

LIFE AND WORKS OF FERNAN CABALLERO

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Josephine Blades

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A. B. University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas

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## PREFACE

I wish to thank Professor Owen for his  
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Josephine Blades

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Cecilia Böhl, who was to become widely known under the pseudonym of Fernán Caballero, was born on Christmas day, 1796 at Morges, a little village on Lake Geneva in the Canton of Berne, Switzerland. Her parents, Francisca Javiera de Larrea, and Juan Nicolás Böhl (who added the von Faber of his stepfather in 1806) were on their way to Germany.

It had been the dream of the German to return home with his wife, settle down near his friends, and lead a calm life of retirement and study. To Francisca, the light hearted, romantic Andalusian, the life of the unfeeling and protestant Germans was unbearable; both her temperament and her deeply rooted Catholicism made such a life impossible for her. Böhl, even during their stay in Switzerland, seemed to have misgivings about his wife's ability to adjust herself to the language, climate, and customs of the North, and wrote to his friends: "My wife has a predisposition to every excellent quality; some of these qualities, however, she will probably never develop because of certain deeply rooted romantic ideas. She is intelligent enough to understand me. In fact, she lacks

only the will and the constant subjection of her feelings to her reason to be my ideal of a wife... With what delight will I again observe at close hand women like you, dear Mother, and Lotte, and how much my happiness will be increased if I can hope to see my wife your spiritual comrade."<sup>1</sup>

His hopes to reform his wife were unfulfilled, and before the end of the year (1797) he returned with her, his mother-in-law, and daughter to Cadiz where Francisca resumed her happy social life. Here it was Bohl who found his days uninspiring and dull. In 1805 he sold out his business and bought a country home in Gorslow, a very isolated spot where the German was delighted with the quiet home for his family. Doña Frasquita, completely shut off from her interests and friends, found the situation absolutely unbearable and at the end of four months returned to Cadiz taking with her the two youngest children and leaving Cecilia and her brother. Bohl must have realized how futile it was to try to mold his wife's lively spirits into the placidness and quiet temper he thought to be ideal.

The education of the two children in Germany was entrusted to a very pious Belgian tutor who spoke to them

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1. Hespert, E. Herman: Francisca de Larrea, A Spanish Feminist of the Early 19th Century, Hispania, Vol. XIII, p. 176.

always in French and seemed most interested in inculcating a very deep religious sentiment. On her death Cecilia was placed in a French boarding school presided over by a woman who had been connected with the school of Saint-Cyr, a celebrated college for young girls in France. The woman was of the old school and it was here, Morel-Fatio states, that she was trained in the old regime, and where she acquired the attitude of mind she preserved absolutely throughout her life.<sup>1</sup>

In 1812 she returned with her father to Cadiz. During these impressionable years she had been with her father a great deal, and he is doubtless responsible for the development of most of her attitudes and habits of thought. He was an indefatigable scholar, best known for his Floresta de rimas antiguas castellanas and Teatro español anterior a Lope de Vega. He read widely in many fields but found the theater of the Golden Age most to his liking. He deplored the spirit of the contemporary Spaniards and spent his time in the old writings. He wrote to a friend concerning his shortage of funds, "but you too are a collector, and you understand how one can be hungry a week to possess an old ballad".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Coloma, L.: Recuerdos de Fernán Caballero, Bilbao, n. d., p. 68.
  2. Morel-Fatio, A.: Fernán Caballero d'après sa correspondance avec Antoine de Latour, Etudes sur Espagne, 3rd series, Paris, 1904, p. 287.

Böhl despised precocity of any sort. When Cecilia was a baby cutting teeth he wrote, "She is remarkably strong and well, but does not talk much yet; I don't think that important, for I detest any sort of precocity."<sup>1</sup> Cecilia herself later wrote concerning an infant prodigy who was receiving a great deal of publicity in Spain: "When I was his age, and even older, I used to compose some little things which my mother found pleasing and took to my father who without reading them threw them away and said: 'Foolishness, don't waste your time doing this when you ought to be studying and sewing!'" Any disposition Cecilia may have had toward pride in accomplishment was thoroughly nipped in the bud and she grew to be very humble and even secretive about her writing. It was only natural that she should write since she had the example of her father and of her mother who wrote a great many political pamphlets and other articles.

Cecilia was her father's favorite child and he spent many hours instructing her in her studies and informally teaching her the precepts of the good life. His sentiments were of the most elevated sort and his religious convictions heightened by his conversion to Catholicism which took place through his wife's and more directly through his daughter's influence. The teachings

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1. Morel-Fatio, Op. cit., p. 284.

of the Abbot to the innocent Clemencia in the novel of that name were translated by Cecilia directly from her father's loving advice.<sup>1</sup> He cautioned her to be ever benevolent, modest, considerate; to place emphasis on the spiritual and not the material things of life; not to concern herself with social systems but to thank God for the equilibrium he so wisely established on earth; to value depth of feeling far above learning. The tenor of Fernán's thought was doubtless based on the firmly rooted principles of her father and of her education in the aristocratic school in Hamburg. Her religious convictions were the more exalted since she was spiritually isolated from the protestant Germans who surrounded her.

When she returned to Spain she spoke French, Spanish (with an accent her mother deplored), German, and English, and was well read in the classics. She and her father were happily received by Francisca who gloried in her husband's conversion to Catholicism.

In Cádiz at this time Doña Frasquita, an exalted romantic, maintained a literary salon where the flower of the traditional group met. Cecilia was advised by her mother "to observe, to listen, and to keep still", and availing herself of this wisdom the young girl carefully noted the society she was to describe in Elia and

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1. Coloma, Op. cit., p. 75.

others of her books. Here she was thoroughly imbued with the ideas of the <sup>1</sup>serviles, an attitude which she later hotly defended. A Spaniard by temperament, she had always considered herself as such, and she quite quickly and naturally adapted herself to the Southern school. God, King, and Country became her passions and she vehemently defended them all her life. The importance of her father's teaching and of her mother's high patriotism in the development of the child who was sensitive to such inculcations can hardly be exaggerated.

In 1822 she was married by her mother to a young Captain Antonio Planells, handsome and a successful enough army officer, but totally unsuited to the delicately nurtured, simple, and innocent young girl to whom he had been attracted. In later years Cecilia wrote a novel Clemencia in which the heroine is married in just such a sudden manner and suffers the heartbreak and disillusion that she herself had felt. The sweetness and martyrlike attitude of the young girl were quite as understandable to the man who had grown up in an army barracks as his worldly ideas were to her.

Although admitting that in Clemencia she wrote of her own experiences, Cecilia did not like to have her life read into her novels and wrote to Latour: "Have

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1. Serviles was the name used to designate the political conservatives who upheld the authority of the Crown.

you ever heard me speak of other incidents of my life? Have I ever spoken of Germany or of the brilliant home of my grandmother where I was brought up as an enfant gaté with all possible pampering? Have I ever spoken of my first stay in Cadiz where I was the enfant gaté of the public? Have I ever spoken of my coming to Seville with an ideal man (her second husband, the Marquis of Arco Hermoso) with whom I was ideally happy and who died adoring and blessing me? No; then why marvel if I do not speak of one period... It is because I believe as on one else like the one who said Le moi est odieux. Nevertheless, from no other period could I derive more vainglory, but to do it I would have to speak evil of two persons, which I have never done nor will I do. I am silent on this sad début of my life. I was then, and I can well say it, good, as one comes out of a French pension established in Germany, and I could derive from my heart and my experience the début which I have given the Clemencia of my novel. Afterwards, adopted almost as a daughter and with great affection by the Captain General and his wife, who was a friend of my mother, I was pampered and cared for until the moment of returning to the bosom of my family. A splendid future awaited my handsome twenty five year old husband, but a short time after our marriage he died suddenly... Here is a summary of my state in Puerto-Rico; terrible sorrows

which a soul a little over sixteen years old (she was actually twenty) suffered and could not, did not know how to, was not strong enough to stand in a strange country and in poor health, and which if it had not been for my generous friends, would have cost me my life."<sup>1</sup>

In 1820 and 21 she was in Hamburg visiting her grandmother. She was already considering the Marqués de Arco Hermoso and on her return did marry him March 26, 1822. Her stay in Germany was too long to please her father who liked to discuss with her not only his literary projects but memories of their stay in dear Görslow.

Cecilia's parents were in financial difficulties at the time and her father managed an English wine establishment. Böhl regretted that he should have to descend to this, but his German nature kept its freshness and made him find poetry everywhere; the beautiful Andalusian vegetation, the oranges and pomgranates carried him into an ideal world and made the real world more bearable for him.<sup>2</sup>

Cecilia and her husband moved to their country home and it was there that her literary life really began. Coloma says that it is "truly singular that Cecilia who was born a poet by a gift of God, and who wrote as birds

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1. Morel-Fatio, Op. cit., pp. 320 ff.

2. Idem, p. 299.

sing and flowers bloom, spontaneously and by necessity of their nature, should be horrified as she was for fear she might be taken for a blue stocking"<sup>1</sup>. So she wrote in secret many of the novels and cuadros de costumbres which were to bring her fame.

Her love for things Spanish she had learned from her father and her mother. She saw in the legends and the lives of the people of the country the essence of Spain, and she longed for the time when Spain, like other European countries, would cease to despise the things of the soil and give to their folklore the understanding and interest it enjoyed elsewhere. Perhaps by her mother's romanticism she was first attracted to this field; certainly it greatly appealed to her naive nature and it is here that she does her work and does it with true love for the people and the customs she describes.

La familia de Alvareda, the first of her novels, was written here, directly from a relation of incidents which she heard in one of the villages, some twenty five years before it was published. She wrote some of her first drafts in German and French. Some of these her Mother translated and it is clear that she collaborated with her to some extent.<sup>2</sup> Her father helped her also, but

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1. Coloma, Op. Cit., p. 251.

2. Cartas de Fernán Caballero, Madrid, 1919, p. 73.

was very sparing in his praise. Coloma corrects Morel-Fatio's statement<sup>2</sup> that it was her father who sent Sola, one of her early and less valuable contributions to the periodical Literarische und Krilische Blatter der Borum Halle, and says that the article instead of being written in German was originally written in Spanish, translated to German by her mother, and sent without her knowledge to the publisher who withheld it from publication for some obscure reason until 1840, two years after Francisca's death. At any rate Sola, her first published work, did not attract much attention even when reprinted by El Semanario Pintoresco in 1849, and did not give promise of the Fernán Caballero of La Gaviota.

In 1835 the death of her husband shattered Cecilia's life which had been very happy. Her father wrote that the tragedy had almost affected her mind.<sup>3</sup> She herself wrote: "When I lost Arco... with him my well being, my existence and my very life were shaken..."<sup>4</sup> The latter part of 1836 she was called back from a trip she had been persuaded to take with her sister Aurora by the illness of her beloved father who died on November 9th.

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1. Coloma, Op. cit., pp. 289 ff.
  2. Morel-Fatio, Op. cit., p. 307.
  3. Idem, p. 302.
  4. Cartas de Fernán Caballero, p. 74.

In 1837 Cecilia again married, this time Antonio Arrom de Ayala, a man eighteen years younger than she. He was so dependent on her that his body, weak from consumption, and his brilliant but a little unsteady mind threatened to break if he could not marry her. Her first marriage was contracted by her mother; her second husband was of her own happy choice; she married Arrom out of compassion.

In 1838 her mother died after suffering a nervous illness which made life a burden for herself and her family for some time. In less than three years she had lost her husband, her parents and the fortune of the house of Arco-Hermoso.

It was during this time that she wrote La Gaviota, Clemencia, Una en Otra, and some of the Relaciones Populares.

