

ful and easy to obtain, are frequent for those who seek them, at least prostitution is neither so public nor impudent as in other countries; and that the police, by severely prohibiting its scandalous seminaries, obliges it to conceal itself, and sometimes pursues it to its secret retreats. I shall farther observe, that women rigorously banish from their society those familiarities* which are considered as indifferent by other nations, where the senses, not so quickly inflamed, more slowly betray their disorder; and that this distrust of themselves is at least an homage which their weakness renders to modesty. But provided they be not too nearly approached, they permit, and sometimes provoke those allurements at which decency is in other places alarmed.

They pardon equivoque, obscenity, indelicate descriptions, all witticisms and indiscreet expressions. The free manner

* A woman would not permit the most chaste kiss to be given her in publick; and those which are customary in our comedies, and of which no notice is taken, are entirely banished from the Spanish stage,

in which they explain themselves in some instances, cannot but astonish a stranger accustomed to convey his thoughts on similar occasions under a thicker veil. The English women have an extremely delicate and pure imagination, and no person would dare to wound their ears with an expression in the least tending to indecency. It is said, they carry reserve in this respect to that degree of excess which we should call prudery. French women who do not repel the sallies of an innocent gaiety, but whose decency impresses awe upon effrontery, are, in their turn, pruders in comparison to the Spanish women. I have seen the latter hear without a blush, and even permit themselves expressions which men of but few scruples would have reserved for the orgies of debauchery. I have heard several of them sing couplets which breathed something more than voluptuousness, and left the penetration of the hearer nothing to imagine. This circumstance alone however, would not be sufficient to prove the depravity of manners in Spain.

Purity of morals is certainly not a matter of convention. In every country depravity is nearly the same, except the modifications given it by law and religion. The moral purity of language is something different; this varies according to time and place; it depends upon climate, custom, manners and genius of language. Women who permit themselves freedom of expression, and give the example of it, are certainly not on that account more seducing to persons of delicacy, but they are not more easily seduced. The woman who jests with vice is, perhaps, farther removed from it than she who carefully repels it from her imagination, from a conviction of her own weakness; besides, as it has frequently been remarked, manners are never more corrupted than when the moral purity of language is carried to the most scrupulous excess; because then every mind is filled with depraved ideas, and the greatest precaution must be taken that they may not be awakened. On the contrary, a nation not yet corrupted by excess of civilisation, may have
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in its language a kind of ingenuoufness which renders expreffions far from entirely chafte; and when, like our firft parents, it begins to blufh at its nakednefs, we may be fure, that like them, it has no longer preferved its innocence.

This however, is not the cafe of the Spanifh nation. I have only wifhed to prove that the liberties the Spaniards permit themfelves in their language, may neverthelefs be reconciled with much purer manners. I fhould be inclined to believe thefe modes of expreffion, fhocking to the decency of other nations, would difappear by a more refined civilifation, more precautions in the education of young perfons, almoft excluſively abandoned to the government of fervants, even in the moft diftinguiſhed houfes, and eſpecially by better example, the moſt efficacious of all educations. But can a young lady, who from the moſt tender age has been familiarifed to the groffeſt expreffions which her preſence commands not reſpect enough to repreſs; who in com-

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panies, to which she is frequently admitted, hears applause bestowed on impudence, which disdains to throw a transparent veil even over the obscenities in which it indulges; can one, whose ears are early accustomed to the indecent expressions which are permitted on the stage, and whose eyes repeatedly behold the wanton attitudes exhibited in the favourite Spanish dance, long preserve in her imagination and language that virgin purity which is, perhaps, the greatest charm of her sex?

The dance I allude to, is the famous Fandango, at which foreigners are equally astonished and offended, but to which they soon become more than partial.

No sooner is this begun at a ball, than every countenance becomes animated, and even those who by their age and profession are most obliged to gravity, have much difficulty in preventing themselves from joining in the cadence. It is related, on this subject, that the court
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of Rome, scandalized that a country renowned for the purity of its faith, should not have long before proscribed this profane dance, resolved to pronounce its formal condemnation. A consistory assembled, the prosecution of the Fandango was begun, according to rule; and sentence was about to be thundered against it, when one of the judges judiciously observed, that a criminal ought not to be condemned without being heard. The observation had weight with the assembly. Two Spaniards were brought before it, and to the sound of instruments displayed all the graces of the Fandango. The severity of the judges was not proof against the exhibition; their austere countenances began to relax; they rose from their seats, and their arms and legs soon found their former suppleness. The consistory-hall was changed into a dancing-room, and the Fandango was acquitted.

