generously promises her brother that he will do so out of regard for him, making a friend thereby:

\[
\text{supuesto que yo conmigo no ver a Flor proponía} \\
\text{con lo que de balde hacía} \\
\text{quiero ganar un amigo.} \quad (1)
\]

Again, when the king commands him to bring about don Pedro de Luna's death, wisely deciding that the matter will blow over, instead of carrying out the order, he dispatches him on a distant mission, thus anticipating the king's regrets and gaining two friends. Through recognition of the good in others, friends are made. It is the exceptional man who can appreciate noble qualities in a rival--and in one who has just murdered a brother it would seem impossible.

(1) 

\text{Ganar amigos, II, 5.}
In admiration of Fernando's refusal to betray a secret even to avert death, don Fadrique sheathes his sword and declares that such a man must be his friend:

Levantad, ejemplo rare...
de valor y piedad;
símbolo de la amistad
de nobleza espejo claro,
gloria del nombre español...
no solo estáis perdonado,
pero os quedare obligado
si me quiere por amigo...

It is hard for a modern reader to appreciate that the real individual greatness of this act lies in the fact that it is contrary to one of the most deep-rooted feelings of the Spaniard—that of vengeance. Thus don Fadrique's magnanimity takes on a deeper significance. Vengeance is celebrated as a national virtue from the very beginning of Spain's literature; in the Cid there is the episode of the son avenging the affront given his helpless old father, which event and many akin to it have been celebrated in song and ballad through all the ages since. Alarcón following the usual tradition treats vengeance as a virtue in his comedies, particularly in La crueldad por el honor, in which he sets forth the principle that any act, no matter how unnatural it may seem, is preferable to a stain on the family name; and in El Tejedor de Segovia, which has for its central theme the attainment of righteous vengeance.

(1) Idem, I, 12.
(2) Alarcón must have taken the base of his plot for La chápa busca la pena and the plot of one episode in El dueno de las estrellas from this episode in the Cid or from the tale in some of the ballads following it, as the
Indeed, until a debt of "honor" was wiped out by blood, no true Spaniard of the seventeenth century could seriously engage in anything else than the relentless pursuit of his enemy. A different sort of vengeance is also pictured by Alarcón and his brother dramatists. In this case it is purely personal, due to jealousy and unrestraint; Alarcón treats it as a social vice.

It is remarkable, then, that a poet of this period should have endowed his noblest character with a trait transcending even the national ideals. It is but one more instance in which Alarcón points to a reform which came to pass in the centuries after his death.

The men around don Fabrique are swayed by envy and suspicion; the king is easily influenced by prejudice and slander. Yet when they realize that true nobility is in their midst, the contagion spreads—the best in each man rises to the surface. The executioner finds himself in the strange predicament of having four young men clamour for his services, required by only one!

Friendship begets friendship as truly as nobility inspires nobility. The sentiments of all concerned are those of don Fernando:

Le di y me dio, y ha cumplido
El la suya; pues mi vida
Será primero perdido
que yo en amistad vencido. (1)

(2) cont'd from p. 84. Circumstances are identical.

(1) La amistad castigada, III, 10.
The king, overhearing the scene, is so overcome by such examples of heroism and unselfishness, that, catching the spirit, he pardons the three culprits and reinstates Radrique to his favor.

The priceless value of a friend—and the suggestion to improve every opportunity in making one—is thus celebrated in this exalted comedy. However, Alarcon's appreciation of friendship, its self-sacrifice and devotion, its power to uplift and beautify society appears again and again like a vein of gold in the sordid earth from which his characters are made.

(1) E.g. El semejante a sí mismo, I, 2, Leonardo and Juan; II, 12, don Diego and Juan; Los favores del mundo, don Juan and don García.
Chapter III

Love and Courtship.

Al demonio es parecido
el que vive enamorado,
mas perdido y mas penado
y menos arrepentido. (1)

Many of the phases of this chapter have necessarily been touched upon touched upon in the preceding ones. For Alarcón pictures youth, and always youth engaged in the natural pursuit of love.

Even the exceptional poets in his time, including Alarcón, followed a conventional mode of portraying love episodes. The gallantry of gentleman to lady readily took the form of passionate devotion, based on the assumption of her irresistible beauty and his inflammable heart. One glance of feminine eyes was sufficient to set it ablaze; and this accomplished, he must immediately become possessed of a consuming jealousy:

Aún no hay centellos de amor,
¿y ya hay volcanes de celos? (2)

It follows in natural sequence, then, that being in love was synonymous with being mad. Innumerable are the passages in the comedies expressing this belief. And having made his readers realize that the lover is no less than a jealous madman, the dramatist proceeds to wind him up for their edification in a maze of in-

(1) El desdichado en fingir, II, 2.
(2) La industria y la suerte, I, 8.
trigue. Some of the schemes are so involved it is surprising that even as dexterous a poet as Alarcón finds his way out. Los empeños de un enredo and La industria y la suerte are two examples of plots with exceedingly complicated intrigue. Here is the whole play of the latter, however, in six lines:

Verdad es que mi señora
fingió ser Blanca, pensando
que era don Juan, porque Arnesto
fingió ser; y así entrambos
vieron a ser, creyendo
que engañaban, engañados.

The extreme of jealousy is portrayed when the hero of El semojante a sí mismo becomes jealous of himself. By means of an elaborate intrigue he remains at home, though presumably having set out for Peru, personifying a cousin who is supposed to resemble him. All works well until his sweetheart responds to the "cousin's" love, her instinct truer than her penetration. In his doubt of her lies the punishment for his distrust in thus having put her to the test. As has been mentioned, (3) coupled with his jealousy of a rival is the Spaniard's desire for vengeance, which he hugs to his breast; for whatever else he may lose, he still has that left, and scorned in love, he turns to it as naturally as a cloud makes a shadow:

(1) La industria y la suerte, III, 19.

(3) See p. 85.

(2) Best description of jealousy, La amistad castigada, I, 8.
pues me quitas la esperanza
mi amor convierte en rigor;
que un desesperado amor
siempre apela la venganza.  

A woman's life in the Alarconian comedies is solely the page of her courtship, hence as we see her she is controlled by the dominant emotions of her nature in such a crisis. At times she displays the proverbial Spanish pride and arrogance (La culpa busca la pena, I, 2), or she is noble, capable of a steadfastness of devotion and courage as we see her in El Tejedor de Segovia, or again of unselfish renunciation as in El examen de maridos.

Sure and sagacious is her mode of appeal to man; she touches his vanity (El examen de maridos, III, 10); she arouses his sense of her weakness and her need for his protection (El desdichado en fingir, I, 1); she chides him for his faults with tenderness, at the same time awakening his pride and his feeling of chivalry (Los favores del mundo, II, 11, 12). Baffling is her capriciousness, for when she can have a man she doesn’t want him, and when she finds he is unattainable she will have no other; nor is she averse to pursuing him as a last resort (El semajante a si mismo, I, 9, for example, or La verdad sospechosa, I, 8).