In a letter written to Mora, supposedly in 1848, Cecilia explained her idea of writing. She said: "Too much modesty or too much pride have made me not show any of my writing to anyone since the death of my parents whose enthusiastic aprobation was, as you may believe, my only stimulus, desire, and recompense; but lacking them and urged by my family and my husband, I have decided to try to publish them. Since I am new in affairs of this sort, I can do nothing without the judgment and advice of a competent person or without the aid of a

friend interested in it. For this reason I am writing to you... Would you, then, have the patience to read one of my novels?... If so I shall send you one...illustrated by my husband..."<sup>1</sup> This novel was La Gaviota which was published in El Heraldo in 1849.

Coloma relates the following story concerning its publication. Since he derived most of his information from Fernán herself one can only suppose that as she grew older her modesty grew greater or her memory weaker for one can scarcely gainsay direct evidence in the letter quoted above.

Coloma's version is this: Arrom had the highest opinion of his wife's literary ability and felt it her duty to publish some of her works. Of this she was, however, unconvinced. On one of his trips to Madrid Arrom took her manuscript in French of La Gaviota, the one he liked best, and showed it to their friend José Joaquín de Mora, who was greatly impressed by it and enthusiastically agreed to translate and help get the novel published. Unable to get Cecilia's consent to publish it, they decided to tell her that it was in the hands of the printers and there was nothing she could do to stop it. Accordingly she chose the pseudonym Fernán Caballero, the name of a village in the Mancha

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1. Cartas de Fernán Caballero, pp. 17 ff.

which she happened to notice mentioned in a periodical of the day, and the story was printed in due time.

Arrom after a great deal of trouble was finally appointed consul to Australia. When arrived there after considerable expense he found the salary so low and living expenses so high that he feared for a time it would be necessary for him to return to Spain. Cecilia was left with almost no income and Asensio says that it was then, with the principal object of getting more money to devote to charity, that she decided to publish what she had written, encouraged by the praises of various friends to whom she had sent manuscripts. She was living at Sanlúcar de Barrameda, and it is clear that she wrote both to occupy her time and distract her mind from her troubles, and to have a little money above the barest necessities. That year was the hardest she ever knew. Queen Isabel at the request of Pidal and Ochoa ceded Cecilia an apartment in the Alcazar at Sevilla and she lived there from 1856 until 1868, a very happy period of her life with the exception of the tragic death of her husband.

Arrom's business, meanwhile, had been prospering and in 1858 he returned to Spain, where he spent a few happy

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1. Asensio, J. M.: Fernán Caballero y la novela contemporánea, Vol. 1 of Obras completas de Fernán Caballero, in Collección de Escritores Castellanos, Madrid, 1893, p. 88.

months with his wife after their separation of so many years. His plan was to go to London and sail for Australia to settle all his business there, then to return to spend the rest of his life with his wife. While in London he received a letter stating that his business associate had run away with all the money of their concern, leaving only debts for which he would be responsible. Arrom thought he felt his mind weakening under the blow and committed suicide after writing his wife a letter reproaching himself for her suffering during their twenty two years of marriage and telling her that he could not bear to force her to take care of an insane husband.

The shock was almost more than Cecilia could bear. She wrote shortly afterward: "There is a rhyme which ends saying 'que las penas de este mundo no son todas para mí'; I believe, on the contrary, that all the sorrows of the world are for me, and sometimes I ask myself if I am insensible or if I am a rock, for they come without killing me or striking me down. God takes care of everything, and as he gives some strength to rear children, he gives it to me to bear up under such sorrow..."<sup>1</sup> To the devout Catholic that she was a suicide was deepest tragedy. She comforted herself by thinking that her husband was not in his right mind at the time of his death.

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1. Cartas de Fernán Caballero, p. 184.

She worked constantly, both from necessity and to relieve her sorrows. She had to work to live, for she consistently refused money from friends and relatives and was greatly humiliated when friends suggested that petition be made for a special grant from the State. In 1864 they took away a small pension she had been granted by virtue of her husband's service in diplomatic circles. She wrote: "They have taken away my pension. It is to be given only to those whose husbands have served fifteen years, just enough if it were not retroactive. It doesn't matter much to me. I love poverty, not the poverty of the imagination, or simply the spoken word, but in reality. I shall not admit the offers or rather urging of my rich family to support me. I believe that whoever receives, let it be from whomever it may, loses his true and noble independence, and though I have no liberal ideas on the matter, I esteem it above everything else in the world."<sup>1</sup> To support herself she wrote for periodicals.<sup>2</sup> According to Coloma she wrote little except for these periodicals after her husband's death, publishing from time to time a cuadro which she had

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1. Idem, p. 267.

2. She wrote for La Revista de Ciencias, Literatura y Artes de Sevilla, for La Moda, La Educación Pintoresca, La Razón Católica, El Pensamiento, and other religious journals.

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written some time before.

She decided to enter a convent after the tragedy, not as a nun, but as many other women have done who sought peace and refuge from a world that was too hard. Asensio says that her friends unobtrusively prevented her entering several convents feeling that it would be too great a loss and that she would find existence away<sup>2</sup> from the world she loved so much little to her liking. She finally received permission to enter the Convento de Religiosas de Santa Inés, and was arranging her few business affairs to go when the Mother Superior ruled that she could have no books in her cell but works of devotion, and that she could carry on no correspondence except with close members of her family, that to be only in case of necessity and under supervision. Fernán realized that the ruling was only in keeping with the spirit of the order, but she also realized that it would not be the life to make her happiest, so in spite of her intense religious feeling and her desire for repose she decided against withdrawal from the world.

The revolution of 1868 was a material and moral cataclysm for Fernán. She not only lost her home, for she had to leave the Alcazar and take a small house in

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1. Coloma, Op. cit., 381.

2. Asensio, Op. cit., pp. 104 ff.

Seville, but her friends were scattered and she had lost all faith in her country. She wrote: "You must realize that I have lost all my Spanish feeling; this nation has degenerated to the infamy of a renegade... I don't believe any other nation has arrived at the moral degradation at which this one has."<sup>1</sup>

In 1873 she prayed that her saint's day might be her last on earth. She wrote: "... all are going; and I whom the oldest of the sisters remain here alone, the last of my family and my contemporaries..."<sup>2</sup> She died the seventh of April, 1877, murmuring on hearing the carriages in front of her house and the people inquiring concerning her health, "So much for me, and so little for God!" Her last years were spent in sustaining an immense correspondence, in writing for periodicals, in seeing her most intimate friends, and in her endless works of charity.

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1. Morel-Fatio, Op. cit., p. 358.

2. Cartas de Fernán Caballero, p. 356.

CHAPTER II

POETIC CONCEPTION OF LIFE

Against the modern movements of materialistic thought Fernán Caballero rose up with all her might. In order to understand her it is necessary to remember that her works are not only the simple expression of a desire to place stories before the public, but rather the live and impassioned labor of a combatant mind. She was moved by an evangelistic spirit and felt a God-given duty to present to the public the poetry, peace, and simple religion of the country life in a way to lead her readers to a higher appreciation of their nation and a better -- that is, more religious -- life. Valdés wrote: "The novel is for her a weapon with which she assaults the conscience and subjects it to her command."<sup>1</sup>

To combat the materialistic attitude Fernán had a poetic attitude which permeated all her thought and writing. This poetic conception is in no wise to be confused with romanticism, however. Concerning this confusion she says: "That is a very common error -- confusing the poetic with the romantic and condemning

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1. Palacio Valdés: Semblanzas Literarias, Obras completas, Vol. XI, Madrid, 1908, p. 131.

the one on account of the other... Poetic is the young girl who with all the virtues of youth -- simplicity, innocence, modesty, industry, obedience, does not precociously think of love affairs or of ostentation; this is not a romantic type. Of the latter type is the emancipated girl who becomes impassioned like a Fedra in spite of her parents' will; an intrepid Amazon who eagerly seeks a theater in which to shine... this youth, indeed, is not poetic. Poetic is the lad who limits his desires and fights with tranquil perseverance against bad luck, who honors his elders, respects what is superior to him, holds his tongue, and who makes his place with his merit without ascending any higher than is proper ... this youth is not romantic...

"Poetry takes life as it is and embellishes it, calms misfortune with reason, which is its friend, and contains the overflow of happiness with delicacy which is its inseparable companion. Romanticism, on the other hand, has for misfortune desperation, madness, death; for happiness rapture, overjoy, clamour...

"Are you one of those who hold that poetry, being a fantastic thing, an art, ought to have its seat in the head which thinks and creates, adorns the creation and places it in libraries, and not with us who believe that it has its seat in the heart which feels it and sheds it through life like a gentle dew from

Heaven?"<sup>1</sup>

Fernán placed the understanding of the heart and soul against the harsh mental approach, finding in the latter nothing of the tenderness which she conceived as shaping the ideal life. "All the things of this world may be viewed in two ways, one with the icy sight of reason which chills and diminishes them like the light of a candle, and the other with the ardent and sympathetic sight of the heart which gilds and quickens everything like God's sun. This sight of the heart is called poetry. Happy are those who having it express it in harmonious words!"<sup>2</sup>

She protested against learning on the ground that it dulled sensitivity of feeling and most vehemently protested against it for its own sake. "What, then, is all the culture of the mind without that of the heart? A brilliant sun without warmth, a beautiful flower without perfume, a beautiful voice without modulation, a beautiful face without tears and without smiles!"<sup>3</sup>

Fernán felt rather than reasoned; an appeal was

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1. Cosa Cumplida... Solo en la otra vida, Vol. XXXII, Collección de Autores Españoles, Leipzig, 1882, p. 154.
  2. Un Servilón y un Liberalito, in Cuatro Novelas, Vol. XX, C. de A. E., Leipzig, 1885, p. 152.
  3. Con mal o con bien a los tuyos te ten, in Cuatro Novelas, p. 200.

primarily to her heart. "Music and poetry", she wrote, "are born in the heart; knowledge, art, intellect only burnish and perfect its inspirations."<sup>1</sup> "The poetry which springs from the heart has no need of academic language, nor of well rhymed words; it is modest, and nothing is unworthy of it; there is no shanty, however humble it may be, which it does not illumine, nor land so arid that it does not make it productive; and the more humble I see it the larger and more beautiful it seems to me. It is to me the voice of our guardian angel who tries to make everything good and beautiful to us, instilling in us sympathy, benevolence toward earthly things, love and desire for those of heaven."<sup>2</sup>

It was this sympathy and benevolence which were at the base of her sight and description of all things. So it was that everything she saw had a roseate hue; everything she perceived pulsed with the innate poetry of nature. She never saw things in harsh reality; they were a part of a rhythmic whole which to her was bathed in the light of God's sun and was, therefore, beautiful.

Death was no longer a terrible thing .. it was a part of the all-embracing poetry. She wrote: "When I saw a grave opened by the relatives of the dead (for

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1. Una en Otra, in Cuatro Novelas, p. 112.

2. Un verano en Bornos, C. de A. E., Vol. XXXIII, p. 54.

there were no salaried grave diggers), far from seeing in them mournful men digging a black and terrible sepulchre for one dead, they seemed to me brothers of charity preparing a bed for one asleep. There we might have greeted each other with the "Brothers, we must die" of the Trappists, for this phrase would not have been for us the supreme expression of alienation to things of the earth, but rather the confident adhesion to things of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

In Nature this poetry was ever evident and rendered it more understandable to the human heart to which Fernán appealed. One of her characters, Clemencia, expressed her view: "I do not know how to classify a single plant, but the flowers are the real poetry of the material world. Since man sang their song has been mingled with his; never has the spirit of innovation, of opposition and of paradox to which there is nothing sacred, which has partaken of everything, dared to ridicule the suave sympathy which flowers inspire, which in nature are always renewed fresh and luxuriant like hope in the heart of man; inseparable from poetry, they are companions of the sentiments which inspire it."<sup>2</sup> Systematic study of nature was of no interest to her -- she felt the spirit

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1. Cosa cumplida, p. 158.

