FEMINISM IN LOPE DE VEGA

by

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PREFACE

The purpose of this work has been to make a study of Lope de Vega, the great Spanish dramatist, from the point of view of the elements of feminism presented. In view of the fact that of the eighteen hundred comedies which the dramatist claimed to have written somewhat more than four hundred are extant it is obviously impossible to cover even a majority of them for a master's thesis. For the present work, therefore, twenty of the comedies have been studied carefully. These were chosen more or less at random and should therefore be sufficiently representative for the purpose. The limitation of the number of plays read to this number is further justified by the fact that there is in Lope's plays a great deal of repetition due to the large number of them and inevitable haste in composition.
The so-called feministic movement has become so widespread in recent times that it is accepted almost as one of the commonplaces of the social conditions of today, as one of the forms of the unrest so characteristic of contemporary society; and at the same time the idea is prevalent that, no less than in its manifestations, it is essentially a modern movement in its origin. Comparatively modern it doubtless is as a conscious movement, especially in some of its phases, but its real origin lies much farther back. Seventeenth century France, for instance, offers a brilliant example of woman's meeting man on a footing more or less of intellectual equality, and even dominating and shaping the thought and the literature of the period to a striking degree. On nearly every domain of contemporary thought she left her impress, and it was she who, almost if not quite as much as man, aided in paving the way for the scientific development and the political and social transformations of the eighteenth century and the succeeding periods. Nor need we stop at the seventeenth century, for back of that, in Italy of the sixteenth and even of the fifteenth century, women met with a respect and enjoyed privileges -- educational, cultural, and social -- which stand in marked contrast to both earlier and later conditions.
Stranger still, however, is it to find in Spain, so ultra-conservative in modern times in this as well as in other respects, evidences of a corresponding movement, or rather condition, in the sixteenth century, if we may trust the literature. This is notably the case with the great dramatist Lope de Vega, in whose comedies the women generally represent a stage of emancipation that is so far advanced in certain respects as to lead one almost to doubt the reality of the picture presented.

The purpose of the study of which the present work is the result has been to determine the nature of such feminism as Lope de Vega presents, and to ascertain the origin of the idea involved: that is, to determine whether the comedies offer a more or less faithful portrayal of the women of the time, or of certain classes, or of a certain class; or whether the idea originated wholly in the imagination of the dramatist.

Briefly stated, it will be shown (1) that the plays of Lope de Vega present women in an advanced stage of emancipation; (2) that such presentation was justified by the position of women in contemporary society, (3) that the women who embody this feminism represent a type sufficiently familiar to the masses to warrant its portrayal in dramas of a popular nature, such as were these comedies.
The term **feminism**, literally denoting **feminine character or characteristics**, has been variously employed during the last fifty or seventy-five years, the ideas associated with the word, and consequently the application of the latter, changing in accordance with the activities of that portion of the women to whom feminism in some or other of its phases had become a conscious movement. In general the term has been connected in the popular thought with the specific aim and the specific manifestations of a given period. Thus in the United States it has long been associated with the idea of equal suffrage on the one hand, and on the other with the idea of manliness and unconventionality. More recently, it has taken on the idea of militancy as represented by the destructive brick-throwing and house-burning tendencies of the English suffragettes, or the less dangerous and more amusing White-House picketing of their American imitators. In general, then, the force of the term has varied from time to time, its suggestiveness being limited to the contemporary activities of the exponents of the idea involved, although the fundamental value of the word is far broader. Perhaps Katharine Anthony gives the best definition of the term as well as the best interpretation of the essence of the movement involved, when she says:
"The basic idea of feminism, with which every other idea, and every material achievement must square, is the emancipation of woman as a personality. The program of feminism is not the mere imitation of masculine gestures and motions. -- It is true that an important part of the program is the reinstatement of woman as a human being; and the pattern of the human being as we know him has been cut to fit the masculine personality."

In the present work, the term will be used very broadly to denote any variations from the generally accepted status of women in the direction of wider interests and a greater freedom of activity.

During the middle ages the status of women was a peculiar one from our modern point of view. In the upper classes they were the objects of a degree of homage which approached a sort of adoration during the period of chivalry, while among the lower classes they were nothing more than drudges, either in the household or in the fields. In neither case did they receive much education, even the women of the upper classes being taught

merely to embroider, to sing, to hawk, and to ride, their intellectual endeavors being limited largely to the learning of a few psalms. Such education as they received was primarily intended to enable them to amuse their lords, whose entertainment was to be their chief concern in life. Few indeed were the individuals who in one way or another managed to achieve a real education. In general, the women of all classes were little more than chattels. Their function was to work, to entertain their lords, and to be the mothers of their husbands' children. They were betrothed in infancy, being a very marketable commodity because of their dowries, and were married at an early age. They had no property or political rights unless they became widows or were left in charge of the castle temporarily in the absence of their husbands, in which event they had full authority in his stead. As the middle ages became older, the position of women became worse in that the contempt with which they had always been regarded to a certain extent among the masses became more widespread and more pronounced in the reaction which followed the period of chivalry. The literature from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century is full of discussions as to the value of women -- a fact which indicates that they at least
had their defenders even if their detractors were so numerous. During the Renaissance, partly under the direct influence of classic example and partly as a result of the broader mindedness which was one of the most striking effects of the whole movement, women as a whole received greater recognition, and the number of individuals among them who were prominent for their learning or their cleverness was greatly increased.

In general, however, their status, especially in Europe, remained substantially the same down to very recent times. Limitations in the matter of personal liberty, of economic activity, and of political rights are perhaps the most striking characteristics of the generally accepted status of women, variations from which have received the name of feminism.

As vague and general as have been the ideas associated with feminism as a rule, certain definite phenomena have yet been usually accepted as characteristic of the movement in so far as it represents a tendency towards a wider interest, a wider scope of activity for women. These may be roughly grouped in five divisions: (1) the spread of education for women; (2) the acquirement of greater freedom of action socially; (3) the seeking for political equality, and (4) for equality of
economic opportunity; (5) conscious effort on the part of women to attain these aims. Just here it may be said that the activities represented by the third and fourth divisions are largely modern manifestations and that there is only the slightest hint of such an idea in Lope de Vega.

At the very beginning of our study of the comedies of Lope de Vega we are confronted by a curious and important fact, and that is that in them woman is the dominating force, the motive power of the entire action. It is with her that the play begins and ends, it is about her that it centers. She is not merely the inspiration of gallantry, but also a person of initiative and independent action.

Fitzmaurice-Kelly, the great authority on Spanish literature, speaks of this as follows:

"This last, 'the cloak and sword play' is as much his own invention ...... as is the feminine interest in his best work. Hitherto the women had been allotted a secondary part, ludicrous in the entremeses, sentimental in the set piece. Lope, the expert in gallantry, in manners, in observation, placed her in her true setting as an ideal, as the mainspring of dramatic motive and of chivalrous conduct."¹

¹. Fitzmaurice-Kelly. History of Spanish Literature.
No one who reads *El Perro del Hortelano; La Moza de Cántaro; La Vengadora de las Mujeres; Por la Puente Juana; Las Bizarrias de Belisa; El Guante de Doña Blanca*, or indeed almost any of the comedies, after reading the plays of the earlier dramatists can fail to notice how the woman character has changed from the nonentity of Gil Vicente of Torres Naharro, and even of Lope de Rueda, better though she be in the latter, to a personality of influence and determining power. Is it going too far to conclude that this change is not due so much to the undeniable inventive power of Lope de Vega as to his greater power of observation and comprehension of hidden forces which were quietly at work, or possibly even to the coming into open existence and development of a condition of things which was radically different from that which his predecessors had under their eyes? The fact, at any rate, is an undeniable and important one, and would seem in any case, to point to a significant change in the position of women, since the dramatist's skill of Lope de Vega alone would hardly have sufficed to make acceptable to the theater-going masses a condition of things at utter variance with reality and, in the latter event, of such a nature in itself as to evoke a ready hostility. It still remains to be seen, however, to what extent this change in dramatic motivation is accompanied by a corresponding change in the women
characters themselves, and ultimately to what extent this corresponds to contemporary reality. This will become more evident as we proceed to a closer study of the plays in relation to the education of women, their freedom, social, political, and economic, and the conscious effort on their part to get away from old ideas and restrictions.

Education for women has become so natural a part of our social scheme today that even the most conservative among us rarely think of it in connection with the woman's movement. Yet we must realize that it is a necessary stepping-stone in the path of woman's progress towards emancipation. It is, in fact, the first, most necessary one; and its very existence is significant of the end in view. Enlightenment must come before ambition, and ambition for further progress is the invariable consequence of true mental awakening.