The curiosity of Eve is her birthright, which the author considers an inseparable part of her nature;

(1) El semajante a sí mismo, III, 13.
(2) See also El Tejedor de Segovia, B.A.E, pp. 378, 379.
And because of this, in the course of her love, she does not hesitate to pry, eavesdrop, or make use of her servant's ears and eyes. She is skilled in the art of flirting, using her eyes and fan in a language of their own with perfect fluency and safety under the closest chaperonnage (Los empeños de un engaño, II, 6). The picture would not be complete without adding that Alarcón finds her also fickle, rivaling perhaps her lord, the state of whose constancy is probably like that of Tristán's in La verdad sospechosa (I, 3), who says:

...siempre por la que veo me olvido de la que ví.

Many of Alarcón's women are marvelous blendings of sweetness and sanity, patterns of virtue and modesty, and yet nothing is more noticeable than the extremely low estimate of feminine character which he sought to give her at times. She is almost made to have no character at all! Knowing she must marry if she would enjoy the privileges of freedom, she will sacrifice her virtue, if need be, or will stoop to the meanest forms of deceit in reaching her goal. Never was it held to be more true by man or maid that

lícito es cualquier delito
para no morir de amor. (1)

Only in the case of the maid the quotation would be

(1) El semejante a sí mismo, I, 5. See Ganar amigos, II, 12.
(2) Los pechos privilegiados, II, 15.
truer if it ended, "Para no morir sin casar". This type of woman is cold and calculating, feels no pangs of conscience when she betrays a friend (Todo es ventura, III, 13), or holds one lover in reserve until she is quite sure of another (La amistad castigada, II, 3), and she rivals the miner in his gold digging in her search for a suitor or husband able to shower her with lavish attentions and luxuries. A contemporary of the period, the Venetian ambassador in Spain at the time of Clavaro's fall writes: "In the royal palace the gentlemen are permitted to carry on with the ladies of the queen the relations they call "gallanting", in which lavishness, ostentation, and expenditures are carried to such an extraordinary excess as to be beyond belief, although here it is considered the most ordinary thing in the world for rivalry and competition to do away with all moderation..." (1)

Not only did Alarcon constantly endeavor to teach the evil of avaricious ambition, but also an everpresent motive. He portrays the freedom with which women seek to evade convention and restraint, the veiled ladies meeting their lovers surreptitiously on the Calle Mayor and walking unaccompanied about the streets.

(1) Hume, p. 54, (quoting British Museum MS. Add. 8701), idem.

(2) E.g. La industria y la suerte, III, 3, "Don Juan ha de ser mi esposo," etc.
To counteract such laxities comedies such as *La cueva de Salamanca* contain the old, old story of the woman's reward for virtue: here the youth who came to dishonor stayed to wed, so prepossessed was he with his sweetheart's goodness. Her familiar argument

\[
\text{si has de casarte, no quieres que haya yo el do ruín; y si me engañas, no quiero quedar sin honra y sin ti.}\]

is still more forcible when expressed from the man's point of view,

\[
\text{Al fin, sobre mi palabra me dijo, lo que llaman ellas su honra... en habiendo gozado, conoci la diferencia que hay del díos deseo a la posesión quíeta, vaneése, y a pocos días la dejo burlada y necia.}\]

*La manganilla de Melilla* is a beautiful love story of the Moorish captive Alma. She is glad to take refuge among the Christians, even though she fears them, in order to escape marriage with a cruel captain in her father's army. Varegas who has rescued her from the fate awaiting her at the hands of her abductor, plans to return her to the Moors in accordance with the terms of agreement between the warring peoples. He undergoes a severe struggle, his love for her finally dominated by his sense of honor.

(1) *La Cueva de Salamanca*, III, p. 96, B.A.E.

(2) *El desdichado en fingir*, I, 10.
She reproaches him,

...muestra que puede mas
tu honor que mi amor en ti. (1)

but he withstands the double temptation—that of holding
her as his mistress and of being unfaithful to the agree-
ment with the enemy. His faith in the Christian God up-
holds him in his victory over self:

¡Gracias os doy, Sacro Autor
de las causas, que me veo
vencedor de mi deseo,
de mi mismo vencedor! (2)

At length Alina becomes a christian, a fitting albeit
hackneyed solution to their difficult situation. As a
christian subject she now can be his wife and be her
defender against the entire Moorish army if need be. To
modern readers this colorful romance in which the virtues
of continence and a man's high sense of honor are exalted
is a far more acceptable means of teaching the desired
moral than the preceding examples cited.

Despite the fact of his frequent disregard of
women's virtue in his love making, a fine sort of chivalry
existed in the really noble young men of the day. (3) No
true gentleman would break his word to sweetheart or friend
or betray a confidence. Though don Vasco, the hero in
Siempre ayuda la verdad, has just had assurance that his
love of six years standing is reciprocated, he denies it

(1) La manganilla de Melilla, II, p.312,B.A.E.

to the king, explaining later to his servant,

Advíerte que entre los nobles
se tiene a término bajo
decir a nadie el favor.

Alarcon himself practiced what he preaches here—to the
disappointment of posterity.

More honorable even is don Fernando in Ganar
amigos. He has promised Flor not to reveal the fact
that he is her suitor. The moment arrives when he has
fallen beneath his opponent's sword; by breaking his
word to her he can save his life, but he chooses death
with the words,

...conmigo,
ha de morir mi secreto.  (1)

One of the ugliest vices to which Alarcon calls
attention is the readiness of the married woman to err.
The freedom of her new state, the possession of a husband,
and her wider knowledge of life tend to make her more
approachable and accessible. For this reason, in El dueño
de las estrellas, for instance, the king consents to the
marriage of the woman he loves with one of his subjects—
hoping to secure afterwards the favor denied before. His
tempter, the courtezan, argues in this wise:

La pena que te fatiga
has de remedado con dar
licencia para casar
con licurgo a tu enemiga.

(1) Ganar amigos, I, 12.
In telling his master about the different kinds of
women in Madrid, Tristán thus describes this class of
married women: by showing how the woman of ill fame uses
marriage as a mask:

Bellas casadas verás
conversables y discretas,
...éstas, con la conjunción
de maridos placenteros,
influyen en extranjeros
dadivosa condición.
otras hay cuyos maridos
a comisiones se van,
o que en Italia entretenidos.
no todas dan verdad
en esto; que mil taimadas
suelen fingirse casadas
por vivir con libertad.

A further possible reason for this condition is suggested,
in the prearranged marriage, of which Alarcón evidently
did not approve. For Leonor (Los empeños de un engano, I, 1)
says that since her marriage has been arranged by agreement
she is not sorry to lose what she did not desire to win,
adding that where love is there is no necessity for a con-
tract.