2. Clemencia, Vol. I, C. de A. E., Leipzig, 1883, p. 203.

of beauty.

Her nature was always idealized and personalized. The moon is as if it were "a huge candle which Father Time had lighted in search of his daughters"<sup>1</sup>. The stars "shine brightly as if they were climbing high to see their creator."<sup>2</sup> In the garden there is a "square of violets surrounded by cabbages which appear ugly dwarfs caring for enchanted princesses"<sup>3</sup>. She described the gardens of the Andalusian countryside, the patios, the flowers on the balcony with a quiet, sincere delight.

It was in the country and not in the city that she found her poetry. "Much beautiful poetry is found in the villages because in the country the imagination has full sway; it is not hidden and debased as in the cities where it rubs against vice and misery which clip its wings!"<sup>4</sup> She found poetry in the simple, happy life of the country people; in their family life, in their religious faith.

"The country", she said, "is the earth before man despoils it of its beautiful blossoming appearance; heaven is directly above us; it is entire liberty of

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1. Un Servilon y un Liberalito, p. 151.

2. Idem, p. 151.

3. Una en Otra, p. 22.

4. Idem, p. 112.

sight, of movement, of dressing, and even of thinking, which no one absorbs or distracts; it is the sweetness and purity of the atmosphere; it is the width and variability of the horizons; it is the insect which entertains me in his dominions with his song, such as the cricket... It is the bird which observes me cock-<sup>1</sup>ing his pretty head..."

Nothing rested her sight nor warmed her heart more than to see the ploughmen returning home in the evening. She told of how each one came mounted on his donkey, his crates full of fruit and vegetables. Their slow pace was hastened as the children ran out to greet their fathers. The youngest child would ride with his father while the older ones played with the little donkey, and each little group went toward his home in which the happy mother and wife was waiting. Such a scene moved the author to exclaim: "Oh, how many times we have seen with deep feeling these pictures of intimate and pure happiness neither hidden nor ostentatious, neither brilliant nor concealed, like the soft light of the moon! And we have asked ourselves with bitter melancholy-- Why has material culture with its insatiable ambition, its refinement of pleasure and its stupid elegance of form replaced the saintly pure joys with others which

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1. Un Verano en Bornos, p. 37.

in so little measure satisfy the heart, the poetry of the soul and of the conscience? Why deprecating this happiness which God shows and teaches us, has this false happiness been conceived which sighing for the unrealized dares to cast its disparagement over that happiness which God and reason show us? When will we understand that the ideal is not to be sought in the air, in a globe without direction or course, but that which should serve us as a desirable pattern is in our hands, like the flowers with which God scatters the paths which he has plotted out for us?"<sup>1</sup>

The country village, "calm and tranquil, placed on the shore of the sea, which perturbs it with its great incessant clamour, which distracts it with its restless continuous movement like that of the century in which we live..."<sup>2</sup> was at once a refuge from the noisy advancing world and a guide to a simpler, better life.

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1. Pobre Dolores, in Cuatro Novelas, p. 248.
  2. Idem, p. 244.

CHAPTER III

LOVE OF PAST

Fernán Caballero's love of the traditions of the past was not confined to this phase of rural life, however. She saw the country she so intensely loved contaminated with foreign influences in every field; she saw the Spaniards turning away from their own inheritance to a culture that could be no more than superficial to them; she saw them trying to impose a layer of foreign learning upon themselves, and she, deeply rooted in national love and appreciation, rose against the corruption of that which was really Spanish. She realized that even though a foreign culture might be more advanced in a way there could never be anything more genuinely fine than the indigenous culture, that nothing else could rise above servile and ridiculous imitation. To her nothing modern could in any way replace the old Spanish school of thought and action. It was not only that her patriotism drew her against foreign things; she was such a reactionary that she would have protested just as forcefully had she been faced with modern movements purely Spanish in origin. Her attack is, then, twofold: against the pernicious modern trends and with them the forget-

fullness of old Spanish modes of living.

The railroads were odious to her; she found their only justification in the fact that their use would eliminate the maltreatment of animals drawing the carriages. The speed and comfort of the invention were<sup>1</sup> of no interest to her; she preferred slow movement.

The only time she mentioned science in more than a passing way was to express her horror at having seen in a polytechnical exhibit in London the microscopic rev-<sup>2</sup>elation of the impurity of a drop of water. At great length she describes the appearance of the germs cast on a screen and their movements which filled her with greatest repugnance. To think that such horrible things could exist in a pure drop of God's water! In this, as in all things, Fernán deliberately ignored or was not conscious of the possibility of impurity and imperfection and preferred to be left in ignorance.

The march of civilization brought a disregard for historic monuments and markings. She deplored the removal of these evidences of the past. She wrote: "You and the people in whom imagination predominates and for whom feeling is judgment would say of it (the modern state of Seville), I am sure, what you would say of old churches

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1. Un verano en Bornos, p. 56.

2. Idem, p. 35.

you see whitewashed. The local color, the national physiognomy are disappearing, thanks to the modern Procrustus they call civilization. This opinion cannot be expressed without being trampled by the majority imbued with the modern principle of material well being and all it demands..."<sup>1</sup> "Seville weeps with her fountains, cries with her nightingales, sighs with her gentle breezes."<sup>2</sup>

The modern movements of thought horrified her. She suggested instead of the mark of Fire Insurance on the University of Santiago a better one would have been insurance against anti-religious, anti-social, and anti-national teaching she found so rampant.<sup>3</sup>

"How have we advanced in so many years of modern culture and civilization?" she asked. "In having a French theater, an Italian opera, an English Jockey Club? Seek your true models in the comedies of Calderón and Lope and in all those contemporary pictures of customs, and do not say that they are types of fantasy and too elevated for real life; no, no; they were exact then, so that if they are now elevated it is because we have descended. Retrograde, retrograde, and do not make of your country a ridiculous manequin! Retrograde, retro-

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1. Una en otra, p. 20.

2. Idem, p. 37.

3. Cosa cumplida..., p. 231.

grade, for when the past is unquestionably better than the present retrogression is progress. Is it not better to take as a model the noble father who gave you being and whose blood runs in your veins than to take the neighbor who is foreign to you and who looks at you with mocking disdain because of your imitation of him?"<sup>1</sup>

So it is that she plead with her countrymen for a realization of their standards of the past, but she found no response. "Then I turn my face with sorrow and shame from that heroic past to this flimsy present, comparing that real love for the country to the fictitious and apostate modern patriotism which deprecates that which is Spanish, detests its true essence, sells its temples, destroys its monuments, and mocks what used to be re-<sup>2</sup>vered."

Just as she protested against the furnishing of homes in the elegant French manner she protested against the furnishing of the mind in the modern manner. Sir George in the novel Clemencia she intended to make the product of modern thought. He is a stupid, unconvincing character, clearly the product of her imagination and makes one commend her usual procedure of drawing her characters from direct acquaintance. Sir George is thus

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1. Un verano en Bornos, p. 50.

2. Idem, p. 49.

regarded by Clemencia: "Merciful heavens! Does nothing vibrate in his heart? Neither religion, nor nature, nor patriotism, nor love of family, nor friendship, nor charity? In spite of the gifts which distinguish him... he feels nothing! Oh, what a devastated Eden!... And, nevertheless, this is a man who has a superior intelligence, who is highly cultured, and who has been reared alternately in the two countries which pretend to show the way of moral and material progress to the others; a man who has acquired his aspirations in the light of the new sun of the nineteenth century, a man who has seen everything, who knows everything, and who has judged everything... Is this the fruit that a man who is the type of the spirit of the epoch has gathered from the modern advance of the human spirit? Thus his cold skepticism despoils life? Thus the petty and proud wisdom of man deprecates the magnificent creations of God? Thus he strips his heart of poetry, thus he shrivels and degrades his soul?... Sir George is the type of man who has forsworn and broken every relation with the past and who, marching without a guide toward the unknown, follows a path which claims to be the true one, and which does not know where it will take him."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Clemencia, p. 246.

CHAPTER IV

OUTLOOK ON SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Fernán's outlook on social problems of the day was narrow and confined to immediate problems surrounding her every day life. Of the larger aspects of the problems of poverty and charity, for example, she had no conception. Her idea of poverty was one gained by first hand experience and one must admire her for her splendid spirit in the face of actual need while criticizing her attitude toward the problem as a whole.

The closely related questions of poverty and charity have always been pressing ones in Spain. Encouraged by the Church in the spirit of almsgiving, Catholic Spain has been slow to see the social evils attendant upon the pordioseros. Fernán regarded them as an essential part of the social system, unfortunate people who loved God and who would be cared for by him through the compassion of the more fortunate.

She descried all modern philanthropic efforts and regarded organized charity as unjustifiable. Charity to her was as important in its effect upon the giver as upon the recipient and that direct effect is, of course, lost by concerted in place of individual action. She

wrote: "This is a digression ... which might resemble one of those modern speeches in favor of criminals and the poor class, which are only new arms or seed for the revolutionists and which will have the result of the others. I much prefer the widow's mite to this vainglorious philanthropy which in place of scattering good sentiments of moderation, peace, and conformity among the people, scatters only an evil ferment which makes the poor rebel against their civilization without bettering it."<sup>1</sup> "Charity! holy, sublime charity! Some proclaim you, others understand you; some wish to guide you and you guide others. Why aren't you seen in the palaces which philanthropy erects? Why do you appear in all your glory in the huts of the poor, and why do you glory in the widow's mite? It is because charity wishes to Queen and not slave."<sup>2</sup>

The beggars and almsgivers had, to her mind, a definite place in God's plan of the universe and were to be treated with due respect. She deplored the "modern" attitude toward beggars on the street which she exemplified thus: "What a plague! What a repugnant aspect on a public walk! Why aren't they here, as in foreign

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1. Una en otra, p. 35.

2. Lucas García, in Cuadros de Costumbres, Vol. XVII, C. de A. E., Leipzig, 1883, p. 229.

capitals, marked off sections for begging? How backward we are! Look at this man -- and with children! Should this be permitted? Everything goes on here as God wishes.<sup>1</sup> Since God wished such things they were to be accepted.

Her lack of understanding of social problems is further shown in her defense of lavish expenditure justifying it by the fact that it gives employment to the poor in factories and that by it they are directly and immediately benefitted.<sup>2</sup>

Cruelty to animals was a thing which made Fernán suffer greatly and she constantly wrote of her doctrine of humane treatment. "Of what consists this unqualifiable indifference to the suffering of animals which everywhere at all times is shown without decorousness? Can it be of hardness of heart or dullness of intelligence which does not understand how these poor beings suffer, enslaved, tyrannized and martyred so without pity?"<sup>3</sup> "I don't want even to remember what the poor horses who drew the heavy coach suffered. The cynicism of cruelty which is rampant in Spain destroys my heart and enrages my mind; there is no hindrance other than a few little paragraphs in the periodicals to which no one pays

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1. Con mal o con bien, p. 192.