In mediaeval times, as we have already seen, education for women was practically unknown. There were, to be sure, the inmates of the cloisters who generally had fairly good educations, and in addition to these a few remarkable individuals who stand out strikingly as exceptions to the usual rule; but as far as its receiving any recognition was concerned, woman's mind might almost as well have not existed in most cases. Even in the modern Spain, until very recently, it was not the custom to give girls any education at all, even of the most elementary sort. Indeed, it was
long considered dangerous to teach them to read and write lest they communicate with their lovers, or find some other distraction outside of the home. But between the crudeness of the middle ages with its almost complete failure to recognize women as rational beings and the ignorance of modern Spain, held in the grasp of a lethargy which only the rudest shock can dispel, is the period of the Renaissance, to which Lope de Vega belonged.

No more striking contrast could be found than that presented by the great dramatist with both the earlier and the more recent conditions in this respect. His plays give abundant evidence of the general education of women at this time. In them illiteracy is totally lacking. It enters into the action of the comedies as little as into that of any comedy of today whose characters are taken from the higher levels of society. All classes of women, indeed, appear to know how to read and write, and the real lady has gone far beyond that. She is familiar with the art of composing verse and is abundantly able to write a poem whenever the occasion arises. The stories of Greek mythology are at her tongue's end, and the dramatist does not hesitate to give her some of the passages most beautiful in language and thought, and not without reason, for for the most part such expressions are distinctly consistent with her character and acquirements.

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The instances which show this widespread education are too numerous to cite, and we must have to content ourselves with a few striking cases. An excellent illustration of the general desire to educate the young girl to the extent of the elementary branches is found in La Dama Boba. The play deals with the love affairs of two sisters, the one, Nise, well educated, and the other, Finea, illiterate and almost unbelievably stupid. Scenes five to eight are especially significant. Scene five shows Finea with the tutor provided by her father to teach her to read and write. She is so contrary that he leaves in despair, whereupon Nise rebukes her, saying that it is suitable for her to obey and learn since their father wishes them to be educated. Finea finally bursts out with the very significant exclamation:

"Persíguenme todo el día
Con leer, con escribir,
Con danzar, y todo es nada."

The contrast between the two sisters in the play is very clearly drawn. The father realizes that from a matrimonial point of view, Finea is at a disadvantage because of her ignorance and stupidity, and his brother helps him out of his difficulty by adding a large sum to her dowry to make up for her seeming lack of brains. Even this added inducement fails to secure a husband for her until love begins to awaken her intelligence. Nise, on the other hand, is the object of many attentions because of her knowledge.
The very general existence of such a condition as this in the plays tends to make us minimize its importance, and to lose sight of the fact that it indicates a widespread elementary education for women which has perhaps never been surpassed in Spain, either before or since. Not merely are the women of the upper or leisured classes almost without exception educated to this extent, but their servants as well are able to read and write without this fact seeming to cause any comment or in any way being an occasion for surprise on the part of other personages in the play. So, for instance, in El Perro del Hortelano, the servant Marcela sends a note to her lover, the secretary, bewailing his falseness. Again, in La Moza de Cántaro the maid goes over Maná's love-letters with her. She has read them through and hands them over to her mistress with comments on their contents. In Los Melindres de Belisa, the lackey, Carrillo, who by the way boasts of having ready Pliny and Horace in Spanish translations, addresses Flora as "secretaria", a term which denotes a part of her many functions in the household.

Further proof need hardly be given, but although we may grant that the woman of Lope's plays is not illiterate and that her elementary education was considered desirable and was provided for, there remains the interesting question as to what extent she received what we call a higher education. There is little evidence of definite
purpose to give to woman such added culture or of considering such training necessary. However, we find instances of women who of their own accord undertake the search for knowledge through the pages of history, literature, and science. The motive for this is in most cases not given, but in *La Vengadora de las Mujeres*, Laura states clearly that her purpose in studying was to enable her to write about the achievements of women and atone for the injustices done them by historians whom she has read. *La Dama Boba*, already cited, gives a good example of this enthusiasm of women for learning. We find here that the same father who hires a teacher for his daughter, Finea, and insists upon her learning to read and write laments the scholarly tendencies of Nise, and threatens to destroy her books of poetry on the ground that she has gone further than a woman has any need of going. He expresses his sentiments as follows:

"Siempre alabé la opinión
De que á la mujer prudente
Con saber medianamente
La sobra la discreción."  

In spite of her father's disapproval, however, Nise, as has already been indicated, has gained great fame and is the object of much attention because of her knowledge. She reads Greek poetry and is remarkably well read in the poetry of her own language.

On account of her own language, her reputation as an educated woman, she is chosen by two of her suitors, Duardo and Laurencio, to judge a poem by the former. On this occasion, Laurencio addresses her with great respect and admiration as the Spanish sibyl, the fourth of the Graces, and the tenth Muse.¹

Perhaps the most striking example of higher education for women is to be found in the case of Laura in La Vengadora de las Mujeres. She explains that she has constituted herself avenger of women because of the wrongs which she has noted them as suffering in

"Los libros más principales
De historias y de poesías,
Y de tragedias de amantes."²

¹ No. 9. Still more definite proof of her education is given when she calls together her friends, Diana and Lucela, to teach them the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle.

² No. 9. When Lisardo, one of her suitors, first comes to her home, the servant informs him that his mistress has studied law among other things. He wins the lady's approval immediately by presenting her with learned books of philosophy, magic, and history, and follows up the advantage gained by informing her that at the court of Brussels he has heard men lauding her for her studies in all languages.

1. La Vengadora de las Mujeres, Act I, Scene 1.
and sciences. As Laura lived in Bohemia, the distance to which her fame had spread would tend to show that the quality and extent of her education were exceptional.

Although Dorotea in La Niña de Plata is rather accomplished than educated, the play shows the general value set upon a cultivated mind as an addition to beauty of face and form. The Infante, Don Enrique, falls in love with Dorotea at first sight, and his admiration is aroused still further when he hears of the reputation which she has throughout Seville for singing, dancing, writing five-part counterpoint, painting, and composing verse. In the words of Don Arias, a gentleman of Seville,

"Canta y compone en punto diestramente
A cinco voces..........

Pinta como el mas célebre y valiente,
Danza con gala y con igual concierto,
Escribe versos con tal gracia."

Among the men, it appears to be quite the thing to have a smattering of Latin at one's command. Even the servants, especially the ones who play a rôle similar to that of the graciosos, occasionally use it. This is apparently considered a desirable accomplishment and an evidence of superior wisdom. Because of this in El Acero de Madrid, the quack doctor covers up his ignorance of

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1. La Niña de Plata, Act I, Scene 5.
medicine by sprinkling his diagnosis with a little Latin, and the effect on the patient and her family is all that could be desired.\textsuperscript{1} In \textit{El Esclavo de su Galan}, Don Juan's servant uses an amusing mixture of Spanish and Latin, evidently in order to appear smart and funny.\textsuperscript{2} The lackey in \textit{El Perro del Hortelano}, in advising his friend about his love affairs, acquires an added dignity by the use of a few Latin expressions. While such a use of Latin was regarded as lending distinction to the men who used it, it would seem that among ladies no such invidious distinction was regarded as proper. The women servants never give any indication of such learning, but the ladies of the upper classes sometimes acquire it. In \textit{La Hermosura Abarredada}, Doña Juana, who is not represented as an unusually well educated woman, poses as a young man, a student.

\textsuperscript{1} When asked by the Beneficiado, or curate,

\textsuperscript{2} "\textit{N} \textit{o} F\textsuperscript{1} " \textit{\textit{N} y quam artem profiteris?"}, she responds promptly, "\textit{Grammaticam}" perhaps too promptly, for the Beneficiado replies, "\textit{Bien está.}

\begin{quote}
\textit{\textit{Q}ue\textit{d}á\textit{os} esta noche acá,\n
\textit{Y mecum mand\textit{e}caber\textit{is}.}\n\end{quote}

(Juana) (Ap.) "Tan mal debe de saber Hablar Latin como yo."

In act III, scene 2 of \textit{Las Bizarrías de Belisa}, Belisa, who probably did not read the classics, speaks scornfully of Lucinda's ability to write Greek as an unnatural acquirement:

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\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{El Acero de Madrid}, Act I, Scene 9.
\item \textit{El Esclavo de su Galan}, Act I, Scene 5.
\end{enumerate}
"Que no le supo Castilla,
Ni se lo enseñó su madre;"

This pursuance of strange tongues by the fair sex is evidently considered the acme of absurdity by some of the more conservative characters, a sort of descent of woman the sublime to woman the erudite, a thing ridiculous; for it serves as the subject for many stories at the expense of those who attempt it. These very stories go to prove the prevalence of it. One instance will suffice. In La Dama Boba, Octavio suspects that his daughter Nise's ardor for learning is a mere pretext in order to be with Laurencio, and tells this story to justify his suspicion:

"No era tan blanco en Granada
Juan Latino, que la hija
De un veinticuatro enseñaba;
Y con sernegro y esclavo,
Porque era su madre esclava,
Del claro Duque de Sesa,
Honra de España y de Italia,
Vino á casarse con ella;
Que gramática estudiaba;
Y la enseñó á conjugar
En llegando al amo, amas;
Que así llama al matrimonio
El latín."