In considering the numerous phases of society
which Alarcón exposed or censured, it is remarkable to
realize that in spite of these, he preserves the color

(1) El dueno de las estrellas, III, 6.
charm and beauty of the tale he unfolds. And it is still more remarkable when we consider that he must present all these things, plus the emotions of his characters, through conventional love scenes(1). By his genius he has preserved the atmosphere of romance in spite of restrictions and his moral aim. All the glamour of starry skies and moonlight meetings, the mystery of soft eyes behind lattice or roja, the sign language of too-guarded love laughing at the confident elders, impassioned and whispered words—the stealing of forbidden fruit—is in the picture, or for variation there is the balcony scene of Romeo and Juliet savor, and often the gay knight in the street below is surprised by a jealous rival whereupon high words and clashing swords send the lady pale and fainting to the arms of her maid.

Because of this successful romantic treatment, though portraying the most flagrantly wicked aspects of society at times, Alarcón's comedies never give an impression of sordidness and are seldom offensive to good taste.

(1) E.g: La manganilla de Melilla, Alima and Vanegas; Quien mal anda en mal acaba, doña Aldonza and Roman; La prueba de las promesas, Aurora and Filipo.
Chapter IV
Law, Government, Religion.

A mí me toca el dar avisos. (1)

If Hartzenbusch in his estimate that the plays in the Primera parte were written by 1621 (P.VIII), and Fernández-Guerra that La verdad sospechosa was written in 1619 (P.306), it is clear that at first Alarcón was concerned with his struggle to attain favor as shown in the three philosophical plays bearing upon the instability of worldly success and the element of chance in its attainment, Los favores del mundo, La industria y la suerte, and Todo es ventura. At this time La Cueva de Salamanca shows him reminiscent of his own student days, and Las paredes ovén and La verdad sospechosa resentful of the reception scandal-loving tongues accorded both him and his productions at court. Very naturally, also, to this period belong his dramas portraying, objectively, fickleness, Mudarse por mejorarase, and jealousy, El semejante a sí mismo, the commonest aspects of love open to the observer, as well as his subjective love story, Las paredes ovén.

The plays in the segunda parte are not as personal and do not deal with any phase of love as a primary

(1) El dueño de las estrellas, III.
object, save El examen de maridos in which he exhorts women to use reason in the selection of a mate, but with man's relation to others in society: the need of friends (ganar amigos); government (el dueño de las estrellas); religion (El Anticristo; La manganilla de Melilla); loyalty to the king (los pechos privilegiados); honor at any cost (la envidia por el honor).

The shameful war among the king's favorites pictured in El Tejedor de Segovia was but a reflection of the actual struggle at court between Lerma and his adherents, and Lerma's son, the count-duke of Olivares and his following near the time of Philip III's death. A great hue and cry was raised against Lerma's favorite, Rodrigo Calderón, whom Olivares accused of assassinating a plebeian on the open road-way, and of having had part in the queen's death. Listening to Olivares, the king despoiled Calderón of all the honors and possessions he had lavished upon him, agreeing to his imprisonment and later his terrible public torture, 1619.(1)

Those in power, in expectation of office themselves, aroused sedition in order to equal the greater; the greater in order to become still more powerful did likewise... The men

(1) La Fuente. La historia de España, v.15, pp. 457-467.
of ancient valor and chivalry were being extinguished...
The provinces of Portugal, Catalonia, and Flanders...arose
in rebellion. (1)

It will be seen in the plot of El tejedor de Segovia, which follows, that the transition from these
historical facts to fiction is but slight. When don
Fernando Ramírez, the hero of the drama, returns from vic-
torious combat with the Moors, it is to find that through
false testimony and treason of a jealous rival, the Marqués
Suero Pelaez, his father has been beheaded. Upon learning
that his sister has been seduced by the Marqués' son, ven-
geance becomes the only motive of Fernando's life. Perse-
cuted by his enemies, powerful in that they are king's fa-
vorites, Fernando is obliged to defend himself in a tower
against their hired assassains, who finally lay siege to
the place with the purpose of starving him to death.
Teodora, living close by, witnesses his indomitable cour-
age, falls in love with him, and aids him to escape. To-
gether they flee to Segovia where they live disguised as
weavers. It so happens that the young Pelaez is attending
court in Segovia where he becomes enamoured of Teodora and

attempts to enter the weaver's cottage. Fernández's opposition meets with the punishment of imprisonment. In jail he arouses the respect and admiration of his fellow captives, contrives his own escape together with that of all the others who care to follow him. He, Teodora, and the band take refuge in the mountains of Guadarrama. Because of the persecutions and unjust laws at the hands of the king's ministers, many flock to join his ranks until the outlaws rival the numbers of Robin Hood's band. From this point the tale deals with Fernández's revenge and reinstatement in favor. The hatred, conspiracy, and seething rebellion, which make up the background of the drama and form the vehicle for its action is a picture of contemporary conditions in Spain.

Julián Pelaez, vaunting himself in his power, imprisoned all who dared to oppose him. Following him and enveloping him in a cloud of hate-breeding injustice and scandal. The heroic figure of the Tejedor is Alarcón's expression of opposition to such ministers as then existed; this drama is his remonstrance against not only the misgovernment of the favorite, but of the entire system of officials down to the alguacil and jail keeper.
There is much satirization in side-play. For example, the erstwhile bandit, don Fernando, learns from a constable passing his way that his own (Fernando's) outlawry is overshadowed by more serious rebellions. The scene is a clever portrayal of the dishonesty of the police and the injustice to the poor: It begins,

D. Fernando ¿Qué dinero llevas?  
Alguacil Poco.  
D. Fernando Pues, ¿no has hurtado estos días?  
Alguacil Anda muy corto el oficio;  
que esta la corte perdida,  
sólo delinquen los pobres  
no peca la gente rica.  
Que lo que corrige y ajusta  
no la virtud, la avaricia.  

For then as now the delinquent found that safety and favorable considerations were costly; but the rich man, in spite of his avarice, realized from experience

¡Qué gran negociador es el dinero!  

Indiscriminate freeing of prisoners and the inefficiency and laxity of jailers was fostered at this period of history through the generous habit of emptying jails on all great occasions for celebration. In addition to a jail scene in this drama suggesting conditions, La Cueva de Sala-

(1) El Tejedor de Segovia, II, 3.  
(2) Ganar amigos, III, 1.
mance contains the following: one of the students who has stolen the jailer’s keys proceeds to administer justice, freeing each prisoner after questioning him regarding his crime. The author ludicrously exposes the false system of justice, and certain other vices, in the answers of the prisoners:

D. Diego ¿Por qué causa praso estás?
Preso I Don Sancho se ha querellado de que en su casa me ha hallado con una hija suya.
D. Diego ¿Hay más?
Preso I N o más.
D. Diego Injusta querella don Sancho de ti formó, porque si ella admitió, la que le ha ofendido es ella.
Libre estás.
D. Diego T ú, ¿por qué estás preso? Dilo brevemente.
Preso II Porque maté a un maldiciente.
D. Diego ¿Que buen gusto! Libre vas.
¿Y tú, ¿por qué?
Preso III D í a un cochero extento una cuchillada.
D. Diego Cosa tan bien empleada, la premiara yo primero.
Libre vas...

Murders in the open streets had become scandalously frequent, mostly it was said, prompted by private vengeance, and rarely punished. (2) Alarcón bears testimony to this fact directly through like murder scenes in five of his plays,

(1) La Cueva de Salamanca, III.