2. Lady Virginia, Vol. XXXII, C. de A. E., p. 253.

3. Un verano en Bornos, p. 25.

attention, for good has the misfortune of always passing unperceived. I who meditate so much on this scandal, and who see that so many governments have done nothing and are doing nothing along this line of true civilization, and have been able to find no better means of imbuing sentiments of humanity in the populace and of doing away with this rooted barbarism than inculcating from the pulpit charity to extend to every living thing to which God gave life and with it the faculty of suffering. The fate of animals ... is an absurdity in the realm of ideas, a monstrosity in that of feeling, and cannot be permitted religiously or morally."<sup>1</sup>

She was one of the strongest enemies of the national sport of bull fighting and carried on a constant militant campaign in articles and novels against it. She wrote of "...the bull ring, theater of that strange and barbarous diversion which, unfortunately, is connected with Spain; an old diversion which time does not dull and which civilization does not modify; in which the man who exposes his life for money is stupidly and grossly great and those who secure and without danger applaud him without being able to aid him if he should fail are impiously and inhumanely little. Therefore such repulsive entertainment can find no more justification in the light of

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1. Un verano en Bornos, pp. 1, 2.

reason and sensibility than the drunkenness which it produces, upsetting a man's reason and heart as the drunkenness of wine does."<sup>1</sup>

It was tragic to Fernán that not only Spaniards but foreigners should condone and enjoy the spectacle. She deplored Gautier's article,<sup>2</sup> and wrote: "On reading that article written by one of the most cultured men of one of the most civilized countries of the world, we have not been able to help wondering if the exaggerated civilization of our century is a gaudy flame, a gloss, a gold veneer which covers but does not penetrate the blade."<sup>3</sup>

1. Con mal o con bien... , p. 199.
2. Idem, p. 207. The article appeared in L'Artiste, Sept., 1853.
3. Con mal o con bien..., pp. 207 ff.

CHAPTER V

FOLK-LORE

Fernán Caballero loved the simple people of the Andalusian villages. She saw in them the traditions and the soul of Spain itself. She loved that which was Spanish and appreciated the fact that whatever grows up within a people belongs to them and is worthy of preservation. She saw in proverbs the wit and attitude of a people unappreciated by them and doomed to an unsung death. So she went about the villages, talking to the women, playing with the children, taking part in their commonplace life, their pleasures and their trials. She wrote down the stories she heard the women tell; she kept note of events she heard related; she collected the songs, the poems, and the proverbs that form so essential a part of the conversation of the people. When she heard her scrub woman sing an unfamiliar couplet she stopped her work to write it down. Her novels were a compilation of characters she had known, refranes she had heard, incidents she was familiar with, put together with artless grace to form a whole.

One volume entitled Cuentos, oraciones, adivinas is entirely devoted to this material. The divisions

of the book are: Stories of Enchantment, Children's Religious Stories, Children's Riddles, Children's Prayers, Stories and Verses, Popular Proverbs and Maxims Gathered in Country Towns, and Popular Riddles.

The first division is the rendition of popular tales such are commonly known in all nations. They are delightful stories, charmingly told with simplicity and economy of words. The second group is composed of stories with a moral or religious point, written for the understanding of children. There are some five hundred proverbs of a general nature, nearly a hundred more having to do with weather observations and agriculture, and several hundred common Andalusian locutions. Altogether there are over four hundred riddles with their answers. The collection is valuable for the preservation of these stories and proverbs.

Anecdotes, proverbs, and coplas are introduced in all the novels and cuadros which Fernán Caballero has written. The speech of the rural inhabitants, of whom she so often writes, is full of proverbs; children at play tell each other stories and sing coplas together. Scenes of this sort are often introduced for their own sake and take a disproportionate amount of space. The author herself never tells the stories; she has them told by her characters. Often, as is the case in La Noche de Navidad, the folk-lore introduced is the body

of the work, and the plot serves merely to hold it together.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT

The religious understanding of Fernán Caballero was not a mysterious faith of exalted mysticism nor a result of metaphysical contemplation. It was a completely simple faith unadorned by any philosophy or reason. Her faith was an intense one which never doubted nor reasoned but accepted, without trying to understand, all which came about. Her religion was too undeveloped to be of much value to an individual more open mindedly in touch with the problems of the century. Valdés wrote: "Fernán Caballero's religion does not rush to the scene, ennobled by grief and combat, lending efficacious reply and solution to the dark questioning of the conscience, dispersing like a breath of hope the sinister clouds which gather in the mind of a man of this century. It is a religion of short flight destined for fifteen year old students and for children who are not yet in high school. It resolves no more questions than those of obedience to parents, respect to elders, chastity in deed, word, and thought, gentleness to inferiors and pity for the needy. It is the religion of first communion."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Valdés: Op. cit., p. 134.

In this religion of first communion Fernán lived all her life and always found an answer to her problems. Her God was an all powerful God not to be cheapened by gaudy titles.

"'If you name God, call him by his name, and not by those which are in style today -- Supreme Being, Supreme Intelligence, Moderator of the Universe, and others of this quality.'

'What, my Aunt!', exclaimed Rafael, 'you deny God his powers and prerogatives?'

'Of course not', replied the Marquesa; 'but in the name God all is included. To seek others more high-sounding is to plate gold... The thing done here below, removing the title of King to call him President, First Consul, or Protector, seems the same to me... ' "<sup>1</sup>

Her God was a powerful God who heard the prayers of his children and might act immediately on them. She wrote, for example, of a young girl's prayer to the Virgin which resulted in the immediate calming of the waves during a storm and the saving of her sweetheart.<sup>2</sup>

Her God chastised the innocent often times, but the chastisement was a refinement of the Spirit and grief was blessed. She contrasted a grief stricken girl

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1. La Gaviota, Vol. II, C. de A. E., Leipzig, 1881, p.169.
  2. Un verano en Bornos, p. 23.

praying and the crowd at the bull fight. "What a contrast... this girl weeps and prays; the others amuse themselves with horrors and laugh. which, then, is the more perfect state? Is it not grief, which brings a creature to the feet of his creator? Are not tears a blessed gift which make the eyes they bathe lift toward heaven?"<sup>1</sup>

Basic precepts of this religion were repentance and pardon and she dwelt on them with an insistence that bespeaks her sincerity but which grows rather wearing. "Without pardon the offense is still alive, and a blot on the conscience, and no one can live content without a clean conscience, but is abandoned by the hand of God."<sup>2</sup> So because of holy command an old couple pardons the man who caused the death of their daughter and who killed their son-in-law outright,<sup>3</sup> murdered men forgive their murderers before dying and men condemned to death forgive all those who have caused their downfall.

She believed the Catholic religion the only religion that could bring peace into one's life. She was sure that if one could look into the hearts of a group he would find as she did that the only serene ones of the unhappy lot<sup>4</sup>

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1. Con mal o con bien..., p. 202.

2. Idem, p. 195.

3. Una en otra, p. 35.

4. Lady Virginia, p. 254.

would be Catholics; the joy of all the others would be fictitious.

She found an answer to life's problems in the simple life of an old schoolmaster, his wife, and his sister -- thus: "These three people, so much alike, lived happy in the midst of their poverty; their bread was not made bitter by their complaint nor their life with want; there were never people happier in the sad situation to which they were gradually descending, nor dispositions meeker; for happiness and meekness are caused by a clear conscience and firm, virgin faith which the rich of heart and poor of spirit possess... This complete submission and confidence in God nurtures meekness, and scatters anguishing cares, the excesses of sensibility, and bitterness against men and things. And above all it nurtures the beautiful gift of conformity, which spontaneously springs in their hearts, and which shelters them with its sweet shadow, without their noting that their tranquility of spirit is due to the excellence of their souls and that the joking epithet of almas de Dios with which the world ridicules them signified nothing less than their having arrived at the apogee of Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

The sincerity of Fernán Caballero's faith is not to be doubted. Since she found peace and happiness in it

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1. Un servilón y un liberalito, p. 136.

she desired that others have it to lead a happier life, and to that end she filled her books with religious preaching by good examples and by imploring her reading public to profit by the excellency of those examples.

CHAPTER VII

REALISM

The realism to be found in the writing of Fernán Caballero must be considered in relation to the state of the novel at the time of her life. The Spanish populace was reading translations from the French or the historical novels written in their own country. El Señor de Bembibre by Enrique Gil y Carrasco was published in 1844, Doña Urraca de Castilla by F. Navarro Villoslada in 1849 and Fernandez y Gonzalez's El Cocinero de Su Majestad as late as 1857. When La Gaviota appeared in 1849 "it was as though a jasmine flower bloomed in a chill and arid desert."<sup>1</sup> To this arid desert of the novel this new author brought the freshness of actual contact with a group of people she knew well and loved. Away from the knights and ladies of another age she brought interest to living individuals and situations whose worth she realized.

Her method of writing was to collect bits of folklore, sketch characters she knew, then later to put them

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1. Mérimée and Morley: History of Spanish Literature, New York, 1930, p. 541; quoted from Ortega y Munilla.

together to form a whole which Padre Coloma called "admirable pictures, a sort of subtle mosaic of real elements, which lend to the whole all the aroma, the light, and the simple appearance of the truth."<sup>1</sup> In writing to Mora concerning La Gaviota, which she sent him for criticism she said: "my parents, a spirit of observation, many occasions to study in the extremely Spanish Seville the customs of the people, much patience to gather in the country towns proverbs, stories, beliefs, jokes, traditional sayings, etc. have made me collect over a period of years a brilliant mosaic... The fruit of these labors of mine I have put in order as the director of a museum puts his pictures, seeking the light and place in which they should appear... I know that time will give them value, because all I have painted will disappear like smoke within a little while, for you know how national traits disappear, and especially in a country which appreciates so little that which it has."<sup>2</sup>

Fernán thought the novel of customs the novel par excellence, and explained her idea in La Gaviota.

"'Please', continued the Marquesa, 'do not, at least, drag in seduction and adultery. What an idea to make women interesting for their sins! Nothing is less

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1. Coloma: Op. cit., p. 257.

2. Cartas de Fernán Caballero: p. 16.

interesting to a sensible person than a light headed girl who lets herself be seduced or a sinful woman who fails in her duties. Do not, following the scandalous use of the new novelists, profane the sacred texts of the Scripture. Is there anything more scandalous than to see the words of our Lord in a cheap paper...? This is a profanation!... Neither introduce a terrible suicide, unknown here until recently, for those who commit suicide have allowed their religion to become lukewarm if they have not destroyed it.'

'You are right', said the Countess, 'we aren't going to paint the Spanish as foreigners, we shall paint ourselves as we are...'

'Do not be ostentatious in your novel', the Marquesa went on, 'with the use of foreign words and phrases of which we have no need. If you do not know your tongue, there is the dictionary...'

... 'Let us leave frailties, tears, and crimes and bombastic speech. Let us make something good, fine, and happy.' .....

'Then', suggested Stein, 'write a fantastic novel.'

'Never', replied Rafael; 'That is all right for you Germans but not for us -- a Spanish fantastic novel would be an unbearable affectation.'

'Well then', Stein went on, 'a heroic or tragic novel.'

'God forbid!' exclaimed Rafael ...

'A sentimental novel -- '

'Merely hearing it mentioned makes me shudder.

There is no type which is less suited to the Spanish temper than the weeper. Sentimentality is as opposed to our character as sentimental jargon to Castillian speech'...

'It seems to me that two types fit us: the historical novel which we shall leave to learned writers, and the novel of customs, which is the one that suits persons of mediocre skill like us... That is the novel par excellence, useful and agreeable. Each nation should have her own, written with exactitude and with the true spirit of observation; they would aid a great deal in the study of humanity, history, practical ethics, and in the understanding of localities and epochs. If I were Queen I should order a novel of customs in each province, to be written without omitting anything...'<sup>1</sup>"

With her genre thus definitely established, her interest she frankly declared not to be in writing novels as fine literary products, but in reproducing the truth as she saw it. She wrote (in 1859) concerning her work that it "has no other merit than that of painting our country realistically, which has not been done in our

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1. La Gaviota, pp. 176 ff.

days by foreigners or by Spaniards, because those who could do it do not have time, and those who have time don't know how to or don't want to, occupied as they are in imposing foreign culture on us. Furthermore, why should men of culture and good taste write of a country morally and materially decomposed, where the literary productions do it no honor? My novels, my friend, as novels merit little indeed. I have no creative imagination, so they lack intrigue, interest, and their reading does not awake the curiosity nor fix the attention. They are pictures of characters, of the ridiculous vices of the age, and of the beautiful qualities which are disappearing..."<sup>1</sup>

She shrinks from being called a literato: "Heaven help me, no, my friend. I a litterateur! I am not the rose, but, as Bulwer says, I was at its side and was dredged with its perfume. I am not learned, I am merely well educated. In what I write there is no art, nor learning, nor study; it is instinctive;... I have not proposed to write novels. I have tried to give a true, genuine, exact idea of Spain and its society, to describe the inner life of our people, their beliefs, their feelings, their sharp sayings."<sup>2</sup> In her prologue to Lágrimas

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1. Cartas de Fernán Caballero, pp. 191 ff.