1. La Dama Boba, Act II, Scene 21
We must conclude then that while elementary education for women was the almost universal rule in the plays of Lope de Vega, and was looked upon as a necessity, more advanced education was rather a matter of individual activity on the part of certain of the women from one motive or another, and was by no means generally accepted as either necessary or fitting. Indeed, public opinion, as represented in the plays would seem to have considered it rather unfavorably, but in spite of that fact it would seem to have been fairly widespread.

Closely connected with the question of education of women and of the intellectual position accorded them is that of their personal freedom. Education for women, as we have already seen, is apt to be looked upon as either useless in fitting them for the life which they are to lead, or else actually harmful in creating in them the desire and equipping them to a certain extent with the means to break away from the restraints imposed upon them by a man-made society. Woman's place is in the home, no matter how dull, empty, and futile may be the life which she leads there; and, furthermore, she is naturally a weak vessel and must be protected against herself and against all the world besides. Her duties are to direct the household of her lord, to minister to his comfort, to amuse and entertain him at his will, and to mother his children. What does she need to know of higher education for such
purposes? She may dance, sing, or play upon some musical instrument, for such accomplishments may readily serve to entertain her husband; but beyond that not merely does utility cease, but danger enters in. The demands of her husband's honor require that she be secluded and protected against herself.

Few of the occidental countries have been more backward than Spain not only in the degree of education and the intellectual position accorded her women, but as an inevitable result in the personal freedom allowed them. The mention of Spanish women brings to mind a picture of beautiful girls shut in behind iron-barred windows or accompanied by grim old dueñas who successfully keep admiring suitors at a distance. We think of the Spanish girl as uneducated, unambitious, satisfied to stay quietly at home until her parents arrange an exchange of masters, and she meets and marries her husband. And while this picture is one which is made familiar to us by romance and story, it is one which is founded on reality. The young unmarried girl is rigorously secluded and guarded, especially in the upper ranks of society. To be sure, she may begin to attend social functions at an early age and to take a great interest in the possible sweethearts of herself and of her friends, but she can not enjoy the goodfellowship with her boy friends which the American girl takes as a matter of course. She must never be alone with a man even if she is
engaged to him. Nor is she freer in regard to intellectual development. Although the universities are open to women, those who avail themselves of the opportunity for study are so subjected to ridicule that not many dare attempt it. There is nothing left for the girl of the upper classes to do but to marry or to enter a convent. Even marriage offers little change in her activities, as it does not mean for her the emancipation which it brings to a girl in France, for instance. She settles down meekly to take care of the house without realizing that there could be another plan of life.¹ Not merely has this condition become established and maintained in Spain itself, but from there it has been carried to most of the other Spanish-speaking countries, a fact which proves the strength of the tradition involved.

This condition of seclusion which prevails in modern Spain is the reverse of that which we find presented in Lope de Vega's comedies. The closely-guarded, lattice-enclosed girl is almost as non-existent as her illiterate sister. The chaperone, when present, is usually only a young servant girl, herself involved in the intrigue of a comic underplot; but often she is entirely lacking. The maid appears to be a sophs in that she fulfills conveniently the superficial requirements of convention.

While she is too young and too much preoccupied with her own affairs to have many of the characteristics of a typical chaperone, she accompanies her mistress when the latter goes for a walk or drive and remains in the room when she receives callers. With her the lady can go about more freely than she could alone. Not only are night and the hidden balcony the setting for meetings between lady and lover, but the street, the parks and drives of the city, as well as the lady's home, where she receives freely all who care to call, — all serve as places of rendezvous for the young people of the plays.

In general, then, there seems to be as great liberty of action on the part of the women in the matter of coming together with their lovers or men friends as with their women friends. Their freedom is checked neither by restraints of convention nor by individuals present for that purpose.

There are, to be sure, a few cases in which this does not hold true. Such a one is that of Belisa in El Acero de Madrid, who is jealously guarded by her aunt, Teodora, who cautions her at every step against the interesting pastime of flirting with her admirers, a thing to which the young lady herself is rather prone. The first few scenes are very amusing. The lover, Lisardo, and his friend, Roselo, are waiting near the church door for Belisa and her aunt to appear. When the latter finally enter, Teodora is lecturing her niece for her unseemly behavior.
The passage in question is given in translation in order to show the way in which Belisa receives the reproof of her aunt and the spirited manner in which she replies to this attempted discipline. The passage serves admirably to characterize the two personages.

Teodora: Show more of gentleness and modesty;—
Of gentleness in walking quietly,
Of modesty in looking only down
Upon the earth you tread.

Belisa: 'Tis what I do.

Teodora: What? When you're looking straight
towards that man?

Belisa: Did you not bid me look upon the earth?
And what is he but just a bit of it?

Teodora: I said the earth whereon you tread, my
niece.

Belisa: But that whereon I tread is hidden quite
With my own petticoat and walking-dress.

Teodora: Words such as these become no well-bred
maid.

But, by your mother's blessed memory,
I'll put an end to all your pretty tricks;—
What? You look back at him again?

Belisa: Who? I?

Teodora: Yes, you; — and make him secret signs
besides.
Belisa: Not I. 'Tis only that you troubled me
   With teasing questions and perverse replies,
   So that I stumbled and looked round to see
   Who would prevent my fall.

Riselo (to Lisardo) She falls again.
   Be quick and help her.

Lisardo (to Belisa) Pardon me, lady,
   And forgive my glove.

Teodora: Who ever saw the like?

Belisa: I thank you, sir; you saved me from a fall.

Lisardo: An angel, lady, might have fallen so;
   Or stars that shine with heaven's own blessed light.

Teodora: I, too, can fall; but 'tis upon your trick.
   Good gentleman, farewell to you!

Lisardo: Madam,
   Your servant. (Heaven save us from such spleen!)

Teodora: A pretty fall you made of it; and now I hope
   You'll be content, since they assisted you.

Belisa: And you no less content, since now you have
   The means to tease me for a week to come.

Teodora: But why again do you turn back your head?
Belisa: Why, sure you think it wise and wary
   To notice well the place I stumbled at,
   Lest I should stumble there when next I pass.
Teodora: Mischief befall you! But I know your ways!
   You'll not deny this time you looked upon the youth?
Belisa: Deny it? No!
Teodora: You dare confess it, then?
Belisa: Be sure I dare. You saw him help me,—
   And would you have me fail to thank him for it?
Teodora: Go to! Come home! come home!
Belisa: Now we shall have
   A pretty scolding cooked up out of this.¹

As a result of this occurrence, Belisa is kept closely at home until Lisardo's servant dressed as a doctor prescribes doses of "Madrid steel" (probably chalybeate water) and walks in the open air. On these occasions, Roselo distracts Teodora by making love to her, and the young couple are left free to chat unobserved.

Another and somewhat different case is that of Dorotea in La Niña de Plata. This accomplished young lady lives very quietly with her brother and an aunt. Besides this ample protection she herself has the reputation of being very conventional and never receiving men callers.

Even in this play, however, where the restrictions are in a measure self-imposed, they are sometimes waived and an opportunity made for uninterrupted tête-à-têtes, as when Dorotea on a balcony awaits Don Juan's coming in the street below and talks to him.

Far more common than the attitude represented in the two plays just cited, in the one by the dueña and in the other by the heroine herself, is that of another Belisa, the principal character in *Las Bizarrías de Belisa*.

This play is so much to the point that it is worth giving in considerable detail. It opens with an account given by Belisa to her friend, Celia, of her meeting with a certain Don Juan, who appears to have aroused her interest. It would seem that when she was out driving in her carriage, she has observed him fighting with another man and apparently getting the worst of it. Her sympathy aroused in his behalf, she finally could stand it no longer and, although he was a total stranger, she sprang to help him. As might any girl of today, she begins her account of the event with a half-apology for her forwardness:

"Con razón ó sin razón,
Salto de mi coche entonces,
Quito la espada al cochero,
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Y partiendo al caballero,
Me pongo Rodamonte
A su lado."1

Together they win the combat, but as a crowd is gathering, Belisa suggests that they escape in her carriage and accordingly they drive towards her home. On the way, suspecting that the fight is the outcome of some love affair, Belisa questions her new friend about it. He tells her at some length the story of his love for a certain Lucinda who disdains him because of his poverty. When the carriage stops at Belisa’s home, they are both weeping over the sad story. She invites him to call, and promising to do so, he departs to see his lady, who continually refuses to see him. Later Lucinda, having heard of the occurrence and becoming jealous of Belisa, writes to Don Juan asking him to come to see her. She who has been so scornful before now receives him like an old friend and, weeping, declares that she has only feigned disdain in order to conceal her love. This sudden surrender kills Don Juan’s affection for her, and going immediately to Belisa, he asks her to find another lady for him. She stipulates that he must first bring her the portrait of Lucinda from his room and all the gifts that he has received from her. When he promises to do this and asks who the lady is, she answers, “I.”