After such a triumph, it may be imagined that the remonstrances of decency

have but little affect ; its empire seems to be firmly established. It is, however, different according to the places in which it is practised. It is frequently called for at the theatre, and generally closes private dances. In these cases the intention is no more than lightly indicated ; but, on other occasions, when a few persons assembled seem wantonly to shake off all scruples, the meaning is then so marked, that voluptuousness assails the mind at every avenue ; its incitements cause the heart of the modest youth to palpitate with desire, and reanimate the deadened senses of old age. The Fandango is danced by two persons only, who never touch so much as even the hand of each other ; but when we view their reciprocal allurements, their retreats and approaches ; when we observe the female, in the moment when her languor announces an approaching defeat, suddenly acquire new courage to escape from her conqueror, who pursues her, and is pursued in his turn ; the manner in which these

these emotions are expressed by their looks, gestures and attitudes, it is impossible not to confess with a blush, that these scenes are, to the real combats of Cytherea, what our military evolutions in peace are to the real display of the art of war. The *Seguidilla* is another dance peculiar to the Spaniards. The figure is formed by eight persons; at each corner the four couple retrace, although but momentarily the principal movements of the Fandango. A Spanish female dancing the *Seguidilla*, dressed in character, accompanying the instruments with castanets, and marking the measure with her heel with uncommon precision, is certainly one of the most seducing objects which love can employ to extend his empire.

The Spanish nation has a decided taste for dancing, and the greatest aptitude to excel in the art. Besides the dances peculiar to the nation they have adopted those of other countries without excepting the minuet; but the noble,

noble, decent and easy graces of this dance escape them. It appears, however, to have many attractions in the eyes of the Spaniards, and makes an essential part of their education. Each ball has a president, who, under the name of *Baftonero* is to make every body dance the minuet, and who, notwithstanding his utmost endeavours to consult the inclination of every one, in forming the couples, never fails to give offence to some. In the reign of Philip V. masquerades were forbidden throughout all Spain. The count de Aranda, who while attentive to the police of the capital, did not neglect its pleasures, had revived the public balls, and proscribed masquerades under Philip; but these two amusements, which in other places are considered as innocent, survived not the retreat of the minister, and being disused when his administration ceased, added to the regret of the inhabitants of the capital.

The Spaniards are therefore reduced, for public diversions, to bull-fights, and the national spectacles of which we shall hereafter take notice. Their private pleasures have something of the gravity which appears, at least, in the exterior of their persons. The game to which the common people seem most attached, is a feeble and spiritless image of the games which kept the strength and address of the ancients in continual activity. It is called *El juego de la barra*, and consists in throwing a bar of iron to a certain distance.

People of fashion have recreations of another kind. In general they seldom assemble to eat at each others houses; and this is undoubtedly one of the circumstances which contributes to their reputation for sobriety. They are little acquainted with the innocent and healthful pleasures of the country. But few among them are fond of the chace; of which the monarch and his family seem to possess the exclusive privilege. The
amuse-

amusements of the country appear to have no attractions for the Spaniards. Their country-houses might easily be numbered. Among the many rich individuals who inhabit the capital, there are, perhaps, not ten who have a country retreat. With respect to the castles, seats, &c. so numerous in France, England, and Italy, and which contribute to the embellishment of the environs of their capitals, there are so few in the vicinage of Madrid and the rest of the Peninsula, that many travellers are of opinion the proverbial expression, *building castles in Spain*, is thence derived.

The rich subjects of the kingdom therefore concentrate all their pleasures within the cities. Music is one of those for which the Spaniards have the greatest taste. They cultivate this art with success. Not that their national music has made any great progress. If it has a particular character, it is to be found mostly in little detached airs, called, in Spain, *Tonadillas* and *Seguidillas*; sometimes agree-

agreeable melodies, but of which the modulations are little varied, and prove that the art of composition is still in its infancy. In return for this they do the greatest justice to the grand compositions of Germany and Italy, which always form a part of their frequent concerts; but they have the most profound contempt for French music, which, in their opinion, is languid and monotonous, not excepting the Vaudeville. Their prejudice, in this respect, is carried to such a height, that an Italian air would become displeasing to them by appearing in the livery of French words; so vain are they of their sonorous and cadenced language, and so persuaded that French syllables, by turns, mute and nasal, exclude the language from the possibility of being adapted to music. They have many lovers of harmony, but few composers worthy of notice.

A young poet at Madrid produced a few years since a poem on music, wherein
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didactic dryness is compensated by several episodes, and brilliancy of imagination. Connoisseurs assure us that the character of Spanish music in particular is there given by a masterly hand; but many examples must be added to the precepts contained in the poem, before it can be relished by the rest of Europe.

Balls and concerts are not the only entertainments at which the Spaniards assemble. They have also their *Tertulias* and *Refrescos*. The *Tertulias* are assemblies very similar to those of France. Perhaps more liberty reigns in the former, but langour sometimes establishes its throne there as well as in the midst of our circles.