(2) Hume, op. cit. p.58.
not counting six others concerned with the process of man-slaughter by means of duelling. If he shows punishment for murder it follows from the natural consequences and rarely from the rigor of the law. What a king does his subjects copy; both Philip II and IV had been the "impulse that guided" the assassination of certain nobles, in each case causing a profound sensation and setting all tongues wagging. (1) Therefore when Alarcón's audience witnessed murder at the instigation of the king, they found nothing impossible or merely fictitious in the portrayal.

For this romantic and colorful plot of the Tejedor, then, these now historical facts were more than a basis. There still remained the field of actual law and government to picture and improve, divorced from the personalities responsible for it. With his knowledge of law, his sane judgment, and his keen observation, Alarcón no doubt felt qualified to point the way to wiser legislation. This he does in El dueno de las estrellas, judiciously placing the setting in Creta. After the writing of this comedy he could have with truth said,

(1) Hume, ubi supra.
Fuí legítimo tutor
del Rey...haciendo
leyes, destruyendo abusos,
dando castigos y premios.  (1)

He introduces the figure of Lycurgus, the noted lawgiver, having him take over the government of the island in the king's stead, who like Philip II is too engrossed in religion to rule:

Que el cargo de reinar no me reserve
tiempo que dar al culto de Minerva. (2)

With this ordinarily dry material for his inspiration, the poet incorporated with real art in the highly interesting tragedy useful information regarding the means by which to banish idleness; to be prepared in case of war; to provide for widows of nobles; to provide for the poor; to remunerate with judgement officers of the law; and to secure the thorough disgrace of slanderers. He translated the thoughts of the people by asking for the punishment of death for evil ministers, alluding to the recent fall of the luckless Calderón. (3) He urges that foreigners liv-

(1) El dueño de las estrellas, II, 1.
(2) Idem, II, 1.
(3) Fernández-Guerra; op.cit., p.281.

It is interesting to note that in 1627, a year after Alarcón retired from literary life, King Philip IV published a document containing this clause, "If any minister of your Council does any
ing in Spain should be treated as neighbors and subjects in order to amalgamate them with the natives to the good of the country, (referring, no doubt, to the severe treatment and final expulsion of the Moors in 1610, to which was due in large part Spain's agricultural and industrial ruin); and that banishment as a punishment be discontinued.

(1) He expresses the universal dislike for a foreign sovereign,

...los vasallos quieren
Rey nativo, no supuesto,
y siempre les es odioso
legislador forastero.  

and the evil effects of the sudden making and revoking of decrees, advising that 'twere better first to try out pub-

unjust act, if he fails to administer justice righteously, or if any grievance is inflicted by him on my subjects, severe punishment must be meted out to him. Great vigilance must be exercised by you in this respect. Huma, op. cit. p. 187.

For a parallel of this speech, see Alarcon's in El dueño de las estrellas, II, 2:

Lo cuarto, que a los ministros
de justicia tan severo
castigudís, que den al mundo
universal escarmiento;
porque de todos estados
públicos suplicios vec...
y persuadirme no puedo
que della la causa sea
ser todos justos y rectos, etc.

(1) El dueño de las estrellas, II, 8.

(2) Idem. II, 1.
lic sentiment,

Consultar las voluntades del pueblo en las novedades es el modo de acertarlos...
Que revocar brevemente lo que ha mandado, es mostrar que es liviano en revocar, o fué en mandar imprudente. (1)

"The Cortes in 1590, when Lerma demanded the unheard of increases in taxes, earnestly prayed the king to attend to their long-neglected petitions for a readjustment of expenditures and taxation. 'Castile is depopulated, as you may see; the people in the villages being now insufficient for the urgently necessary agricultural work...'
The common people were starving." In one short sentence Alarcón suggests their poverty:

¡Hombre rico! ¿en un aldea qué riqueza puede haber? (2)

"The formerly prosperous cloth-weaving industry was rapidly being strangled by the terrible 'alcabala' tax, imposed upon all commodities every time they changed hands by sale. The price of necessary articles was enormously and constantly rising, owing to the tampering of Lerma with the currency, the dwarfing of industry... and the greatly increasing de-

(1) Idem, III, 8.
(2) El Tejedor de Segovia, I, 4.
mand of commodities by America. Whilst the sternest
decrees were issued in rapid succession against luxury in
dress and living, the advent of Lerma and the host of
greedy aristocrats to power had caused a perfect frenzy for
magnificence in attire; and the vast amounts of money
spent in costly stuffs and precious embroideries etc.,
were almost entirely sent abroad...thus the great sums
that arrived in Seville every year from the Indies to a
large extent never penetrated Spain at all, but were
transhipped at once to other countries, either in ex-
change for foreign commodities which unwise sumptuary de-
crees and faulty finance prevented from being produced in
Spain..." (1) Certainly this is an ugly picture! And
how must such a state of affairs have harrowed Alarcón's far-
sighted and orderly nature! Through Zaratán, the gracioso
in La equalidad por el honor (which also pictures the country
in a teeming state of rebellion) who claims he too would
be a Solon if given the opportunity, the poet-administrator
fairly squanders good advice for the guidance of the king's
ministers. The chief points he makes are: to put a stop
to the bad faith and avarice of lawyers who stir up strife,

by having them pay the costs of the condemned; to increase the number of mechanics and laborers by forbidding the sons of men engaged in these trades the study of letters and law; to cease the levying of taxes on articles of necessity, transferring it to the luxuries; to stop the banishment of foreigners' wives, whose husbands only follow them; to prevent men who ought to be soldiers or workmen from holding offices women could fill—such as selling thread and silk. And last, to force the harlot to go abroad with covered face, so that the lady, for the sake of opinion, would uncover hers..." (1)

The economic aspect of extravagance referred to, particularly the high fluted ruffs which Alarcón hated because of his short neck, is pointed out with a plea for its correction:

Me holgara que saliera premática que impidiera esos vanos cangilones. Que demos esos engaños, con su holanda el extranjero saca de España el dinero para nuestros daños; una valoncilla angosta usándose, la estuviera bien al rostro, y se anduviera más a gusto a menos costa.

(1) La crueldad por el honor, III, 3.
(2) La verdad sospechosa, I, 3.
In 1614 one of His Majesty's huntsmen wounded a workman, whereupon the aggressor was seized by two constables. Some gentlemen of the nobility requested his release, and upon its refusal, freed the prisoner by force leaving one officer wounded. Time passed and nothing was done until popular clamor brought about a lukewarm punishment. Great was the stir in Madrid and great the argument, the poor claiming equal justice, the nobility that the constables should not have resisted their superiors. (1) So great had been the abuse by the influential that Alarcón seized upon this opportunity, reproducing the event almost identically in Todo es ventura. (I, 5, 7).