This rather startling declaration has its parallels in others of the comedies, as for instance, in El Perro del Hortelano, where Diana declares her love for her secretary, Teodoro. She does not make her avowal as frankly as does Belisa, but her hesitation is caused not so much by maidenly
reserve as by the difference in social rank between herself and Teodoro. Another similar case is that of the widow, Ana, in La Moza de Cántaro. Doña Ana's suitor, the Count, persuades his friend, Don Juan, to plead his cause. The lady urges Don Juan to pay her attention on his own account and even persists in her efforts after his refusal to become the rival of his friend.

Almost any of the remainder of the twenty comedies which have been studied as the basis for this work might be given as examples of this untrammeled relationship between men and women, which is so common as to be an almost exceptionless rule. In addition to the instances already cited one more of the plays most striking in this respect might be discussed briefly in order to emphasize the fact involved.

Santiago el Verde offers a great deal that is of interest in this regard. This play opens with a meeting between the friends, Teodora and Celia. Teodora has become interested in a gentleman from Granada who is lodging across the street from her. She has opened her shutters a thousand times and attempted to attract his attention in various ways, but all in vain:

"Mas no por hacer ruido
Ni por toser levantó
Jamás el rostro, ni yo
Pude penetrar su oído."

1. Santiago el Verde, Act I scene 1.
Celia promises to help her, and although he is unknown to her, she accordingly writes a note to Don García, the gentleman in question, in which she tells him that she has heard of his slandering her friend Teodora. As Don García has never heard of Teodora, he goes post-haste to see Celia and demand an explanation. That she receives him is an excellent indication of freedom of action. There he falls in love with her and she with him. To avoid competition with Teodora she tells the latter that upon closer acquaintance Don García proves very undesirable, and is, besides, married. As Lisardo, Celia's brother, is paying court to Teodora, the latter decides to favor him while Celia continues to encourage Don García. Finally Celia makes an appointment to meet him at the festival of Santiago, the patron saint of Spain, held in a grove on the banks of the Manzanares. It is from this holiday that the play takes its name.

Meanwhile Lisardo is planning to marry his sister to Don Rodrigo of Toledo. Don Rodrigo arrives, and Lisardo takes him out to the festival to meet Celia. They find her with Don García, who has brought her all his old love letters and pictures of his former sweethearts, and in spite of her unwillingness, her brother insists upon her accepting Don Rodrigo. Finally, she appears to yield to her brother's wishes and is formally betrothed to Don Rodrigo. It now behooves Don García to invent some ruse
if he wishes to see her. Dressed as the tailor, Justo, he gets the order for her entire wardrobe from the groom to-be, who, according to the custom, is to furnish his bride's trousseau. Calling in the guise of the tailor to take Celia's measurements, he learns that she still prefers him to Don Rodrigo. He thereupon proceeds to rid himself of his rival by telling the latter that he has received orders for dresses for Celia not only from him but from four or five others also. The horrified fiancé immediately withdraws from the bargain and states his intention of returning home. Justo assures Lisardo that he knows a man who will marry Celia and so save her from the embarrassing situation in which she finds herself. Returning later in the day in his own attire, he claims her as his bride. Lisardo upholds him against the protests of Don Rodrigo, and they plan a double wedding, Celia and Don García, Teodora and Lisardo.

Such a story as this, if we may assume it to be not entirely at variance with actual contemporary conditions, is sufficient to destroy any idea which we may have conceived from our knowledge of modern Spanish conditions, that the women of the period were characterized by a retiring maidenliness of the most approved sort. Indeed, the play offers strangely modern elements of a type most characteristic of conditions in the United States, and in consequence many passages lend themselves readily to very up-to-date and even colloquial translation.
Such, for instance, is the scene between Teodora and Celia in which the former describes Don García and tells of her efforts to attract his attention; and again the meeting of Celia and Don García on the day of Santiago el Verde when she examines and comments on a picture of one of his old sweethearts.

The picture presented in both instances is so humanly true that it is as much of today as it presumably was of its own time, and perhaps no better argument could be found to show that it does faithfully reflect the period. The same thing is true of *La Moza de Cántaro*, if we make due allowance for the difference in customs and environment. This is one of the best of the comedies from a dramatic standpoint, and in addition is admirably suited to the purpose of the present discussion in that it is a good example of the fearless spirit with which Lope invests his women characters and of the social freedom which he depicts them as enjoying. This is especially true of María, the heroine.

We first see the latter discussing with her maid the relative merits of her many suitors, Don Bernardo, her old father, enters and relates that he has been struck by Don Diego, one of the most attentive and perhaps the most favored of María's admirers. Too old to defend his own honor, in the absence of his son he must bear the shame unavenged. María, however, is both willing and able to
take her brother's place. Without hesitation she goes alone to the prison, where Don Diego is confined, and as he embraces her, she stabs him, saying,

"Pues estas hazañas hacen
Las mujeres varoniles."¹

She preserves the same spirited attitude throughout the greater part of the play. Alone and on horseback, she flees from justice.

The description given of her arrival by the landlord of an inn where she stays, to an East Indian Nabob who enquires about her, is very suggestive, in its account of independence and fearlessness allied to beauty, of a modern American heroine:

Mesonero:  "Pobre, y de brio gallarda;
Porque en un rocin de albarda
(El término perdonad)
Como un soldado venia.
Ella propia se apeó,
Le ató y de comer le dió
Con despejo y bizarría.
Volvía á mirar y vi
Que un arcabuz arrimaba.

Indianó: ¿Qué es tan brava?
Mesonero: Aunque es tan brava,
Os aseguro de mí
Que más su cara temiera
Que su arcabuz."²

¹. La Moza de Cántaro, Act I, Scene 6.
The Nabob becomes interested in María and after talking with her, hires her as a servant. While serving in his home as the watermaid, Isabela, she meets a certain Don Juan, who in spite of the ridicule to which he is subjected on the part of his aristocratic friends, falls in love with her. María, who feels keenly the humiliation of her present position, questions his motives and rebukes him for failing to realize that although she may be poorly dressed, yet her soul, as she says, is white:

"Ya con cuidado me hablais,
Porque ese efecto os paresco
Mujer que os puedo entender.
Pues yo prometo que puedo;
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Bien digo yo que pensais
Que á mi corto entendimiento
Importan resoluciones,
Atajos y rodeos.
Pues levantad el lenguaje;
Que, como dicen los negros,
El alma tengo blanca,
Aunque mal vestido el cuerpo.
Habladme como quien sois." ¹

¹. Ibid. Act II, Scene 7.
The third act gives a picture of María's life in the home of the Hindoo, and here she reveals herself as a militant almost to the point of being a termagant. She orders the other servants around and even uses violence to manage them. After hitting one of them with her pitcher, she bursts into a veritable tirade and threatens to kill him. When three thieves break into rob her master's house, she dauntlessly seizes a sword and puts them to flight bootyless.

But she is not all masculine aggressiveness and bluster. When she learns that the ban has been lifted in Ronda and she may return home, she bids Don Juan farewell in a speech which shows at once her pride, her generous spirit, and a gentleness not altogether consistent with her conduct as already described. She tells him that she must leave because of a duty which must be fulfilled (referring to her love for her father); and while she confesses proudly that she loves him, she urges him to forget her. Finally, however, she discloses her identity and with it the reason for her present humble situation, and promises to marry him.