2. Asensio, Op. cit., p. 203.

she wrote: "We do not write novels, but pictures of human life, just as you see it before your eyes";<sup>1</sup> of La Familia de Alvareda she said: "We do not aspire to produce an effect, but to paint the things of the people as they are; we haven't wanted to depart from naturalness and truth in even the most minute detail";<sup>2</sup> and with regard to Clemencia she commented, "What I write are not novels of imagination, but a gathering of scenes, descriptions, portraits, and reflections of real life."<sup>3</sup> She wrote to the Count of Casal: "I have said a great deal in my prefaces to excuse myself for a fault I have tact enough to recognize, and for this reason I have repeated many times that I do not pretend to write novels, but pictures of customs, portraits, accompanied by reflections and descriptions, and that I should be judged by these things. Nevertheless, my writing is presented as novels because I find no other name to give them... There is an instinct in me...which makes me terrified to think that one might say: this is not true, as the bitterst anathema. In poetizing the truth, which is all my desire and my high moral, I fear that this truth will not appear in all

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1. See: Barja, César: Libros y autores modernos, Madrid, 1925, p. 309.
  2. La Familia de Alvareda, Vol. V, C. de A. E., Leipzig, 1885, p. vii, Introduction.
  3. See: Barja: Op. cit., p. 309.

its splendor.. In wishing to cast out from the perfect life everything romantic, seeking the ideal in the simple, as it exists for me, I rob my novels or deprive them of all that brilliant part of color and romanticism and the extraordinary..."<sup>1</sup>

So great was Fernán's desire to tell the truth and the whole truth as she saw it that she had one of her characters justify the telling of a complete story to the detriment of artistic balance. "...You find that my story is what the English call too rich ... That is not my fault nor my uncle's -- it is the fault of the material I write about. You would have ended with Aunt Juana's letter, which moved you so, but my Uncle, who tells the truth, does not care about producing effects nor following rules."<sup>2</sup>

That the truth lacked intrigue did not perturb Fernán Caballero. With gentle and very transparent apology she wrote: "We regret that following truthful events it is not possible for us to divert the reader with a mournful and terrible description like those of the English author Anna Radcliff, in whose case, as Custine says, 'l'imagination aime a frémir' (her imagination likes to shudder). But in order to be truthful we must descend to the most

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1. Cartas de Fernán Caballero, pp. 38 ff.

2. Una en Otra, p. 111.

simple, most candid, and if you like, the most trivial details if we are to describe the actual state of the castle..."<sup>1</sup>

Fernán's intent was, as we have noted, higher than simply writing novels. "The part which might be called a novel serves only as a frame to this vast picture which I have proposed to sketch... My intention is much higher than that of making novels;.. it is the rehabilitation of that which the 19th century has trampled with heavy and unfeeling tread; the rehabilitation of what is saintly, religious, of religious practices in their high and tender significance; of Spanish customs in their purity, of the bonds of society and of the family... References to the good and noble awake like sentiments in us..."<sup>2</sup>

To write a novel without this higher intent, or to write a novel without a didactic purpose was unworthy of this woman, possessed as she was with the evangelistic spirit. She greatly admired Balzac and Dumas, yet she criticized them saying, "The bad thing about these and other eminent men is that they have ideas and opinions but no convictions; they have opinions but no principles; and thus they can neither approve nor condemn from a moral viewpoint, because their maxims are so varied that

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1. Un servilón y un liberalito, p. 128.

2. Asensio: Op. cit., p. 203.

on one page one finds them religious, pagan, spiritual, skeptic... This lowers the value of their works for sincere people of good faith.."<sup>1</sup>

She felt a great responsibility for the effect her novels might have upon the reader: "Everyone who prints what he has written must answer before the Tribunal of God, of society, and of his conscience for the good or bad which his writing may cause."<sup>2</sup>

She was very proud that the Church sanctioned all her writing; she felt the dissemination of good teaching not only a responsibility, but a duty. "Purity is the highest and most aristocratic, if I may express myself in this way, of the virtues, for it is the one which separates man from beast in the highest degree, and that which brings him closest to the angels. It is an obligation, a precept, a solid base of the social order of life. In literature, whose mission it is to raise and purify our sould, it is a duty... If I were a young writer I should never lose sight of this consideration: My mother or my sweetheart or my sister will read my works, and some day my children will read them."<sup>3</sup>

To one so circumscribed by moral preoccupation

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1. Cartas de Fernán Caballero, pp. 80 ff.
  2. Idem, p. 49.
  3. Idem, p. 50.

reality must necessarily be sacrificed to the didactic purpose. The whole of reality cannot, of course, be encompassed by a single writer. Each must choose his narrow field; but to write realistically he must faithfully present what he sees, choosing and discarding material to make a unified whole. Fernán chose her field-- the Andalusian country-side from which she seldom wandered -- and she reproduced faithfully what she saw, for she was blinded to the evil, brutal aspect of life. Her life was so saturated with her religious idealism that she could not have viewed matters in any other way. The little evil that was forced upon her consciousness she deliberately ignored. "It is very certain and everyone knows that in Spain, as everywhere, there are evil people and things; we have never considered denying it, nor making Spain an Arcadia; the many evil types which are found in our novels and pictures of customs, if not in the foreground, as necessary shadows to the composition, prove this. What we have not wanted to do is to take the thankless, uninteresting, and useless task of putting evil types into the foreground and giving publicity to things of this type. We have already said on other occasions that criticism and painting of the evil which degrades man is an inefficacious corrective for that evil; praise or painting of the good which ennobles man is the sweetest

of the stimulants for good."<sup>1</sup> Her evil characters appear only as shadows to place more boldly in relief the qualities of the good characters with whom they are contrasted.

Fernán's tender sympathy for her Spain, her Andalusia, her country folk, was so intense as to rob her of the objectivity which must be present to assure any degree of reality. She almost completely lacked that objectivity. Only in the reproduction of the conversation of children at play and at times of the poor village people, and to a considerable extent in La Gaviota does she achieve it. At all other times the personality of the author is ever present. There is never the slightest doubt as to who are her mouthpieces, and, not content with dictating speeches, she rhapsodizes over the Christian principles she has had her characters enunciate. She does not trust the appreciation of her readers and must make doubly sure that they realize the import of what she has first strongly implied and then explained.

This defender of her principles may at any moment launch into a protracted discussion of a Christian virtue or of the neglected ruins of an ancient castle -- a thing she felt perfectly justified in doing. She wrote: "This is the occasion to make a digression. The author has every right to make as many as he wishes, just as the

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1. Cuadros de Costumbres, Prologue, p. 5.

reader has the same right not to read them. Romanticism, which Victor Hugo defines as liberty in literature, has given us the right to make digressions."

Style was a matter of no importance whatever to Fernán Caballero. She clearly outlined her stand in the novel Clemencia. A group is discussing a recent novel.

"'I do not like it', Clemencia replied, 'because its object, without a bad intention on the part of the author, but because of the lack of a good intention, is not moral; and this end or object which ought to be even more in spirit than in words is, to my mind, what every novel should have.'

'But', exclaimed Paco Guzmán, 'it is worth a great deal; it has a magnificent style.'

'Perhaps so, Paco, but clothes don't make the man.'

'What! You call style a garment? Style, which is one of the first gifts of an author?'

'First let us determine what you call style, for I think this word, if not ambiguous, at least of such an arbitrary and extensive meaning that each one understands it in his own way. Is it the peculiar manner the author has of expressing himself, or is it the correct and grammatical way of handling the language?'

'Madam, I believe that the science of dialectics, syntax, and logic in equal parts make up style.'

'The grave and classical Dictionary does not define it in this way when it says it "is the manner and form of speech of each person". Neither does a critic of great understanding and great literary practice who has written ... in the Herald<sup>1</sup> when he says: "We believe that in the matter of style the essential thing for a writer is to have one of his own, spontaneous, which is not confused with any other, which lives because of itself..."'

'...When Buffon said "Style is the man", in place of materializing it into an object concocted by art and rules, he makes it an inspiration, and as peculiar to each man as the beautiful voice which issues from the throat of a nightingale. An excellent modern critic defines it "the rule of good taste in the art of expressing oneself". The eminent Balzac clearly said that "style is not in words but in ideas"... Lamartine says that "a woman does not have style, and this is the reason she expresses everything so well", from which one can only infer that if style is indeed a thing which is learned and subjected to rules, it is not necessary to express oneself well; on the contrary, the person who is not subjected to this rule would express an idea better.

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1. This critic was Ochoa, who had written what she quoted in criticism of La Gaviota.

For my part, I understand that style is to expression what poetry is to thought. I believe both children of inspiration...<sup>1</sup>"

Fernán wanted to write without subjecting herself to any rule, to write naturally and easily. Style was to her an unconscious product never to be striven for. She thought the inspiration of the subject matter would be sufficient to produce a style that would not detract from the point of the story; she never wished that her style be noted for its own sake.

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1. Clemencia, pp. 207 ff.

CHAPTER VIII

WORKS

## La Gaviota

Marisalada, the daughter of Pedro Santaló, is first introduced in casual conversation about her. Momo speaks of her as La Gaviota (the seagull) and says he has so called her "because she has very long legs, because she lives in water as much as on land, because she sings and shouts and leaps from rock to rock as the other sea gulls do."<sup>1</sup> Her petulant nature is skillfully shown when she first speaks. She has been ill for some time and the good Aunt María has taken the Doctor to examine her.

"'Come, Marisalada, come; get up, my child, so this gentleman may examine you.'

Marisalada did not move.

'Come, child', the good woman repeated; 'you will see how he is going to cure you like a charm.'

Saying these words, she caught the girl by her arm, trying to raise her.

'I don't want to!' said the sick girl, shaking herself loose with a sharp jerk.

'Since she is ill, she is impatient', her father

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1. La Gaviota, p. 38.

said, trying to discipline her.

Marisalada had a coughing spell. The fisherman wrung his hands in agony.

'A cold', said Aunt Maria, 'that's a slight thing. But, my dear Uncle Pedro, who would consent that this child with the cold she has should run about barefooted and barelegged along these cold rocks?'

'She wanted to!' replied Uncle Pedro.

'And why don't you give her good food; broth, milk, eggs -- she should eat more than shell fish.'

'She doesn't want to!' her father responded dejectedly.<sup>1</sup>"

Stein found her seriously threatened with consumption.

"'And still she wants to sing?' asked the old woman during the examination.

'She would sing crucified like a bat (thief)', said Momo.<sup>2</sup>"

Here without comment, so often introduced to the detriment of the character portrayal, is Marisalada -- harsh, unheeding of her father's care, willful, unmoved by anything but her singing for which she has a true passion.

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1. Idem, p. 58.

2. Idem, p. 59.

She is pleased to stay at Aunt Maria's house during her convalescence. Here she is pampered; she takes all care and attention as if it were due her; she cares nothing for her idolatrous father and greatly prefers this to being at home.

One day she sings a popular song. Stein, the doctor, repeats the melody on his flute. She hurriedly enters the room where he is and listens with the greatest attention, her body bent toward him, a smile on her lips, and her soul in her eyes. She has been moved for the first time. From that moment she regards Stein, not with the old asperity, but with confidence and a certain docility which causes great astonishment. Her reaction toward music is such that upon being asked in what her idea of happiness consists she replies, "In always hearing you<sup>1</sup> play".