His constables, however, being pressed by the noble to give up their prisoner, show their knowledge of the futility of further resistance by bowing to the will of power,

Pues menor inconveniente
es librar un delincuente
que indignar a un gran senor.     (2)

The characteristics of a people can be judged from watching it while at play. The theatre at this time was one of the chief amusements of the people, but even were the element of disorder prevailed among the mosqueros, who were a thorn in the side of the poets and ac-

(1) Fernández-Guerra, op.cit., pp. 199-200.
(2) Todo es ventura, I, 6.
Alarcón urges a reform, particularly of the hissing, saying that even though an author may be divine,

...si no remedia
esta nueva introducción
de los silbos, es forzoso
que pierda el más ingenioso
a los versos la afición. (1)

The foregoing are the principal aspects of socio-
logical matters touched upon by the dramatist. We may
proceed from them to the consideration of religion.

Religion

No tiene el infierno
fuerza contra Dios eterno. (2)

The only phase of religion which Alarcón
stresses is the triumph of the christian over black magic,
witchery, and the infidel. The scandalous immorality at
the court, arising apparently from the absolute degeneration
of religion into a formula, and of its ceasing to be a guide
of conduct, has been noted in preceding chapters. Nowhere
does the author imply this to be the case, but the entire
lack, save in La manganilla de Melilla and El Antioriato of
a personal faith touching everyday-life points with a
surer finger to the true state of religion than if Alarcón

(1) Idem, I, 8. (2) El Antioriato, III.
had exposed it consciously and directly.

The long struggle with the Moors, the continuous clash of the infidel and christian faith, had engendered in the Spaniard a feeling for the church such as he had for his country; it was an institution to be protected against opposition, encroachment or invasion. In part such was the spirit of the Puritans who, in their zeal to retain the religious formula they so ardently desired, overlooked the true christian spirit.

Witchery, sacrilege, and black magic were hunted by the Inquisition while immorality and murder stalked through the streets of the Capital. Terrified stories were told, says Hume, of horrible irreligious rites being carried on in conventual houses, and particulars of awful scandals of the sort were continually under investigation. (l) It is not surprising, then, that such lurid material, "front page stuff" today, should have furnished the underlying motive for one of Alarcón's first comedies, La Cueva de Salamanca. He is more concerned at this time with the stage effects and surprises he is able to produce by means

(1) Hume, op.cit. p. 271.
of the supposed magical power of the Spanish Merlin than with the religious aspect. However, in the end, after the students have been aided and abetted in their mischief making by the magician, a trial is held in which there is discussion and argument concerning whether the art of magic is lawful or not. The investigators of the Inquisition and the church versus the magician (III). After displaying considerable knowledge of the claims of magic, Alarcón ends the trial with a verdict against the art by the old conclusion that it is the work of the devil. Quien mal anda en mal acaba contains a very Spanish version of Faustian flavor in which the licentious villain of the piece is enabled through his league with Mephisto to so bewitch the beautiful girl he desires that her lover becomes grotesque and offensive in her sight, while she cannot gaze sufficiently upon her charmer—representing a learned doctor—come to cure her of her malady. It is the servants who, through their firm and simple faith, detect the fraud and rout the devilish impostor. Tristán expresses the prevailing sentiment,

Yo soy...
un católico cristiano
testarudo aragonés;
y no tiene el mundo acerros
iguales a mi coraje
para impedir el ultraje
de mi Dios y de mis fueros... (1)

which can be seen is entirely a matter of the church
and the devil. At the same time that Tristan scorns
the art prohibited by the church, he is brimming over
with his own particular and ignorant set of supersti-
tions and fears of the supernatural. The devil finally
withdraws his aid, forsaking the poor human whom he has
beguiled, saying:

Mi furor,
Román, no os puede valer.
Aquí dió fin mi poder
porque el del cielo os mayor. (2)

El Anticristo deals entirely with the subject of
the infidel impostor who is outwitted, subjected, and de-
stroyed by means of a woman's pure christian faith. The
second scene in act I is exceptionally revolting and in-
cestuons. Whether it was entirely due to this or to
the machinations of his enemies who threw a bad smelling
oil about the theatre, the play was hissed off the stage.
It is certain that no modern audience would endure the of-
fensiveness or boredom of the play.

(1) Quien mal anda en mal acaba, I, 17.
(2) El Anticristo, III, 19.
It is highly suggestive that for the medium of the play, *La manganilla de Melilla*, which sets forth the noble christian virtues, Alarcón has chosen the love story of a christian officer and a Moorish captive maid, with a setting amid the surroundings of the Spanish army arrayed against the Moor. The charm of the Arabian names and atmosphere and the beauty of the romance serve as a thoroughly acceptable background for the exposition of God's power to strengthen man in his individual struggles, as well as His power to lead the christian faith to victory. Alima, the Moorish girl becomes a christian, but Manegas, fearing her conversion is feigned, denies that he loves her, being more willing to lose her to the Moorish chieftan whom she hates than to see her falsely accept God. He determines to return her, in accordance with his duty and ideal, for

Un cristiano
español y valeroso
no puede engañar.  (1)

In making the sacrifice of his heart for his faith he calls upon God for grace,

Mi Dios, aquí
me dad favor, que de mí
sacrificio os he de hacer.  (3)

(1) *La manganilla de Melilla*, III.

(2) *Idem*, II.
Learning by a clever test that her faith is real, his joy mounts in a paen of triumph glorifying the strength of him who puts his trust in God,

Y el gran gozo me enloquece,
de saber, que no enflaquece
ese propósito en tí.
Venga toda Barbería;
que en Dios mi esperanza fundo,
y no hay poder en el mundo
contra aquél que en Dios confía. (1)

Even in portraying Christianity in the heart of man, the idea of struggle is uppermost, the victory of faith over all things. Thus is the Christian during this age a Crusader, and particularly if he be a Spaniard.

(1) Idem, II.
Chapter V

Philosophy

Porque hay favorecidos, hay celosos, despierta el cuidadoso al descuidado, y desdichas hay porque hay dichosos. (1)

Just as Alarcón has portrayed woman beautiful in ideal when playing the leading role in his comedies, but often ignoble in actuality when living under his observation in Madrid, so he has formulated an inspiring philosophy of life on the shining surface of his work, beneath which runs a dark undercurrent of bitter disillusionment tempered somewhat by his belief in the law of opposites, of compensation, and of average.

A glance through the titles and plots of his compositions yields a practical philosophy containing all the rules necessary for the guidance of a useful and contented life, spent in harmony with companions and circumstances. To the disheartened or envious he would say through Todo es ventura that a very great measure of life's success depends upon the mere turn of fortune's wheel—blind luck; but lest the idle or shiftless be tempted to leave his destiny entirely in the hands of fate, he warns in La industria y la suerte that a man must avoid scheming

(1) La prueba de las promesas, III, p.443, B.A.E.
and be honest and deserving; and that he may be prevented from setting too much store upon the value of worldly considerations and become overly proud, ambitious, or avaricious, he writes *Los favores del Mundo*, showing that all the earth has to give is of short duration, and man's condition from day to day is as unstable and insecure as life itself.

Should man be grief stricken or unfortunate, he offers the comforting doctrine of *No hay mal que por bien no venga*; and would he be happy, he points out in *Ganar amigos*, there is no surer way than by making friends and being willing to sacrifice for others.