In spite of this apparent freedom of acquaintance and friendship, the brother or father seems to have had considerable authority in the choosing of husbands for the marriageable women of the family. But while the parental choice is usually expressed clearly and is a strong
factor in the girl's decision; while she generally remains single if necessary rather than marry against her father's wish, we find practically nowhere a marriage by compulsion. On the other hand, marriages occasionally take place in direct opposition to the father's wish. In Castelvines y Monteses, a Romeo and Juliet in comedy, Roselo and Julia are married secretly although the father of each is the sworn enemy of the other's house. Since this play is probably taken from the Italian novello which served as the source of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, it can not be cited with absolute confidence as an illustration to prove a corresponding freedom in the Spanish customs. And yet it is difficult to point to anything in the plays of Lope that is distinctly not Spanish. Even where his plots are borrowed from foreign sources, he transforms his material in such fashion that the atmosphere is decidedly that of his native country. Proelss approvingly quotes the following remark of Ernest Lafond concerning this fact: "Lope a beau voyager, il emporte partout l'Espagne avec lui."2

Sometimes, as we have seen in Santiago el Verde, the girl appears to yield to authority, but it is generally with the hope, if not the expressed intention, of having her own way in the end, and she usually gets it, or else

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2. Ibid. p 294.
she conveniently falls in love with the eligible suitor and changes her mind — perhaps one method of getting her own way. Most often we find the woman, urged perhaps by parental authority, considering several suitors from whom she may make her choice. This necessarily involves a greater degree of acquaintance with them than was later considered either necessary or proper. Sometimes the lady imposes upon the suitors a trial of wits or valor or both, the victor to receive her hand as the reward. An excellent instance of this is to be found in La Vengadora de las Mujeres. Laura, the heroine, does not wish to marry, but as her brother insists that she make a choice from among her suitors, she plans for them two contests, one in writing a book, and the other a trial at arms. To win her it was necessary to be the victor in both. It might be added incidentally that by winning the tourney herself, disguised as a knight, she gains another respite; but as one of the suitors has meanwhile won her favor, she finally consents to marry him.

In many cases there is no person with authority to dispose of the lady's hand, or such authority is so far from the scene of action that no one takes the trouble to invoke it. This is true of El Perro del Hortelano; Las Bizarrías de Belisa; La Moza de Cántaro; Por la Puente, Juana; La Boba para Otros; y Discreta para Sí; Lo que Ha de Ser;
and others. In the last play, as in *La Niña de Plata*, it is the man who is forbidden by parental authority to marry. Alejandro, the prince in *Lo que Ha de Ser*, and Don Juan in *La Niña de Plata* obey quite as readily as Belisa in *El Acero de Madrid*, or Isabela in *¡Si no Vieran las Mujeres!* for example. In many cases, indeed, the father of the hero has sent him to pay court, a command which is dutifully carried out. This would seem to be a remnant of the old patriarchal rule from under which the son has in general progressed farther than the daughter.

The authority of a person of higher rank to arrange a marriage is seldom questioned. There is an example of this in *El Guante de Doña Blanca* where we find the king planning the marriages of the noblemen and ladies of his court. They accept his decision without question or seeming dissatisfaction, although, in one case at least, neither the man nor the woman especially desired the match. In *La Hermosura Aborrecida* the queen plans to marry Don Sancho to Doña Juana, not suspecting that they are already husband and wife. He does not question her authority to marry them, but by various ways upsets her plans in this case as well as when she proposes to make Juana the wife of a certain Don Luis. The situation in *La Niña de Plata* and *Porfiar hasta Morir* is somewhat different.
In these plays the king is balked in his desire to marry the heroine to a chosen subject because of a betrothal already binding in the one case the man and in the other the woman. In the former play, in which the king plans to marry Don Juan to Dorotea, Don Juan's father pretends that his son is engaged, because he realizes that that is the only way to avoid the match. After his trick is discovered, he discloses his real reason for objecting to the marriage; the unfaithfulness of Dorotea, feeling sure that the king will consider it a sufficient excuse for his deception; but the lady's innocence is established, and all ends happily. Although this royal authority is nowhere questioned, it is not used to oppose directly the wishes of the prospective bride in any of the comedies.

One of the fields of feminism in which a great part still remains to be won is equality of economic opportunity for women. While it was long considered necessary for the woman to live dependent upon the support provided by her father, brothers, or other male relatives, and while even when no adequate income was forthcoming the real lady preferred to live miserably in a sort of genteel poverty rather than face the disapproval by which she would be met if she attempted to better her condition in any way except by marriage, we now grant to women the opportunity to become independent by their own efforts expended, in most cases, in the economic pursuits in which their talents lie.
More important still is the fact that the idea is slowly coming into existence in our consciousness that economic activity in some phase or another is not merely a privilege for those who are disposed by nature or compelled by circumstances to take advantage of it, but also a duty from which no human being, whether man or woman, is exempt, and in this growing consciousness is the germ of the great recognition of woman as a personality. The war has perhaps as yet had no more important result from the social point of view than this. And while after the war there will doubtless be a certain degree of reversion to old conditions, things can never be quite the same again, for above all the new consciousness, attained under pressure of necessity, will still persist. Some sociologists, including women like Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Katharine Anthony, have laid out programs which only the most advanced thinkers can grasp, and few women now understand what their part will be in the economic world of the future. It is difficult to throw off the weight of long-standing custom and prejudice and stand free to admit the possibility and the propriety of a scheme which upsets old ideas and standards, but to a greater degree than anything else could have done, the magnitude of the present war has served to awaken woman herself as well as man to a realization of her ability along economic
lines. We had already come to admire the girl who wishes to taste independence, and had even begun to conceive of there being some other way than the time-honored profession of teaching by which the unmarried woman might provide for her own support. We had ceased to hold up our hands in horror at the thought of woman's practicing law and medicine,¹ and now other professions once strictly reserved for men are being opened to her every year. This is but the beginning of a new regime which is coming slowly but surely.

This is the branch of feminism in which the hardest battles must still be fought, because it is most nearly new. But modern as it is, it has had its earlier appearances. During the Renaissance, just as there was a greater mental development among women than before, so there were some traces, faint enough, to be sure, of greater economic freedom for them. It goes almost without saying that in the plays of Lope de Vega we do not find the lady of the upper classes actually supporting herself by work unless she has carefully concealed her identity and disguised her real condition. Such a thing is not permissible for the gentleman either, and would result in his losing caste completely.

¹ In 1912 there were only 5 of the United States in which a woman could not practice law and 10 in which she could not be notary public. Cf. Wilson, Jennie. Legal Status of Woman in the United States. The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. 1912.
When María in *La Moza de Cañarío* found herself compelled to work for a living, she took another name and carefully concealed her identity, although she was far away from home, — far, that is, as distance was reckoned at that time. Although Don Juan was aware of her unusual refinement and intelligence, the fact that she seemingly belonged to the working class made it impossible for him to marry her. But although the lady could not acquire property by her own labor, we do occasionally see her the owner of an estate, directing her servants and seeming to do it all with perfect efficiency. In *El Perro del Hortelano*, Diana, the young countess, manages her own property with the aid of a secretary and an overseer (*mayordomo*) who is under her direction. Doña Ana, the widow in *La Moza de Cañarío*, and Belisa, in *Las Bizarrias de Belisa*, apparently are mistresses of their own estates — at least they are free to go and come as they will, and no masculine protector appears even on the occasion of their marriage, from which we may assume that there is none near enough to direct their affairs of any kind, since a wedding always seems to call for the appearance of such authority if it exists at all. In *Lo que Ha de Ser*, Nise keeps a watchful eye on the care of her farm. In Act I, scene 4, she asks her servant Peral, about the cattle:

"¿Qué hay, Peral, de nuestras vacas?"

He expresses hearty approval of her management, at the same time, however, he intimates openly that she should marry:
"Bien dices: trate el pastor
De sus ovejas y cabras,
El mercader de su hacienda,
Y el soldado de sus armas.
No han sido malas las crias;
Toda tu hacienda se guarda,
Para que su dueño seas.
Dime, ¿por qué no te casas?"

The idea had evidently not quite come to be
accepted that a husband was not necessary for the proper
management of property.

In La Esclava de su Galán, the heroine, Elena,
for love of whom Don Juan has given up his plans to enter
the priesthood and with them the favor of his father, Don
Fernando, disguises herself as a slave under the name
of Barbara, and makes her servant sell her to Don Fernando
in order that she may bring about a reconciliation between
father and son. She proves so valuable to her master that
he turns over the entire direction of his place to her:

"Bárbara, mi dicho ha sido,
Y pues que lo siento así,
Se ve lo que te he fiado.
Todas las llaves te he dado.
Rige y gobierna por mí
Criados, casa y hacienda:
Tanto de tu entendimiento
Y virtud estoy contento."