During three years Stein directs the girl's musical education and, blinded by his generous nature and his goodness, enchanted by the girl's superb voice, he falls in love with her. Fernán says of Stein that he is a man who could "go to a mask ball without being persuaded that behind the ridiculous faces of painted cardboard are other<sup>2</sup> faces and features given the individual by nature."

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1. Idem, p. 102.

2. Idem, p. 91.

He is sure that such music could come only from a beautiful soul.

María becomes attached to Stein also, not because she appreciates his goodness, not because she understands his superiority of mind and soul, but because his musical ability attracts her. Furthermore, he is the only eligible man in the town.

The matter suggested by Aunt María, Marisalada considers the matter of marriage in her own selfish attitude of mind.

"'Yes', she was thinking, wrapping her shawl about her head, 'he loves me; I already knew that. But only as Brother Gabriel loves Aunt María -- that is, as old people love each other ... Now if he marries me he will indeed be good to me; he will let me do what I want, he will play his flute for me when I ask him, he will buy whatever I fancy. If I were his wife I would have a beautiful shawl like Quela, Juan Lopez's daughter, and a light mantilla like the mayor's wife. How jealous they would be!...'"<sup>1</sup>

The natures of Stein and María are shown in contrast at Stein's proposal of marriage. He, profoundly moved, does not realize that he is being met with indifference.

"'You would marry me, then, beautiful daughter of nature?'

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1. Idem, p. 97.

'Why not?' La Gaviota replied.<sup>1</sup>

They are sitting on the beach. María, bored, is drawing pictures in the sand. Stein speaks of the beauty of calm nature and compares turbulent passion to stormy weather. "But our happiness", he says, "will be as inalterable as a May sky, for you will love me forever, won't you?"<sup>2</sup>

María, lacking any response to Stein's poetic mood, does not want to answer but must, so she writes -- Forever -- in the sand.

Stein takes this for modesty and goes on comparing her attraction to that of the waves, but finding her without their perfidity. She to his question "You will never be ungrateful, will you?" scribbles, "Never" and the waves wash away her words.

Her indifference is further shown by the fact that in serious conversation with Stein she is pleased to note how red Momo's ears are because she has recently pulled them.<sup>3</sup> On her wedding day, almost on the way to the church, she exchanges angry coplas with Momo.<sup>4</sup> Stein is divinely happy on leaving the wedding celebration; María is only

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1. Idem, p. 104.

2. Idem, p. 105.

3. Idem, p. 100.

4. Idem, p. 112.

upset because she must leave such a merry gathering. The contrast is too great in the two natures; they are greatly over-simplified. One tends, against Fernán Caballero's intent, of course, to sympathise with the harsh María rather than the over-sentimental German.

They have been living happily enough for several years (this interval is only mentioned in the novel) when the Duke of Almansa, whom Stein has met before, happens to be in the little town. He is astounded at the beauty of María's voice. She is greatly excited by his admiration. "If María's dark, inalterable, smooth skin could have changed color, the purple of pride and satisfaction would have been patent on her cheek."<sup>2</sup>

At the Duke's insistence they go to Seville, where María makes her début. She clearly perceives the situation in the drawing room.

"'Here I am', she said to herself ... 'The Countess is good, and wants me to shine. The fine young people are laughing at me and at my attire which must be terrible. To the foreigners who are looking at me disdainfully I am a simple country maid; I am a non-entity to the old ones...'"<sup>3</sup>

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1. Idem, p. 116.

2. Idem, p. 122.

3. Idem, p. 194.

Her conversation is laconic.

"'Do you like Seville?' the Countess asked.

'Well enough', replied Maria.

'How do you like the Cathedral?'

'Too big.'

'And our beautiful walks?'

'Too small.'

'Then what has pleased you most?'

'The bull fights.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus the conversation ends.

At the end of ten minutes of silence the Countess says to her, "'May I ask your husband to go to the piano?'"

"'When you like'", Maria replies.

"Stein sat at the piano. Maria, led by the Duke, took her place at his side.

'Are you trembling, Maria?'" Stein asks, and Maria answers, "'Why should I tremble?'"<sup>2</sup>

Her confidence in her ability prevents her from being moved by the approbation of the company. The wild acclaim she receives at her first appearance in opera leaves her indifferent, disdainful, untouched. Why shouldn't she be applauded? She is urged to go to Paris. She responds, "'You see I don't need to go to Paris to be applauded,

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1. Idem, p. 194.

2. Idem, p. 194.

and applause for applause I prefer that of my own country to that of the French.'<sup>1</sup> There is no justification for such a remark in the character of the haughty independent María; it seems only another blow of the author against exaggerated foreign acclamation.

The first person to affect María's emotions is Pepe Vara, a bull fighter whom she has greatly admired at the Ring. His bold insolence awakes her passion which has been unmoved by blander souls. She thrives on his brutal treatment. She enjoys the love that subjugates her, that makes her tremble and weep; the tyrannical love was what she needed just as, the author explains, some natures demand strong alcoholic drinks in place of light wines. Pepe has a terrible fascination for her; she is impelled to accept every whim of his. He forbids her singing one night and gives her such a nervous attack that she really cannot sing. He suspects her of having an affair with the Duke and hides behind the curtains to listen to the conversation. He demands that María rise, ill as she is, and go to dine with him. The following day he makes her go to the bull fight although she is so sick she can scarcely stand.

She becomes violently ill, is left deserted by every-

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1. Idem, p. 205.

one except a sister of Charity, for Stein has discovered her unfaithfulness and has gone away with a broken heart, and Pepe is killed at a bullfight; she loses her voice, returns to the village of Villamar where she marries her old suitor, the barber. There she lives insolent to the last, still fighting Momo.

There is no development of María's character except in the affair with Pepe. Her qualities of insolence and lack of feeling shown at first remain the same. She is consistent enough -- too consistent, as a matter of fact, to be a convincing character. It seems scarcely reasonable that, hard as she was, she should refuse to go to the bedside of her dying father who was calling for her. Interested in no one but herself with the exception of Pepe, others claim her attention only as they serve her ends. She is bold; she does not practice nor can she understand subtleties. Her tragic fate is too swift; the loss of husband, lover, voice, and all her friends almost overnight taxes the credulity of the reader.

Stein admits less development than La Gaviota. He is too gentle, too sweet, too sentimental. It is small wonder that the girl remains uninterested in him. Overflowing with noble sentiment he is blind to the faults of individuals, never seeing anything but good traits, never erring from his way. When he receives a note telling him where he can find his faithless wife, not a shadow of

doubt crosses his mind. When he finds her room empty on going to inquire about her health he is confident she has had reason to leave. To have proof against the calumniator he starts toward the address given; he is ashamed then and almost turns back, but finally torn by doubt in spite of himself, enters. On finding Maria he is shattered. He goes to Havana where he dies of yellow fever, blessing and forgiving his wife as he dies. If the reader were not perspicacious enough to gather the idea of Stein's candidness and goodness through his actions he would never be a moment in doubt concerning them for the author constantly makes occasion to eulogize them.

The Duke, the third man interested in the woman, is perhaps an effort to show good and bad in the same character just as Stein was to show a good and Pepe a bad character. The good is so triumphant at the end when we learn that after all his interest in Maria had been wholly platonic and that he had been attracted only to the embodiment of purity he thought to find in her that the effect is lost. It seems that the author finds such a plan too bold and must defend the goodness of the man and retract the impression she had willfully given in order to have him return intact to his patient and long-suffering wife.

The Duke is hurt when Maria casts aside verses he has written to her in favor of a jewel he has brought.

"She has no heart for love, nor soul for poetry; it seems she has no blood for life. And yet heaven is in her smile; hell in her eyes; and all heaven and earth contained in the accents of her superb voice."<sup>1</sup>

When Stein tells the Duke of his wife's unfaithfulness and asks what his attitude would be under the same conditions the Duke forgets (as Fernán apparently has forgot) the attentions he has paid María and cries that he would murder them both. As he thinks the matter over scorn and contempt become uppermost in his mind and the woman who had seduced him in his dreams and to whom he had sung his verses ceases to exist.

The character of a loving husband and father who is temporarily fascinated by a beautiful opera singer and then, realizing his foolishness, returns home, is a genuine enough one. Fernán, however, has robbed the character of its veracity by too much insistence on his innocence throughout.

La Gaviota was the first of the novels of Fernán Caballero to appear and it is by far her best one. It was written before she became almost completely occupied with preaching on every page and has action enough to render it unnecessary for her to explain in a preface that she thinks action crude and pervading quiet and peace ideal. To be sure, the author's sympathy with the righteous Stein never wavers and we are never in doubt

as to a bad end for Marisalada, but the selection of such a protagonist would not have been likely in the author's later years.

The greater part of the narrative is laid in the country and it is with regret that one sees the scene moved to the city at all, for there the author loses much of the freshness and naturalness that make the former scenes so charming. Despite Cecilia's life in high Sevillian society as the wife of Arco-Hermoso, her love and understanding must have been greater for the country folk, for she portrays them with a fidelity which is only a pretense when she deals with the other class. Not all the first families can have been as stupid and uninteresting as she portrays them.

That Eugenio Ochoa found the pages devoted to the love affair of Pepe and María immoral seems almost unbelievable, for no treatment of the matter could be more chaste. The Marqués de Figueroa in mentioning the opinion expressed by Ochoa hastens to the novelist's defense and declares: "Indeed Fernán never overstepped that variable line which points out modesty to the author and which the author should always respect. How much more circumspect is Fernán, even in the passages to which Ochoa alludes, than the classic novelists of the Golden Age."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Figueroa, Marqués de, La España del siglo XIX, Madrid, 1886, p. 308.

Despite his criticism on this point, however, Ochoa was so impressed with the novel whose authorship was unknown that he wrote in *La España*: "La Gaviota will be in our literature what Waverly is in English literature; the first dawn of a beautiful day, the first spray of the glorious poetic garland which will crown the forehead of a Spanish Walter Scott."<sup>1</sup>

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1. See: Blanco García: La literatura española en el siglo XIX, Madrid, 1903, Vol. II, p. 284; from Juicio crítico de La Gaviota, in *La España*, 1849.

La Familia de Alvarada 1856

Fernán Caballero states at the outset that "the argument of this novel, which we have announced as devoted exclusively to painting the small town is a real happening"<sup>1</sup>.

The plot is rather deftly introduced through the speech of the characters, with less explanation than is usual in Fernán's novels. Perico, who has always been obedient enough to his mother, is determined to marry his cousin Rita. His mother opposes the marriage on the ground that "la que es mala hija es mala casada", and that members of the same family cannot be happy together. He is very determined, however, and his mother allows him to marry her since she regards that a lesser evil than his going off to war.

Rita's mother María is "so good, so candid and simple that she never had character or sufficient vigor to affect the decided and sharp character which her daughter had shown since childhood. Her character was violent, her heart cold. Her face, extraordinarily pretty and temptingly expressive, piquant, alive, flushed and inviting, formed a perfect contrast with that of her cousin Elvira; one could compare the one to a fresh

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1. La familia de Alvarada, preface, p. vii.

rose armed with its thorns, the other to a passion rose which raises above its pale leaves a crown of thorns as a sign of suffering, and hides in the depth of its calix a sweet honey." <sup>1</sup> Elvira, as all of Fernán Caballero's heroines, is too sweet, too submissive, too colorless to be interesting, and the reader sympathises with Rita whose faults are a welcome relief in seas of virtue. The good characters here, although indisputably good, are, however, not so cloyingly sweet as some of the author's later productions become.