"It is just to confess immediately", says Hartzenbusch, "that the titles of some comedies promise more than the work fulfils, as happens in *La culpa busca la pena* and *No hay mal que por bien no venga*; in others the philosophical thought is developed in a tale overflowing with novelties and crowded with incidents in the midst of which that thought disappears, as in *Ganar amigos*.

(1) Fernández-Guerra finds similar fault with *Todo es ventura*, saying, "Had it been one of his works when his genius was ripe, he would not have had any merit placed

in the protagonist, but on the contrary would have put the entire stress on the force of destiny..., as the title would lead one to expect."(1)

At the time of writing this latter comedy, Alarcón was endeavoring to console himself, because he had failed where lesser men had succeeded, in the belief that luck is the controlling element in the affairs of men. At the same time he demonstrated that such a thesis as "All is luck" was untenable in that he placed some deserving worth in the person of the hero. If there is any lack of "merit", the humble opinion of the writer is that it lies in the misleading title and not in the development of the philosophy. And even the title, when compared with other passages, need not be taken literally. For instance, in observing that deceit works better than truth with the powerful, he says,

... con el poderoso
siempre el engaño es dichoso
y la verdad desdichado.  (2)

And when he is disappointed in human nature after witness-

(1) Fernandez-Guerra: op. cit., p.201.
(2) La manguilla de Melilla, III.
ing some particularly envious or ungrateful act (such as when the duke of Lerma set aside his father and trampled upon him and his friends to their ruin) he is moved to the statement that

Ser ingrato
(es) delito el más torpe y feo
el más detestable y más
indigno de nobles pechos...

and so loses his faith in man who, like the Greeks, need to be watched when bringing gifts, that he caustically says,

En la corte es menester
con este cuidado andar;
que nadie llega a besar
sin intento de morder.

More consistent than Todo es ventura, however, is La industria y la suerte, wherein the noble qualities of the hero are purposely made to overcome obstacles hand in hand with the element of luck.

There is little doubt but that had Alarcón not been malformed and unappreciated, his philosophy of life would have been a different one. For it is, of course, natural that each man’s theory should develop out of his

(1) La culpa busca la pena, II, 12.
(2) Los favores del mundo, I, 7.
own problems. Possessing money and influence, his belief that wealth and luck were the keys to all doors would probably not have been so abiding. Or, at least, even with his power of observation and sharp faculty of penetrating political sham and social trickery, it could not have been so bitter. It is worth noting in this connection that in his three purely philosophical plays, Todo es ventura, La industria y la suerte, and Los favores del mundo, the entire argument centers around success,—how it is attained, what it is, and whether, after all, it is worth the pains of securing.

He expresses a deep disillusion of life in general frequently, as in the following speech,

¡Linda cosa!
Porque si es bobá la hermosa.
es de teñido papel
una bien formada flor,
que de lejos vista agrada
y cerca no vale nada
porque falta olor.

La prueba de las promesas, Mudarse por mejorarse, and La culpa busca la pena are of partly philosophical intent, showing at the same time the ugliness of certain vices. The moralist seldom loses sight of the haughtiness of

(1) Mudarse por mejorarse, I, 5.
power and man's ingratitude, upon which he based his principal philosophical deductions of life. *La prueba de las promesas* is directed against those who are lavish and ambitious in promising what they will do in grateful appreciation of the help required to place them in power, but who afterwards, able to stand alone, forget their solicitation and promises, even despising and rending their benefactor. From this he deduces the philosophy that the smallest amount of fulfilment is worth more than the greatest amount of promising, and that the wisest course in life is never to borrow from present enjoyment, or risk it, for future satisfaction. To him who is foolish enough to do so, he says

Necio ambicioso,
contra tus intentos pecas,
pues buscas el bien, y truecas
lo cierto por lo dudoso.
Sabes tú que gozarás
lo porvenir que apercibes?
Acomoda lo que vives,
y no lo que vivirás. (1)

for, he continues, hope is vain:

Hoy vivo: esperanza es vana
la de mañana, y no doy
los certidumbres de hoy
por las dudas de mañana. (2)

(1) No hay mal que por bien no venga, II, 4.
(2) Ubi supra.
By this he does not mean to be unprepared for the future, plainly stating

...Quien es cuerdo
Aunque atiende a lo presente,
previene lo venidero.  (1)

The philosophical idea underlying the play Mudarase por mejorarse, very delightfully portraying fickleness, which he calls the worst defect in man (2), is that as long as the world lasts there will be human beings who will benefit themselves and follow their selfish desires and ambitions in spite of being unfaithful to obligations, or fickle in placing their affections, entirely regardless of the cost to others. The finer sensibilities of faithfulness he sarcastically says, are unknown to court life,

Que dicen que esos puntillos
son para hidalgos de aldea.  (3)

La culpa busca la pena is yet another development of the Spanish theme of "honor" worship, with plot akin to the legends of the Cid. The psychology of restitution is unintelligible, the satisfaction of honor bloodthirsty and unnatural to any mind but that of the 17th century Spaniard. For the affront to his old father the

(1) El examen de maridos, III. 16.
(2) Idem, I, 16.
(3) Idem, III, 9.
son must kill his sweetheart's brother, but in restitution for the loss of her kinsman and protector he becomes her husband. Amidst this terrible array of opposing emotions the philosopher comes back to the question of man's fate. Is it controlled by blind and capricious fortune, or by some divine purpose shrouded in mystery?

¿Son éstos delirios de la fortuna, que dispensa los efectos sin atender a las causas, o son del cielo misterios?

Notwithstanding the fact that the remaining comedies are concerned chiefly with the portrayal of customs, the satirization and correction of vices, or the deifying virtues, in each the philosophical mind of the poet perches on the side, as it were, drawing wise conclusions about the business of living. From the remarks of this avid observer on love, for example, a physiology of the human species under stress of this passion could be written—with a philosophical appendix as a result of findings. It could start like this:

Ningun consejo te doy; que en amor es necedad.

El semejante a si mismo, III, 9.

Que de enviudar y heredar ninguno se ha entristecido.

El dueño de las estrellas, III, 13

(1) La culpa busca la pena, II, 17.
Ya conozco en mi impaciencia que es la misma resistencia incentive del amor.  

Los pechos privilegiados, II, 13.

Borqué el amante que huye seguirle es ponerle espuelas.  

El examen de maridos, I, 14.

Jamás acuséis la acción hasta ver de ella el efecto.  

La prueba de las promesas, II, 3.

¡Qué pasado un amante aborrecido!  

Los empeños de un engaño, I, 11.

Que no hay más despertador que él, los de amor dormido  

El dueño de las estrellas, II, 14.

eetc. etc. etc.