1. La Esclava de su Galán, Act II, Scene 9
From what has already been seen there can be no doubt but that the plays of Lope de Vega offer a fairly definite picture of a feministic movement presented in the phases of education, freedom of action socially, and to a limited extent only of a demand for equality of political rights and economic opportunity. Indeed, it is hardly going too far to assert that nearly every phase of the whole movement is to be found represented in Lope at least in a state of germ. Later periods have developed the various phases of the movement thus foreshadowed, making some one of them the paramount issue for the time being. Thus a few decades ago higher education for women was a burning question in the United States, as it still is in certain parts of Europe, and today it is perhaps the question of equality of political rights and economic opportunity about which the storm primarily rages. In general, succeeding periods have varied in their manifestations as the difficulties of each have been overcome and new ones encountered. Each successive advance has but opened the way for still others by revealing the further need and bringing about a realization of what was still further desirable, as well as by showing the way to attain the desired ends. Achievement in this respect has kept pace more or less with advancement in social and political ideas and ideals. As a consequence, consciousness of needs and definiteness of aim with the resultant organization are perhaps the most strongly marked modern characteristics, and
we could, therefore, hardly hope to find them present in Lope in any striking degree. Leaving out of view for the time being the important question as to whether the picture presented by the dramatist is the product of his own imagination or is based on his observation of actual conditions, we must next turn our attention to a consideration of the question as to whether this movement is represented by Lope de Vega as being conscious or not. Is there, in other words, a conscious effort on the part of the women to attain the ends involved? Is there any display of consciously directed power towards attaining ends beyond these and any indication of ambition to progress in the direction taken? In general, it would seem that such phases of the movement as are represented by Lope are but the forerunners of the period of conscious effort, those phases of the whole movement which are necessary preliminaries to providing the sex with the stimuli indispensable for further effort. There are few indications in the plays of organized effort on the part of the women, but many, as we have already seen, of determination on the part of individuals to achieve such forms of advancement as had become recognised as desirable.

There is, however, one play of the group under consideration which offers an exception of a very striking, not to say surprising nature, and one which amply justifies the statement that the whole feministic movement is to be
found in Lope in germ. This is La Vengadora de las Mujeres, which has already been cited a number of times in illustration of various points under discussion. The play is striking from our present point of view in that it portrays the heroine, Laura, definitely stating the wrongs against women as she sees them, and protesting against them. So filled with bitterness is she that she foolishly swears hatred against all men and determines never to marry in order that she may not put herself into a position disadvantageous for her purposes. She has resolved, it seems, to devote her life to redressing the real or fancied wrongs of women by writing both in their praise and in disparagement of men, whose faults she has determined to make known as well as the injustice done by them to women. The objection might be raised that the dramatist's aim was to show the futility of such efforts, since the lady in question weakens in the end and marries one of her most persistent suitors. But whether he intends to ridicule the movement involved or not is after all another question than the one that concerns us here, since our interest lies chiefly in what is presented, regardless of the author's attitude, and in the fact that it is presented. Incidentally, however, there is little indication of a mocking attitude on the part of the author, and in view of the fact that the women in the other plays embody more or less the same ideas which Laura expresses in definite terms, it is difficult to believe that his aim was deliberately to satirize
the movement. At any rate, the injustices which Laura laments are now generally accepted as such.

Women, she finds from reading poetry and history, have from time immemorial been slighted or ignored in both the social and political life. While the men are permitted to study in the universities and win degrees and fame for their learning, the women must confine themselves to fancy-work and cooking which, she urges, offer no opportunity for the exercise of an intelligent mind. Neither can women acquire wealth by practicing law and medicine, or have a voice in the affairs of the government. All these restrictions upon the activities of women as well as the injustice which she feels that historians have done them in representing them as the source of all evil she determines to avenge, and she has accordingly studied in order to enable herself to write well for the sake of the execution of her plan.

Not merely is she ready to take up arms herself as an individual in defense of women's fame and women's rights, but she seeks to enlist others in the cause, realizing that alone she could accomplish but little. She accordingly organizes a little class composed of her friends, Diana and Lucela, and teaches them the principles of Platonic love, the adoption of which she considers necessary for those who would follow her in her career of vengeance. Not only is her effort therefore a conscious one, but her very consciousness of it leads her to attempt an organization even if only
of a very rudimentary sort, — the only one remarked in the plays read. It is interesting to note that one of her suitors, a Transylvanian prince named Lisardo, pretends to be a Spaniard in order to gain her approval, since she regards Spain as particularly well advanced in its attitude toward women. The scene of the play is laid in Bohemia, but the background of manners and customs against which the intrigue moves is distinctly Spanish, as is the intrigue itself. May we not venture to assume that here as elsewhere the author is but expressing his own attitude through the medium of one of his personages? Lisardo praises her wisdom and offers her many curious and learned books, but in accordance with her principles she accepts only those which deal with the merits of women, with the exception of one which treats of natural magic and one on poisons. Of this last she says, jokingly:

"Señalalde, por sí acaso
Matar los hombres intento."\(^1\)

She appoints Lisardo as her secretary, and they argue at great length, Lisardo contending that men are the perfect and women the imperfect creatures. Naturally neither one is convinced.

As she is being constantly urged by her brother to choose a husband from among the gallants who are courting her, she at last consents to leave the matter to chance.

\(^1\) La Vengadora de las Mujeres, Act I, Scene 12.
by setting a contest, the winner of which she is to take as a husband. She is privately resolved, however, to take no chances with fate and incur the risk of being compelled to be untrue to her principles, and lays her plans accordingly. The contest is to be dual. Each lover must write a book in praise of women, and also compete in a tourney on horseback. The tourney takes place and is won by a valiant knight in white armor who is unknown to the other contestants, while a singer in blue wins second place. Of the books Armando, Laura's brother, judges that of a certain Alejandro to be the best, and as neither the white nor the blue knight appears, he orders Laura to accept him. Lisardo thereupon discloses his true identity and declares that he was the knight in blue. Agusto, another suitor, claims that he was the knight in white, but Laura thwarts him by confessing that it was she who won the tourney. By this time, however, she has fallen in love with Lisardo, who has aroused her admiration, and she consents to marry him.

It may be said here in defense against the possible charge of weakness on the part of Laura that most of the women of the comedies fall in love much more easily and under stress of far less provocation than does she, for she is to a certain extent the victim of Lisardo's amiable and well-intentioned machinations. From our modern American
point of view, regarding, as we do, real love as a more or less lasting passion not easily transferred from one object to another, the swiftly shifting affinities of these Spanish ladies are almost shocking. The same tendency is noticeable on the part of the men, however. Don García in Act II, scene 16, of Santiago el Verde, protests his love for Celia; and in scene 24 of the same act he embraces Teodora, and they declare themselves in love with each other. In the end Teodora marries Lisardo and Don García marries Celia, and everyone is content. Often the minor characters are coupled off at the end of the play without the slightest regard as to whether they had previously been interested in each other, and all profess to be entirely happy. Every one displays perfect ease in falling out of love with one person and in again with another as convenience seems to dictate.

Reference has already been made to the fact that Laura is represented as disguising herself as a knight. This is an instance of a rather common procedure, for in Lope de Vega, as in Shakespeare, we find numerous instances of women disguising themselves as men. This would point to the existence of restrictions which they can overcome only by disguising their sex rather than to any great degree of freedom, and its importance lies in the fact that it is highly significant as an indication of conscious effort to get beyond the old barriers and walk in freer though forbidden paths. It should be stated that in no
case does this seem to be a mere attempt at the assumption of manliness and the usurpation of masculine prerogatives. Occasionally the assuming of men's attire on the part of Lope's women is either for the purpose of concealment, of hiding their identity, or of enabling them to earn their living at professions strictly reserved for men. Usually, however, it is done for the purpose of enabling them to go more freely and safely through the city after nightfall, often in order to watch the movements of a lover suspected of unfaithfulness. It must be granted that with the masculine attire goes an attempt to live up to masculine ideals of conduct, but the disguise itself would demand that in order to be effective. In Las Bizarrias de Belisa, Belisa and her maid, Finea, dress as men and go to discover whether Don Juan is calling on Lucinda. Don Juan appears and is attacked by several of Lucinda's suitors. For the second time during the play — the first time she is in the usual garb of a lady — Belisa stands boldly by his side and fights with him. She and Finea point their shotguns at the attacking party, which is frightened away by the firearms.

In El Acero de Madrid, Belisa is promised to Octavio by her father. She is shut up in her home where a quack doctor, the servant of her favored lover, Lisardo, is also imprisoned, both awaiting the outcome of the escapades arising from Belisa's attempts to evade the eagle eye of her dueña. However, she escapes in men's clothing
and goes to spy upon her lover. This play, as mentioned above, is one of the most conservative in regard to its attitude towards women. Even at that it may be said in passing that the heroine has a great deal of spirit and dash — more, indeed, than the corresponding character in *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, in which play Molière probably owes a great deal to Lope.