Perico and Rita are to be married as soon as the dispensation from the Pope arrives. On the marriage day of Ventura and Elvira the French come and Ventura kills a soldier who menaces his old father. He is forced to flee for his life and is gone, for no apparent reason, for six years. Then one day he suddenly appears, more handsome and charming than ever. But Elvira's joy following six years of suffering is again turned to sorrow when she observes that Ventura is fascinated by Rita, who finds the gallant young soldier quite to her liking. Quite naturally Ventura cares more for the vivacious Rita than for the longsuffering, patient Elvira. Why should the fiancée stand by "patient and prudent" and continue as a martyr seeing her newly revived happiness paling?

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1. La familia de Alvarada, p. 9.

Ana, Perico's mother, feels obliged to ward off the pending tragedy by speaking to Rita about her disgraceful conduct, but is met with scorn and advice to attend to matters which concern her.

One day the unsuspecting Perico realizes the state of affairs when his twins repeat Ventura's invitation to Rita to leave the room because the little angels of God are the devil's witnesses. Greatly aroused, Perico goes to the fair where the pair is the feature of the dance. Ventura, slightly drunk, is about to fight him when his father arrives and calms them enough to get them home. The next morning Ventura, thoroughly repentant and realizing what a fool he has been, is on his way to ask forgiveness and to be happy with Elvira when he is treacherously shot down by Perico. He dies after generously forgiving everyone.

Perico runs away and almost overcome by his hardships is rescued by the generous chief of a desperate band of bandits, Diego. Diego's band robs the rich, gives alms to the poor, and does not hold Perico in high esteem for he does not enter into their spirit. To prove his mettle he is forced to shoot a member of the State's guard sent to capture them. This man, he later learns, is a childhood playmate of his, son of an old friend and benefactor of the family. He is not able to overcome his feeling of disgrace and when the band is captured while

trying to rob a church it is with gladness that Perico goes to the gallows.

Rita's proud spirit is broken during a revival meeting, and she lives thereafter a life of repentance and penance. The author does not present the process of Rita's change of heart; she merely testifies that it takes place. The families once severed by the tragedy are reunited after the sermon on forgiveness of sins. The author in a footnote documents this good effect of a revival meeting and deplures the discontinuance of the practice.

Rita happens to be in the city when the hanging takes place, and, shaken by convulsions, nearly dies after witnessing the terrible scene. One by one the principals of the tragedy die until only a shadow of the guilty Rita remains, trying to care for her children. The narrator returning to the old home of the family finds it in ruins; the old orange tree which has been identified with the family is dead; the faithful dog Melampo is dead.

The novel of La Familia de Alvarada ranks among the best of Fernán Caballero's works. It is commendable for its brevity, its unity, its lack of distracting didactic passages. The author tells in a simple, straightforward, sympathetic way the tragic story of the Alvarada family as it was told to her, changing,

she tells us, only the time of the story and adding something of a beginning and a conclusion. She is not concerned with the mental processes of her characters; she is primarily telling a story. The Marqués de Figueroa wrote: "In this, as in some other novels of Fernán Caballero, the principal merit is in the faithful and exact painting of the people who feel, think and talk in her books as they feel, think, and talk in reality"<sup>1</sup>.

The Duque de Rivas said concerning the characters of this novel that "they are like Velazquez's portraits; how living they are, and with what a master hand they are sketched and painted! How well characterized Rita is... How full of verisimilitude are the portraits of Uncle Pedro and the widow Mary! How noble is Anna! Even the dog Melampo and the orange tree in the court interest and move the reader"<sup>2</sup>.

### Lgrimas

Lgrimas, in the same volume, is the name of the heroine of this lachrymose novel, a spineless unfortunate who was born to suffer unloved and die forgotten. Her story is drowned in seas of sentiment. Only the games of the children at play are of value or interest.

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1. Figueroa: Op. cit., p. 310.

2. See: Asensio: Op. cit., p. 199.

Cuatro novelasUn Servilón y un Liberalito

This is a rather entertaining story with the exception of the bursts of morality. The humor is not at all subtle and quite naive.

A young liberal, Leopoldo, is cared for by an old ex-schoolteacher, his wife and his sister -- all staunch monarchists. The lad plays pranks on them and is their despair although they are attracted to him. He is of a good family, but is being a bit wayward in his youth. He is sheltered by these people and escapes just before being taken prisoner, leaving some money to pay for his keep and a note explaining his sudden exit. He accidentally mixes the letter with one written to a liberal friend speaking in jesting tone of the old people and their quaint ideas. At first deeply hurt, the school teacher and his companions later believe the boy has purposely left the note when its contents make it evident that there had been no conspiracy on their part, and the old man is saved from arrest. The lad in Cádiz is involved in a duel because he refused to play his flute for a French officer. Having the upper hand when his opponent's shot grazes him, Leopoldo forces him to sing a song under penalty of death. This, the author says, is based on a true incident.

The unnecessary ending shows Leopoldo returning years later, now a General, to the home of his benefactors. He finds the old man dead and the two women starving, having refused to touch the money they believed entrusted to their keeping. He, of course, provides for them and he and his wife go into Fernán Caballero's reflections on the incredibility of people's unbelief and the beauty of simple faith.

The style is straightforward, suited to the telling of a story. There is a long introduction of description of the city, the castle, the surrounding country, and the characters. This done, the author proceeds to the matter at hand.

Con mal o con bien a los tuyos te ten

This very moral story is loaded with propoganda, and in it one can discern nothing of the power of the writer of La Gaviota.

A young innocent girl bereft of her matador father (a long harangue on bull fighting is inserted), deserts her cousin who warns her with the proverb which serves as the title, and goes with the rich Servando who cared for her dying father. Servando is "the author of all her misfortune; who, without being a perverse man, nor a consummate bounder, had come, solely through indifference

toward good, and lack of respect toward religion and its institutions, to be a criminal and an unnatural being, with full power given to his passions which he called instincts of nature and which he could not resist..."<sup>1</sup>

Not vicious to begin with -- we are assured that the seducer is unknown in Spain -- he is influenced by an evil Frenchman, Fernán Caballero tells us. He persuades the Spaniard not to marry the girl legally; she, believing herself married, goes with him to England where she suffers in solitude with her two children. He sinks lower and lower and finally dies in prison unable to pay his gambling debts. The evil friend now attempts to deceive the girl and is met with the proper indignation. Aided by the Spanish consul she gets passage to Spain where her consort's relatives, naturally enough, refuse to aid her in the absence of legal documents. Starving, desperate, she is recognized and helped by her cousin. She is so weakened that she soon dies; the daughter is cared for by a rich, charitable woman and properly married to a servant; the boy becomes a successful sailor. Thus we learn that: "All the above proves that in this alternation of opposite principles which the heart of man and the superiority of the world dispute, if evil triumphs many times, good triumphs just as many. For if we see

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1. Con mal o con bien..., p. 236.

vice abandoning its children, we see charity gathering in  
the unfortunate ones."<sup>1</sup>

### Pobre Dolores

Poor Dolores loses her father at sea, her mother on the seashore awaiting her son's return, her brother at the hand of her sweetheart who killed believing him a rival suitor, and her sweetheart at the gallows for murder. She bears it all by the grace of God for she was born to suffer.

At the first of the story we are given folk-lore of Rota where the incidents take place. Fernán Caballero dwells on the beauty of peaceful home life, on the sanctity of forgiveness of one's murderer, on the love of the boy who was going to give his life on the gallows to save his brother. The priest she finds admirable. "He had not invented gunpowder nor printing, nor was he collaborator of any encyclopedia, but he knew what he had to know for the fulfillment of his duties. If he lacked a bit of dignity, he had more than enough piety and enough knowledge of the people, their customs and language to bring

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1. Pobre Dolores, p. 287.

them to the paths of righteousness..."<sup>1</sup>

The character of Marcelino Toro is admirably drawn in a chapter which might well be separated from the rest. Returning rich and expansive from America, he decides that he has artistic ability and turns painter, to be daunted only by a fall while working, suspended, on a huge canvas. Remembering and comparing himself to Murillo, he decides to let his artistic enthusiasm chill. This is the best part of the story.

Una en otra.

The story of the effect upon a family of persistent misfortune is the burden of this novel; the love story of the story teller is the secondary plot.

The opening of the novelette is a conversation in a diligence. After revealing the character of the occupants so well by conversation the author has one of the young men, in writing to his friend, review each individual repeating what we already know about each one. The device of having the boys write, supposedly to perfect their French and Spanish, could be more effective than it is, for the author's personality and ideas are all too clear

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1. Pobre Dolores, p. 287.

on each page. what virile youth would describe a garden thus: "In the garden you see, here a block of violets surrounded by cabbages which appear ugly dwarfs caring for enchanted princesses; there magnificent orange trees, aristocratic, with their leaves of velvet and their flowers of ermine"<sup>1</sup>? What man whom we know only as a business administrator would say of love letters: "These tender, suave disclosures of the heart, these flowers of youth, sincere and exalted as youth itself, have need of secrecy, as the violet has need of shade; they should be respected as innocence is"<sup>2</sup>?

Dear to her heart is the misunderstanding and mis-evaluation of her country and she has one of the boys deplore the fact that it is so unappreciated. "How right the French novelist was when he refused to come to Spain, saying that if he came he could no longer describe it! From which one deduces that these writers make of our country a land part fantastical, part of the middle ages, which belongs only to the middle ages; or indeed a common, barbarous, uncivilized country, a country of transition and without character, unworthy of study or presentation. They are greatly deceived; we can only regret that Téophile Gautier, M. de Custine and others whose opinions

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1. Una en otra, p. 22.

2. Idem, p. 73.

are law in France, have not visited our country except casually, noting enough to appreciate it but not enough to know it."<sup>1</sup>

The character of the gross, self-made Judas Tadeo is too broad to be convincing, and not broad enough to be slapstick. No other extensive attempt is made at characterization. The boy writing the letters has a love affair with the sparkling Casta, foiling her rich suitors and managing a happy ending by an investment in a silver mine.

The other plot is told the boy by his uncle to prove how misfortune is inherited and how it pursues certain families. A young girl, horrified by seeing her husband killed by a robber, dies in premature childbirth, leaving twins, Paz and Luz, who are cared for by their grandmother. Luz, against her grandfather's wishes marries a young muleteer who goes blind and, insanely jealous of his wife, kills her. Paz is in love with a smuggler who is caught and imprisoned on the day he was to give up the business. She marries another man instead, and is happy and tranquil until the old lover returns and murders her husband before her son's eyes. The son swears vengeance, and Paz dies of the shock. The son is about to marry when he recognizes in his

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1. Idem, p. 17.

prospective father-in-law the assassin of his father. Accused and convicted, the man is hanged; the girl becomes prey to epileptic fits; the boy goes mad. The last part of the story is interpreted as punishment for the man who had "false ideas of justice and stupid pride, believing himself the instrument of expiation, when God alone deals out and inflicts it."

Fernán Caballero recognizes that the story would have been more artistic if stopped sooner but explains herself saying -- "That is not my fault... it is the fault of the material I write about... My uncle, who tells the truth, does not care about producing effects nor following rules..."<sup>1</sup> The author does not, however, as is her wont, explain by a footnote that the story is founded on a true happening.

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1. Idem, p. 111.

Un verano en Bornos

This novel, related in a series of letters, treats of the love affairs of two sisters. The story, which is not complicated, moves smoothly and gently. The unfaithful fiancé is disposed of, and virtue and goodness of character are rewarded in the end. There is present the artificiality that must almost necessarily be found when a story is told in letters. The personality of the author intrudes throughout; the lengthy comments on the thoughts and actions of characters are obviously Fernán's.

The story has no outstanding merits nor defects; it is freer from tiring apostrophes than many.

Cosa Cumplida -- sólo en la otra vida

The burden of these six "dialogues between youth and maturity" is that nothing complete is found this side of Heaven. Our happiness is only partial; we never know when some thing may happen along to destroy it. These blows of fate cannot be understood by the mind, but must be accepted with resignation and answered by religious faith. Dialogue III, a character study of Don Gil, the subchanter of the Church, is by far the best.