Alarcón's cleverness, insight, and wisdom are amazing. His views concerning every ramification of life and the human soul are so multiple and profound as almost to stun the imagination. There is hardly a phase of existence which he does not penetrate and interpret. He learned to philosophize even about his own ugliness, deciding that after all,  

...es muy breve la fortuna que se funda en la belleza, y si la vejez empieza me he de quedar a la luna.  

and to realize that man appreciates what he has when he

(1) Todo es ventura, III, 3.
compares himself to others still less favored,

Que la salud más se estima
cuando un enfermo ve. (1)

Above all, he consoled himself and all who are afflicted or deficient in some way, or whose fortunes might be compared unfavorably with those around him in his unsurpassed declaration of the law of compensation which has been referred to in the introduction of this thesis. (2)

He explains man's restlessness and dissatisfaction as the result of his unassuaged ambition:

¿Quién ha tenido reposo
en el más feliz estado;
y quién fuera desdichado
si se juzgara dichoso? (3)

It is a marvelous fashion, therefore, that Alarcón shows himself as a combination of poet, moralizer, and philosopher. "If the disdain and injustice of his contemporaries were great, great has been the recognition of posterity. The drama has taken the beneficent course towards which his impulse first directed it. Time is the wise one, which alone was able to discover the literary

(1) _La industria y la suerte_, III, 3.
(2) p. 10.
(3) _La prueba de las promesas_, II, 1.
learning and the true delight found enclosed in Alarcon's comedies. The gods loved him most because he was the least fortunate." (1)

Conclusion

A summary of the principal sociological aspects touched upon in each comedy, its purpose (aside from that of entertainment), and its thesis, or moral, if those are present, are as follows:

1. La amistad castigada:

   Loyalty to king; intrigue; impatience of nobles to fill posts without waiting for them to be vacated in a natural way; flattery; weakness of king's will power and morals; jealousy; power of money versus right and worth; favoritism of king; frequent changes in favorites; rebellion; treason.

   Thesis: Loyalty to the king, be he right or wrong, should come next to devotion to God, and before all personal matters or considerations.

   Moral: Disloyalty to the king, no matter what the circumstances, will result in personal unhappiness and loss of the trust of those in high places.

2. El antichristo:

   Incest and immorality; infidelity; witchcraft; usurpation; lying; blasphemy; purity of christian faith and morals.

   Purpose: To show the triumph of christian faith
and purity of woman over evil and the infidel.

Moral: The true Christian cannot be deceived by false prophets.

3. La crueldad por el honor:

Laxities of old laws as well as certain social and industrial vices that were ruining the country; disloyalty of subject; immorality; treason; usurpation; high loyalty of subject; vengeance.

Moral: Honor of family name is to be preserved from disgrace at any cost (as indicated in the title).

4. La Cueva de Salamanca:

Wildness of young men expressed in public disorder and law-breaking; profligacy; prison laxity; intrigue; inefficiency of jailers and officials; necromancy and black magic; murders; promises instead of acts; woman's virtue and strength.

Moral: Following the devil leads into diverse difficulties, while virtuous conduct is rewarded.

5. La culpa busca la pena:

Vengeance; murder; jealousy; woman's immodesty and forwardness in pursuing man; duelling; family honor;
insulting old age; friendship; retribution.

Moral: An insult to an old man deserves severe punishment and even death. (As indicated in title).

6. El desdichado en fingir:

Assassination by order of king; licentiousness of king and subject; slandering; jealousy; intrigue; deceit; lying; lightness of esteem for woman's honor; fickleness; woman's false valuation of money; effect of faith in woman in a man's life.

Moral: Troubles beset the path of the deceiver (as indicated in title).

7. El dueño de las estrellas:

Laxity of government; dishonor and licentiousness of kings and princes; lack of honor in married woman; fidelity of the wife; the real protector of a woman's honor—her virtue.

Purpose: An attack upon the laws and different vices and customs affecting the state.

Moral: A man is controller of his own destiny (as indicated in title).
8. Los empeños de un engaño:

Intrigue; deceit; jealousy; woman’s immodesty and forwardness in pursuit of man; flirting; lack of gentlemanly qualities in those of good birth; power and influence versus merit; duelling.

Moral: Trials result from deceiving and intrigue (as indicated in title).

9. El examen de maridos:

Woman’s love of money and position; intrigue; slander; vanity of men; certain personal faults and peculiarities, such as bad breath; fickleness; eavesdropping of servants; pride (as a virtue); wit; instinct of woman; wisdom; generosity in friendship, even in severe rivalry; revenge.

Thesis: To show that women choose their husbands through blind impulse, guided by instinct and not reason.

Purpose: To encourage women to use wisdom in their choice of a husband.

10. Los favores del mundo:

Favoritism and change of favorites; forwardness and immodesty in woman’s pursuit of man; fickleness of men; corrupt ideals at court; double dealing of ministers;
women begging—the "give me" and "bring me" type; power of money versus worth; miscellaneous weaknesses of woman; magnanimity; christianity; true nobility; self control; friendship.

Moral: Do not set too much value upon the pleasures or disappointments of life, for human conditions are of short duration and fortune is fickle.

11. Ganar amigos:

Absolutism of king; assassination by order of king; murder; favoritism and change of favorites; lack of virtue in woman; jealousy; deceit; fickleness; revenge; traitorousness and deceit; self sacrifice for the good of others; loyalty to king and friendship; generosity; nobility; tact; forgiveness; ability to see good in others; faithfulness to promises; chivalry.

Thesis: Friendship begets friendship; nobility, nobility.

Moral: Make a friend whenever possible; friends are valuable.

13. La industria y la suerte:

Murders at court; immodesty and forwardness of women in pursuit of man; vile and mean uses to which money may be put, hired assassains etc.; power of money
in state versus real nobility; talkativeness; lack of morality in woman; treachery and betrayal of friendship; lack of birth and breeding in moneyed merchants; woman's love of position and money; the world's capitulation to power of money in spite of vulgarity of its owner; ambition of father's to have daughters marry money; intrigue; scheming; lying; real nobility; true love.

Moral: Deceit, intrigue, and scheming bring an unhappy fate, or Real nobility and worth triumph over vulgarity and intrigue.

13. La manganilla de Melilla:

Lying; immodesty and forwardness of women's pursuit of man; power can commit wrong with immunity; self-control; continence; faith in God; loyalty; honor in keeping faith with the enemy.

Moral: Christian faith will give a man victory over self and his enemies.

14. Mudarse por mejorararse:

Fickleness; promising instead of doing; deceit; selfishness; wit.

Moral: Fickleness deserves to be rewarded by fickleness.
15. *Las paredes oyen*:

Slander; gossip; the *buceona*; value set upon riches instead of character and worth; breaking promises; miscellaneous faults in women (defended); lack of morality and self control; assault; lying; disloyalty; double-dealing; duelling; nobility; chivalry; bravery; kindness; honor.

Moral: Misfortunes and even disastrous results will befall the slanderer, not the least being the loss of all friends.

16. *Los pecchos privilegiados*:

Immorality of king and of the powerful; absolutism of the king; jealousy; servility; flattery; favoritism; changing of favorites; duelling; rebellion; honor and loyalty of the vassal and of servants; woman's virtue; mother love; virtue in serving.

Purpose: To present a lofty ideal of what a king and vassal and servant should be.