In *La Hermosura Aborrecida*, masquerading as a man serves Doña Juana the triple purpose of concealment, self-support, and reconciliation with her husband. Threatened with death at the hands of her unloving husband, Don Sancho, who has married her for her money and after having spent it all has no further use for her, she goes away and leaves him to mourn her as dead. Since she wishes to avoid discovery and at the same time to earn a living, Juana dresses as a young man and becomes a barber's apprentice. As is the custom, surgery and medicine are part of her trade. Far from proving her woman's mind incapable of the task she has undertaken, the play shows how she becomes very skillful and finally saves the life of the king himself by her miraculous treatment of a cut four inches deep which had all but severed his head from his body. She takes advantage of the king's gratitude to have herself appointed to look into conditions in the viceroyalty where Don Sancho's misrule is arousing serious complaint. Calling the witnesses in the matter before her, she punishes all who testify against her husband. He becomes so grateful to the young
surgeon who so resembles his wife that in his enthusiasm he declares that he has lost all hatred of her from his heart.

There is only one other case in these plays of the lady's dressing in men's garb. This is in La Boba -para Otros, Discreta para Sí. Here it seems to be done for the purpose of dramatic effect. When Alejandro de Medicis is ready to enter Urbino with his Florentine troops and establish Díana's authority as Duchess of the city, she suddenly appears in the camp and declares her intention of riding at his side attired in men's armor, a not uncommon proceeding during the period represented in the play. It is probably Lope's idea to make as great a contrast as possible between her first appearance as a simple country girl and her last as the rightful ruler of the city. The motive is ostensibly to convince the populace more firmly of her intention and ability to rule. This would undoubtedly result from her appearance in brilliant armor, a sort of Amazon, at the head of the army, proclaiming triumphantly her right to the Duchy and with a word banishing her enemies from the city. This scene also makes a dazzling finale which no doubt appealed greatly to the audience for which it was written.

Woman, we have seen, occupied at least in the mind of Lope de Vega, the dramatist, so important a position that to her he assigned the commanding position in his plays. About her the whole play revolves; she is its
motive power, its dramatic center; the beginning, the end, the reason for it all. History bears out the same statement in regard to Lope de Vega the man, whose life was so intimately bound up with women that through natural inclination as well as by experience he had every opportunity to know them well. His chief women characters are generally of the leisured class, and although the love element, as is so frequently the case in Shakespeare, is the central theme of the plays, which are almost invariably concerned with the question of marriage, it is a striking fact that their lives are far from being given over to froth and frivolity. They have all received the rudiments of an education, of whatsoever degree they may be, and many of the ladies have gone beyond that and acquired along with what may be classed as mere accomplishments, such as dancing, singing, and composing verse and music, more solid bases for the acquisition of knowledge through familiarity with the ancient languages, and with them glimpses, at least, into the realms of literature, history, philosophy, law, and even of the sciences — such realms of knowledge, in fact, as were known to classical antiquity and just becoming current through the Renaissance.

The cases of women who own and direct their own property are few but do occur, and would seem to indicate

that there is no resulting inefficiency of management. Everything implies Lope's belief that woman is, at least potentially, a human being of mental power and executive ability, capable of deciding her own problems. At least he so presents her.

All this holds true in varying degree as far as individuals are concerned, for they did not by any means all reach the same goal, nor was the goal the same in all cases. The most advanced cases are not the rule but the exception, and there is evidence of a great deal of opposition in the way of objection and ridicule, if not of actual prohibition on the part of the natural guardians. In most instances the women of the plays enjoy freedom of movement to an astonishing extent, and are apparently as a rule subject to but few restraints, but seem free to go and come as they please, to receive whom they please, and to occupy themselves with what they please. This picture, however, has an opposite which would seem to point to a double standard, that is, to two conflicting ideals current at the same time: the one, the new as just described; the other, the old, by virtue of which the most advanced education was in general limited to the merest rudiments, and freedom of movement was so limited as to be almost nonexistent. This is, of course, to a certain extent, a remnant of the old patriarchal system which was later restored in part at least. Of further
phases of the feministic movement only occasional traces are to be found. The demand for equality of political rights is voiced in one instance, as is that for economic freedom for women, which is also an existent fact to the extent of their owning and managing their own property in various cases and also of their being put in charge of the property of others, although it is only under very extraordinary conditions and in disguise of some sort that they are found earning their own living. Consciousness of their needs and desires is found in more than one instance, and one case of an attempt at organization, although of a very slight nature, has been pointed out. There is, on the other hand, very little indication of an attempt at the assumption of mannishness on the part of the women, who remain essentially women throughout, although there are not wanting examples of those who fill the places of men in moments of stress, as is evidenced, for instance, by their willingness to undertake a combat at arms when the occasion arises. But this they do without any loss of their distinctly feminine character, however much it may be disguised for the time being. Similarly, when they masquerade as men, which is done for the sake of greater safety through concealment of their identity or their sex, they try to comport themselves as men and do so with perfect success. The ideal would seem to be a combination of a dashing and fearless spirit with beauty and essentially feminine characteristics.
Such is, briefly, the picture which Lope de Vega presents. To what extent is it in accordance with contemporary reality, and to what extent is it the product of his own imagination? Some allowance must of course be made for the fertility of the dramatist's imagination and the strength of his powers of invention, both of which are among his most striking characteristics. Furthermore, like Shakespeare, he borrowed much of his material from various sources, both foreign and domestic. Such inventions and such borrowings, however, were largely confined to special incidents or to the plots as a whole, for in all the plays involved the general background of manners and customs is clearly Spanish, a result not only of Lope's own natural tendencies but of the fact that he was writing for a popular audience which must be pleased if the play were to succeed, and popular audiences have always tended to look askance at what is distinctly foreign and hence unfamiliar to them. It goes without saying that in the large number of plays that he wrote — of the original eighteen hundred over four hundred are extant — there is a vast amount of repetition, the same incidents and the same type of plot being used over and over again. Due care must therefore be taken not to lay undue weight upon the mere fact of frequent repetition of the same incident, device, or situation. Moreover, it is obvious that it is impossible for Lope to have written in most
cases with much care, since his known work includes in addition to the vast number of plays already mentioned a considerable volume of poetry and other things.

When due consideration has been given to all these factors, however, we can not but be struck by the consistency of the picture which the dramatist has presented. Everywhere in this group of plays, selected more or less at random, and hence in all probability representative, the women are the center of interest; everywhere they are the dominant factor in the dramatic development; and everywhere they are more or less educated and of an active and aspiring nature. No conclusion is possible other than that the dramatist was but representing the actual social condition of the women of his time. The picture is too consistent, too clearly defined, to permit of our attributing it solely to a brilliant imagination, however much of a share we may ascribe to the latter. This, added to the fact that the indubitable inventive powers and the borrowings of Lope were applied largely to the plots either wholly or in detail, would seem to offer sufficient proof that the picture presented is based on reality, were there no other.

The position of women at the time of the Renaissance showed a remarkable advance beyond that of preceding periods. There had always appeared from time to time brilliant women who were leaders in one way or another. In the field of ancient literature, for example, we might cite Sappho, the
poetess of Mytilene; Corinna and Myrtis, who were rivals of Pindar; and others. In mediaeval times women's education was of variable extent and gained chiefly in convents, where the nuns and especially the abbesses enjoyed a training of mind which was not accorded to those outside. It was therefore anything but general or even widespread.

In the world of politics from earliest times women had proved capable rulers and, if need be, brave leaders in war. In many cases even when they were not in a position of authority, their influence controlled the policies of nations. During the period of feudalism, while the abbess was a real dictator in her province, women generally assumed direction of property and the administration of justice only in the absence of their husbands. Nevertheless, there were a few military spirits of the type of which Matilda of Tuscany is the most representative. An interesting incident shows the growing spirit of unrest and the general interest that women took in a display of physical courage as well as a rebellious desire to try their own prowess and not merely watch the performances of the knights. This was a tournament held one Sabbath day in a castle near the Rhine when forty ladies took their husbands' names and competed on horseback. One maiden toured in the name of Duke Walrable von Lunberg, and won the tourney. The Duke, hearing of it, provided her with a dowry and two horses.¹ This

calls to mind the similar exploit of Laura in La Vengan-
dora de las Mujeres. It was in Avila, — and with this
story, Lope must have been familiar — that it happened
that when the men were away fighting, the women manned
the walls and withstood a siege. As a reward their leader
demanded that women be given a vote in the management of
the town.¹ All such cases, however, are exceptional.
In general, during the middle ages women enjoyed few rights
either social or political, and education for them as a
class was practically non-existent. The lady, to be sure,
as we have already seen, received a certain amount of train-
ing in certain accomplishments, but little or no real edu-
cation in the modern sense. The very peculiarity of econo-
ic conditions prevented anything like the modern need of
economic opportunity from arising, since the home was to
a great extent the workshop and all, whether lady or com-
moner, were employed there in some fashion or other, the
noble lady in directing her inevitably large household,
the commoner as a producer of a kind. In spite of the
more or less idealistic worship of which the women of the
upper classes were the objects during the age of chivalry,
the lot of all classes of them was hardly an enviable one
in general throughout the whole period.