Lady Virginia

Fernán Caballero wrote to Latour: "Since mothers give their daughters my novels to read from the age of ten years, I have proposed not to have them give the idea that there could be children born outside of wedlock and even less that there could be married women whose husbands were not the fathers of their children. Thus I invented, in order to avoid this danger, the donnée which you, with much reason, find unacceptable, and I preferred a thousand times to incur this just judgment than not to respect innocence. I said to myself -- I hope that they will know that the horrible situation of the Marquesa is due to an adultery which Fernán makes understood without making it evident; but Fermín (who helped her with her manuscript) was careful to take this hope from me, adding from his head to my story these inconceivable lines -- 'Those dangerous relations in which I did not transgress all my duties'. 'But, Sir', I said to him, 'what I desire is that the reader believe Lady Virginia more guilty than I, out of respect for innocence, make her. My story with this absolute declaration is not probable.' 'Yes it is, such cases have been seen, and it is more moral this way.' 'But what I want is that Lady Virginia be a great sinner!' 'It is not necessary; it is better thus.' 'But don't you see that this of all her duties awakens in the young

girls the idea that there are other duties than those of caring for their faith and their hearts?' Nothing convinced him and the unfortunate phrase which removed all hope of being understood was inserted."<sup>1</sup>

It would indeed be an unsophisticated mind that would fail to penetrate the "all my duties" and fail to perceive Fernán's idea. When faced with such passages as the following one wonders at the author's idea, which is greatly exaggerated, of her subtlety. The Doctor in dissuading Lady Virginia from owning her son says -- "His unhappiness would depend on having been a deceived husband all his life"<sup>2</sup>. Lady Virginia in protesting her former love for her husband says: "...it is an unfounded assertion... to pretend that one does not love before feeling a lamentable and illicit passion"<sup>3</sup>. Again she declares during her conversion: "Do you know that I am the cause of the suicide of my son, for having been an unfaithful wife and a denaturalized mother?"<sup>4</sup>

If one were thoroughly convinced that there could be nothing of infidelity in the book, it would be possible to read it through and interpret her "illicit passion"

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1. Morel-Fatio, Op. cit., p. 341.

2. Lady Virginia, p. 257.

3. Idem, p. 259.

4. Idem, p. 264.

as one in which she does not "transgress all her duties", and to understand the term "unfaithfulness" applied to her deception as to the disposition of her son. Fernán has Lady Virginia, unable to reconcile her lover to her return to her husband, promise to give him the child she is about to bear, having his father and all others believe him dead. To the unprejudiced observer the whole story can be nothing but absurd.

After suffering through a life of agony longing for her son, she receives a letter from him in which he curses her for depriving him of his rightful place and his splendid father just to satisfy a lover. Lady Virginia's husband is happily killed before she has time to confess, precipitate a scandal, and ruin them both. She finds her son a suicide, and after great suffering is converted, after several pages of the mercy of God, to the Catholic faith. Here she finds God, forgiveness for her sins, and peace for her troubled soul. In closing Fernán shows the mocking attitude of Lady Virginia's former friends in refusing to accept as sincere her new life of sacrifice and devotion to charity.

Little or nothing can be found to commend the absurd story.

Relaciones

The author states in the prologue to these eight stories that "relaciones" can by virtue of their tendency to make an effect be emancipated with more justification than novels from strict probability without changing their essence or failing in their object"<sup>1</sup>. The stories, as a result of this attitude, are highly improbable; coincidence and divine retribution are badly abused. Fernán Caballero again demonstrates that her powers of plot and character invention are poor. Only the bits of folk-lore introduced are of value.

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1. Relaciones, Prologue, p. ii.

Cuadros de Costumbres

Of these six cuadros, Simón Verde is the best.

"In with a man, in simplicity a child", Simón is a picture of a man she once knew. Sustained by the rules of patience and acceptance, Simón and his beautiful daughter Agueda sustain the sorrows and griefs of poverty, unjust calumny of the one, and imprisonment of the other. The instigator of their troubles confesses on his death bed that he had ruined his peace of mind and their lives simply to keep his son from marrying beneath his rank. In the epilogue everyone is forgiven and everyone is happy. The conversation of the rural characters is realistically reproduced and again Fernán's ideal individual -- sweet, simple, and unassuming -- is portrayed.

La Farisea etc.

This volume contains fourteen selections of the author. A few are simply eulogies of places; Waterloo, the Convent of Santa Inés and the Cathedral in Seville, for example. Several are short stories. The only one of much value is La Farisea.

The fundamental idea is a study of the character of a woman, an analysis (not very profound) of a heart dominated by vanity, of pride which stifles all other sentiments.

Latour wrote of it: "This hateful character is painted with such a master hand and with such vivid colors that it would make one want to throw down the book if it were not that happy contrasts enter to be mingled with the indignation one feels."<sup>1</sup>

1. See: Asensio, Op. Cit., p. 121.

Elia

This is the sad story of the futility of trying to differ with social customs, and of the infinite superiority of convent life to that of the world. Fernán announces in the prologue the intention of her novel -- that she is convinced that "the true attraction of all spirituality is heaven" just as Newton was convinced of the attraction of the earth to all material matter. She says that she is aware that Elia will be accused of being colorless and unnatural. She believes, however, that great passions are seldom found except in books and that her heroine, far more real, will perhaps be preferred by those who want something less romantic and more poetic, who sympathize with simplicity and with truth more than with forced energy and action. She believes that lack of passion when born of religion and strength of soul, far from being uninteresting to men, should be appreciated by them as the enchantment of a woman.

We do find the character of Elia colorless and unnatural. It seems impossible that a normal girl, although brought up in a convent and most tenderly nurtured, should be so spineless, and should not get some idea of the world she was living in after a few years. Fernán is so intent on her spiritual purpose that she is not too careful of her development of character. She advises

the reader in the prologue that she has made the characters unfold the ideas they themselves have, and that she is not responsible for any, even those of the Asistentta, who has all her sympathy, but it is impossible to feel that her convictions have not permeated the entire novel. She has developed her thesis, done her teaching at the expense of delineation of character. In this, as in all her writing, she sees her duty and she does it. No one could deny her earnest effort to show the rewards of a virtuous and saintly life, but her zeal lead her to an overstatement of her belief.

After having been unwisely removed from a convent, Elia finds the shock of the world too great. Her love affair is broken up by the boy's scheming mother, and her low birth revealed to her. She reenters the convent, all her love for the boy having been transmuted into divine love. She finds in her religion a freedom and happiness which the world could never hold for her. Her spirituality survives all the worldly sufferings and unhappy fate of the other characters.

Fernán drowns her story in seas of religious sentiment. She advocates the preference of feeling of any sort to knowledge of any sort. Throughout she upholds the sanctity of the past; the impossibility of breaking with tradition. The Priest's word on any matter is the last one; to question his judgment would be unthinkable.

Clemencia

Fernán Caballero wrote concerning this novel to a friend of hers: "...the object which it has.. is to contrast the simple and good Christian embodiment, full of faith and of feeling, with the desiccated, cold, and skeptical culture of the world, personified in Sir George. In order to personify this in Clemencia it was necessary that she pass through the vicissitudes she suffered, and that she be molded at the side of a man like the Abbot, in order to have sufficient arms to combat Sir George. She could not love Pablo, because her hour for love had not come, and because she was too young to appreciate a man whom her uncle constantly ridiculed. She knows him and appreciates him later by comparison. This gives entrance to the great moral ideal of the book; the perfect woman, the ideal woman, ought to let herself be guided by reason and subordinate not only her actions but also her sentiments to it..... There is another matter in the book which passes unperceived, and which is, nevertheless, a profound psychological study. This is the comparison of three loves, love of the Englishman, the Frenchman, and the Spaniard."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Cartas de Fernán Caballero, pp. 36 ff.

The psychological study of which she so confidently writes is not very profound, for none of the suitors partakes very much of reality. The life of Clemencia was drawn in part from Cecilia's own life; the girl's unhappy marriage, the teachings of the Abbot find parallel in her own first marriage and her father's tutelage.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Fernán Caballero was the first modern Spanish novelist. The work of innovators in any field must necessarily be incomplete, and viewed from the later development of realism it would almost seem that she had no place in the movement. Considered in her time she does have those qualities which were later developed, and she stands as the author who gave impetus to the new movement. Gómez de Baquero wrote: "That traditional Spanish author was in artistic progress an innovator who brought to the novel the gift which seems simple, but which has been the talisman of its modern triumph -- naturalism."<sup>1</sup>

It was this naturalness, this seeking out of the true spirit of the people and finding models in actual life that was her contribution to the novel.

Fernán Caballero was actuated in her prose by two powerful forces -- love of God, and love of her native country, particularly of its traditions. It was to the end of placing the Andalusian town, its customs, its sayings, its simple living, its poetic conception of

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1. Gómez de Baquero: El renacimiento de la novela en el siglo XIX, Madrid, 1924, p. 22.

life before her countrymen, to the end of waking them to an appreciation of the glorious past of their country, and to the end of inspiring them to live more in accordance with the precepts of the Catholic Church that she wrote. Her insistence on the predominance of the spiritual realm over the material and her religious conceptions are constantly present and permeate all she may say on any matter. Her purpose was frankly moral and didactic.

Her realm was narrow for she confined herself to idealizing truth. She was best when describing village and country scenes and characters, and she was much weaker when she moved to the drawing room. She could not create characters and realized it -- Sir George of Clemencia is an unhappy attempt. Her grace was in painting the people and customs of the country she knew.

She was an ultra-conservative, hampered by blind love of the monarchy and the past. Gustave Hubbard wrote scathingly of her defense of the past, saying it was as if a contract had been drawn up between Isabel and Fernán, that by the Queen's order all society considered the novelist as the true painter of Spanish customs and a halo almost of glory was placed on her head. In exchange for this she presented the degraded figure of Ferdinand VII as charitably as possible, she hid all the miseries, all the horrors of the constitutional monarchy, and of the despotism of the inquisition

during the reign of the house of Austria and of Bourbon. Such an attitude could never have been conceived of by the good woman; she did not hide the miseries and horrors; she did not see them.

She was favorably accepted by critics of her day as well as by the public, and has enjoyed appreciation of her good qualities since. Valdés wrote: "Her novels... are very beautiful works, a shower of pinpricks at our philosophy, our customs, and our politics. They are little pictures of the past which she wishes that we contrast for their suavity of color, for their lovely sketching and diaphanous atmosphere with the licentious chromos of today."<sup>2</sup> Valera found her boring and she was greatly grieved that a critic should use such a harsh word as empalagar in speaking of the effect of her novels.<sup>3</sup>

Asensio wrote: "Fernán Caballero is, in our opinion, and in that of many well known critics, the link following Cervantes in the succession of Spanish novelists. No other has possessed in such degree the closest observation, no other has written with great truth and exactness the fruit of his observations."<sup>4</sup> Blanco García wrote: "She

1. Hubbard, Gustave: Histoire de la Littérature Contemporaine en Espagne, Paris, 1876, pp. 23 ff.

2. Valdés: Op. cit., p. 132.

3. Morel-Fatio: Op. cit., p. 354.

4. Asensio, José María: Fernán Caballero, Estudio biográfico, Madrid, n.d., p. 35.

will go on being a source of pride to the Spaniards, a constant process against those who intend to pervert our customs, and if some day ... they should disappear their memory could be found in no place more happily than in the novels of Fernán Caballero, a symbol of the characteristic virtues of our race."<sup>1</sup>

One regrets that the talent of this woman was so overlaid with her religious and didactic propositions. She must be appreciated as the innovator of the realistic turn of thought in the Spanish novel, and as a Christian woman whose aim may be criticized but whose sincerity can never be doubted.

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1. Blanco y García, P. Francisco: La literatura española en el siglo XIX, Madrid, 1903, Vol. II, p. 296.

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