Moral: Loyalty and nobility are rewarded.

17. *La prueba de las promesas*:

PROMISES AND NOT FULFILLING; TREACHERY; AMBITION;
love of money; gossip; necromancy; virtue in serving.

Moral: Present fulfilment is better than future promising.

18. Quien engaña más a quien:
   El desdichado en fingir done over.

19. Quien mal anda en mal acaba:
   Black magic; witchcraft; intrigue; lying; vengeance; infidelity; selfishness; faithfulness and loyalty of servant; christian faith; virtue in women; friendship.

   Thesis: To show that christian faith is proof against and triumphs over witchcraft, the devil, etc.
   Moral: Title states it.

20. No hay mal que por bien no venga:
   Vices of courtship, styles, amusements, sports, eating and drinking, feasting, and dwellings; duelling; extravagance; treachery; rebellion; roguery and rascality of young nobles; artificiality of manners and customs; friendship; loyalty of subject to king; religious faith; honor; kingly prudence.

   Purpose: To reform and render more comfortable
and sincere social manners and customs.

Moral: Title states it. Worked out weakly in plot.

21. El semejante a sí mismo:

Jealousy; small vices of women: curiosity, inconstancy, changeableness, etc.; distrust; disloyalty of servants; fickleness; lying; intrigue; friendship; woman's instinct.

No thesis; no particular purpose.

Moral: Jealousy and distrust create and find what they are looking for.

22. Siempre ayuda la verdad:

Absolutism of king; murder; jealousy; duelling; lack of resistance in women; lack of virtue; intrigue; treachery; woman's determination to marry; selfishness; betrayal of friendship; chivalry; honor.

Purpose: To picture customs.

Moral: Stated in title. Plot developing it weak.

23. El Tejedor de Segovia:

Absolutism of kings in persecution of subjects, murder, etc.; envy; immorality of king and nobles; rebellion; treachery; treason; misgovernment; inefficiency and dis-
honesty of officers of law; laxity of law enforcement upon the rich; duelling; banditry; seduction; power of money in currying favor; favoritism; promising and not fulfilling; faithfulness in love; loyalty of subject; bravery; loyalty of woman to her mate; vengeance; heroism.

Thesis: The passion of vengeance is justified.

Purpose: To present a picture of the corrupt conditions and life at court, as well as the opposite picture of Spain's thoroughly national virtues—vengeance, honor, and loyalty to the king.

24. Todo es ventura:

Parisitism; favoritism; pretence and posing; street murders; deceit and intrigue; treachery and betrayal of friendship; selfishness; jealousy; poverty of nobles; faithfulness of servants; jealousy of servants; necessity for aid of the powerful.

Thesis: Fortune by its blind and capricious will governs our destiny.

Purpose: To present a picture of court life and the parasite.

25. La verdad sospechosa:

Lying; bragging; pretence and posing; extravagance in
style, entertainments, gallantry, etc; duelling; lack of virtue in married women; young women's disobedience of convention, such as veiling themselves, riding unattended in coaches, flirting with strangers, clandestinely meeting their suitors on the streets, etc; women's love of money; the buscona; sowing wild oats by young men; disrespect for parental authority; credulity of the honest; selfishness; gossip family honor; wisdom of servants.

Purpose: To condemn liars and lying.

Moral: The liar reaps nothing but grief from lying, and so loses the trust of his fellows that even his truths are doubted.

26. Las hazanas del Marques de Canete not considered, as it was written by Alarcon in collaboration with several other poets and is therefore not strictly his.

27. El Tejedor de Segovia, Primera parte, not considered, as it was not written by Alarcon.

Out of twenty-five plays, therefore, twenty-two present a moral, this moral being much more clearly defined in some than in others. El Tejedor de Segovia and Todo es ventura, though not containing a moral, have a
strong central purpose of presenting sociological conditions at court and in Spain; the third, El examen de maridos, advises women how to choose a husband. All are cuadros de costumbres; all are studded with philosophical expressions.

For how many were the religious, philosophical, social, and political problems which interested humanity then as now! Alarcón was sharp enough to penetrate the depths of social folly around him, and great enough to appreciate the heights of individual worth. This study of his twenty-five comedies, all based on national life and history, has yielded an immeasurable respect for their author's readiness of imagination, greatness of soul, breadth of philosophy, and genius; but above all for the tenacity with which his purpose of correcting evil and perpetuating good burned in him. He touched upon the realities of life like a flame, lighting up the sublimity and grandeur of its heroism, the beauty of its love and chivalry, the sordidness of its petty vices, its extravagance, profligacy, immorality, and intrigue in a glory of romance. He had the poetic feeling for words and description, as well as for the harmony of versifi-
cation. "The external form fits itself perfectly to the subject matter; his language to the thought it expresses; it elevates itself with the daring of his concepts to the highest pinnacle of poetic speech without floweriness or wordiness, and even in his most animated scenes he may be classed as a model of clearness and naturalness". (1)

In realizing his characters he has been almost completely national, painting them with a sympathetic feeling and insight and showing an astonishing faculty of imagination and observation. His philosophy, while in the main substantial and sane, is deeply cynical at times, tinged with envy, and always colored by his hatred of influence and power due to favoritism and money. He is possessed of an instinctive judgement which estimates at their proper relative values all the objects of desire and aversion, all the controlling motives of men, giving his work a truth and a relation to universal law. His dramas are vivified by the intensity of his beliefs about causes and consequences of events, of right and wrong, and by his desire to guide and reform in accordance with these beliefs. Since he held that the nobler a man's birth and

(1) Shack. op. cit. p.15.
breeding and the greater his nature the more should he be tested, his condemnation of those who misused these advantages or proved unworthy of them is insistent.

Alarcon's is a solid, profound, and fecund doctrine, enriching the spirit. His comedies contain inspiration enough to make men noble and fine; warning enough to turn men from evil to good; beauty of character enough to make men proud. They contain bitter truths as to the shortness of worldly fortune, tempered however by a faith in the steadfastness of God. They seek to direct man as an individual, and as a part of society, to a happy port.

"His immediate public appreciated his comedy, doing full justice to its merit", says his biographer(1), though this feeling was not shared by his fellow poets and his monetary reward was negligible. Who can measure the extent of his moral influence? As a result of his protests against foolish fashions and unjust legislation instances can be concretely traced in history (2). And posterity has unquestionably placed him among the four greatest dramatists of the Golden Age.

(1) Fernández-Guerra: op. cit., p. 311.

(2) Idem, note 419, Caspeses y Meneses, Historia de don Felipe IV, p. 311.
Though he could not vision this far-reaching glory and recognition, or know that he was to play such a great part in perpetuating the national traditions and pride of Spain, he lived to realize enough success to say:

En esta vida ¿qué bien puede igualar a la gloria de un dilatado desdén?  

(1) *Ganar amigos*, I, 5.
Alarcón y Mendoza, Juan Ruiz de: Comedias escogidas de don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza, ordenadas en colección por Don Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch. Madrid, 1858. (Biblioteca de autores españoles, vol. 20.)

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