While the Renaissance does not offer examples
of individual women who enjoyed greater freedom either

¹ Reich, Emil, Woman Through the Ages, Vol. I, London,
intellectually or socially than did certain individuals of earlier periods, a certain degree of freedom then became more general and was more universally recognized and accepted. Already there existed the tendency on women's part so evident today to prefer the recognition of real equality of intellect and the ability to conduct life independently to the incense wafted to them on lofty pedestals of chivalry. They began to extend their interest beyond the narrow sphere in which they lived and to concern themselves with the affairs of the state and with the study of subjects which apparently had little or no connection with the manner of living which had been approved for them. Such a change did not come into existence, of course, without some comment to the effect that women wished to become men, but for the time being at least this had little effect. In 1450 an Italian caricature, repeated in France in the sixteenth century, represented women struggling to wear trunk hose. This danger appeared even more threatening when women began to take up the study of medicine, which became quite a woman's profession. Its prevalence as such may explain Lope's representing Doña Juana in La Hermosura Aborrecida as acquiring skill in surgery, although this art was a part of the barber's trade rather than of that of the doctor.

The women were not without defenders in their new interests, however. Cardinal Pompa Colonna and Cornelius Agrippa, among others, were professed advocates of feminism and wrote learned books on that subject.  

Poetry, of course, came to be very fashionable, ladies even corresponding in verse. The latter also excelled as patrons of art and literature.

It has already been intimated that the period of the Renaissance differed strikingly from the preceding period in that education for women became more general rather than through the number of individuals who stood out markedly in this and other respects. There were not wanting many of the latter, however. Italy, for instance, is represented by such women as Vittoria Colonna, poetess, friend and inspiration of Michael Angelo and Bembo, and one of the leading spirits of the Reformation; Giulia and Elizabeth Gonzaga and Veronica Gambara, poetesses and leaders of intellectual society; Marietti Strozzi, who contrived to do away with all obstacles and lead a life of masculine independence; Olympia Morata, a young prodigy in philosophy; and Isabella d'Este, a patron of art, who carried on an immense correspondence resulting from her interest in all current happenings and especially in such as were connected with her passion for art. 

In France, Margaret d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, was the guiding spirit of the Renaissance. Although she was herself a poetess and a scholar, she was important not so much for what she did in this respect as for the fact that she protected and encouraged every aspiring genius who came to her for aid. Others who might be mentioned are Anne of Brittany, wife of Charles VIII, who had such a craze for marriages that the Pope permitted her to carry about a portable altar and perform them wherever she wished; Cathérine de Medici, that diabolical ruler of kings; Jeanne d'Albert, an active Reformer; Diane de Poitiers, who controlled Henry II and to whom, as to a colleague, the physician Portesii dedicated a work on medicine;¹ and Louise Labé, a poetess, feminist, and military leader.

Lope de Vega, a considerable portion of whose dramatic output is devoted to plays of a historical nature, was evidently familiar with the accomplishments and exploits of the famous women not only of his own time and country, but of other lands and ages as well, and doubtless he borrowed many an incident from the lives of the latter. To the women of Spain who were known for their learning, however, he devoted special praise. In the first Silva or Canto of the Laurel de Apolo, a long poem

¹ Emil Reich, vide supra, p. 234.
of ten Silvas describing an assembly called by Apolo
on Parnassus for the purpose of judging the relative
merits of Spanish poets, some 170 lines are occupied
with the praise of various poets and scholars of the
fair sex. Spain, while not giving to the world women
as famous as those of France and Italy, was not behind
them in the state of progress her women attained. In
fact, Clavière in attempting to explain the zeal of French
and Italian ladies for education says they could "invoke
the example of Spain where women displayed their learn-
ing openly and unabashed." ¹ He especially mentions
the Marchioness of Montagudo; Doña María Pacheco de Men-
doza; Isabel of Cordova, "far richer in Latin, Greek, and
Hebrew than in worldly possessions; " the poet, Catherine
of Ribera; the two professors² of rhetoric at the Univer-
sities of Salamanca and Alcalá (the latter was Lope's
Alma Mater); Beatrice of Galindo, who taught the queen
Latin; Isabella Rosera, who preached in the cathedral at
Toledo and went to Rome for the purpose of converting
the Jews and there commented on Scotus Erigena before a
group of astonished cardinals; and Loysa Sygea, "an in-
fant prodigy to begin with, then a Father of the Church,
who could speak the most outlandish tongues." This imposing

2. One of these was probably Isabel of Galindo; the other's
name I have not been able to find. See note 1, p. 63.
list is sufficient to show that the Renaissance was a period of general education of a rather scholarly nature for Spanish women — a condition which Emilia Pardo Bazan says stands in marked contrast to that which came into existence later and which still persists. ¹

While what has been said so far has to do chiefly with intellectual privileges, it includes also some indication of personal freedom for women, as for instance, in the case of those who lectured in the universities, attendance at which in all probability consisted altogether of men; and others who were the guiding spirits of literary circles where they participated freely in the general discussions as is reported in the Heptameron of Margaret of Navarre. In the company which gathered about Elisabetta Gonzaga there were many discussions about women. From the discussion arising in connection with Giuliano de' Medici's description of a perfect court lady, given at one of these gatherings, we may gain an idea of what personal freedom a lady could properly enjoy. She should, he says, have the knack of entertaining all kinds of men with pleasant conversation, and while she should not abhor free company and talk, she should not go to an extreme in approving of them. Altogether he lays down for her a very conservative plan of life by which she must appear neither prudish nor overbold. For instance, the question of exercise for ladies was taken up, and some

of those present told of seeing them "play tennis, handle weapons, ride, go hunting and perform nearly all the exercises that a cavalier can." Giuliano did not approve of this custom, but when Gaspar Pallavicino objected even to the moderate freedom which he had allowed to the perfect woman, expressing his surprise that she had not been given also the power "to govern cities, make laws, and lead armies" while the men stayed at home to cook and spin, Giuliano replied laughingly: "Perhaps even this would not be amiss." 1

In Spain, although the Church influenced the women to a very great extent, the latter did nevertheless acquire a certain degree of freedom socially, although in general the women of the lower and the upper classes seem to have enjoyed greater freedom than those of the middle classes. Among the masses it was a matter of economic necessity that they be unrestricted in their movements, and by the aristocracy a certain degree of freedom both intellectual and social was regarded as a privilege which might be accorded to women of that station with less danger of abuse than among those of inferior rank.

As the entrance of women into wider fields of activity was met in France and Italy with ridicule

and disapproval, we could hardly expect anything radically different in Spain. It is impossible to imagine that the old ideas ever disappeared when the weight of prejudice and long practice was on their side, and when, more important still, the Church itself was continually commending them and condemning the new ones.

It is significant of the attitude of the Church and its custom of imposing special restrictions upon women that it was women and not men who were practically forbidden by the clergy to attend the theater, an institution which the latter seem to have selected as a special object of attack. While the cazuela or stewpan, as the women's gallery in the theater was called, was usually crowded, the presence there of an officer to preserve order indicates the class of women who sat there, and is also explained by the custom of all the spectators of expressing approval or disapproval by loud cries and by throwing fruit skins and other objects, thus causing a veritable riot at times. The lady of the upper classes, probably because of the likelihood of incurring ecclesiastical disfavor, sat discreetly in a box and wore a mask if she valued her reputation, although the same strictness of propriety was not exacted elsewhere.

In connection with the plays it may be noted that the aunt, the dueña in El Acero de Madrid, affected a religious dress and professed to represent the interests
of the church as opposed to the freer, pleasure-seeking world outside of it. She may well stand for the restraining influence which the Church always exerted, especially on the women of the country. In this play and in others of the same sort Lope is but perfecting his picture of Spanish life. It is evident that living in an age when the destinies of all the great nations of Europe were controlled directly or indirectly by women, such as Catherine de Medici in France, Jeanne d'Albert in Navarre, Elizabeth in England and Mary Stuart in Scotland, in a country where they were attaining such recognition as scholars, Lope could not have fairly portrayed his women otherwise than as he has done. The inconsistencies which we have observed in the plays in this respect may also be explained by contemporary conditions. It is puzzling at first to compare the conservative attitude represented in El Acero de Madrid and La Niña de Plata with that represented in so many of the other comedies, as for example, Las Bizarrías de Belisa and Santiago el Verde, but the puzzle disappears in the light thrown upon the matter by a consideration of the conflicting ideals, the old and the new, existing at the period. That the former ultimately triumphed, even if in somewhat modified form, has already been mentioned. We may conclude therefore that the very contrast presented is but further proof of the fidelity of a picture of the truth of which we have aimed to establish.
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