Women in general seek not many occasions to assemble; each aspires to be the center of a *Tertulia*; and exclusive pretensions undoubtedly contribute to banish from Spanish societies what we call *French gallantry*. Women are there
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admired, and even adored, as well as elsewhere; but when they inspire not a lively sentiment, the men seldom pay them those attentions which our politeness prodigally and indiscriminately bestows upon every individual of the amiable sex. It is not in the reciprocal communication of tenderness that manners are softened. The language of mere politeness is too cold for love: that impetuous passion commands and exacts sacrifices, but despises simple respect. On the contrary, it is in the disinterested association of the two sexes that the necessity and mutual desire of pleasing arises, which forms the charm and cement of society. This is, perhaps, the only means wanting to the Spaniards to accomplish the polishing of their manners.

Their *Refrescos*, the invention of luxury and greediness, contribute no less than the Tertulias to facilitate the intercourse of the two sexes. In general, these are only light repasts, prepared
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for persons from whom visits are received, and are as a prelude to the Tertulias; but on great occasions, when a wedding, christening, or the birth-day of the head of a family is to be celebrated, the Refresco becomes an important and a very expensive affair. All the family acquaintance are invited; and, in proportion as they arrive, the men separate from the women. The latter take their seats in a particular chamber, and etiquette requires they should remain alone until all the company be assembled, or at least until the men stand up without approaching them. The lady of the house waits for them under a canopy, in a place set apart in the hall, which in ancient manners, not yet entirely abolished, was called the *Estrado*, over which is commonly suspended an image of the virgin. The appearance of the Refresco, at length, enlivens every countenance, and infuses joy into every heart; conversation becomes animated, and the sexes approach each other. The company are first presented

sented with great glasses of water, in which little sugar-loaves, called *Azucar esponjado*, or *rosado*, square and of a very spongy substance, are dissolved; these are succeeded by chocolate, the favourite refreshment twice a day of the Spaniards, and which is believed to be so nourishing, or at least innocent, that it is not refused to persons dangerously ill. After the chocolate come all sorts of confectionary.

Et tous ces mets sucrés en pâte ou bien liquides,
Dont estomacs dévots furent toujours avides*.

It is scarcely possible to conceive the profusion with which all these delicacies are distributed. People are not only cloyed with them in the house of festivity, but they put quantities of them into paper, and even into their hats and handkerchiefs; and the servants are speedily dispatched home with the pre-

* And all those sugared pastries and sweet cordials of which devout stomachs were ever so greedy.

acious savings, which undoubtedly serve to furnish the table of more than one miser for several days. There is something odd in this general rapaciousness; and a stranger admitted, for the first time, to these kind of festivals, in which intoxicating liquors only are spared, seeks to discover the sober nation and finds it not. It may be imagined that such entertainments must weigh heavily on the œconomy of many individuals; most people regret the custom which makes them necessary on certain occasions; but, as is the case with all abuses become sacred by length of time, nobody has sufficient courage to be the first to shake off the yoke.

A ball or card-tables commonly succeed to the Refresco; but it very seldom happens that the entertainment is concluded with a supper. This is always a very frugal repast with the Spaniards, and at which they rarely assemble.

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Their cookery, such as they received it from their ancestors, is of a nature to please but very few people. They are fond of high seasonings; pepper, pimenta, *tomates*, or saffron, colour or season most of their dishes. One of them only has been introduced amongst strangers, and the art of the French kitchen has not disdained to adopt it; this is what in Spain is called *Olla-podrida*, and is a sort of hotch-potch of every kind of meat cooked together. There is, however, generally a mixture in the Spanish cookery, except in some obscure families attached to ancient customs; in most houses it participates of the French cookery, and in some this has wholly supplanted that of Spain. Thus are the French every where imitated, whilst they are ridiculed and sometimes detested.

The modes of France have reached Spain as well as many other countries. French cloths, and the fashions and colours approved in France, are worn under the Spanish cloak. The veil is no longer exclusively worn but by the women of

the lowest classes; for others it serves but to hide the disorder of their dress when they go out on foot. Except in this case, their head-dress and whole attire are carefully adjusted to the French fashion. The Spanish manufacturers exert themselves to the utmost to serve the reigning taste, and to follow it through all its rapid variations without requesting the aid of France; but it may be asserted, without prejudice, that they are yet far from being able to attain their end. Great cities, and even the court, tacitly acknowledge this by having immediate recourse to Paris or Lyons, as to the only true sources of fashions. In this respect, as in many others, the Spaniards who affect the *bon ton*, confess the superiority of France, and receive from that nation lessons on elegance. Their tables are served after the French manner; they have French cooks, house stewards, and valets de chambre. French milliners are employed to invent and make new dresses for the ladies. Their heavy inelegant equipages disappear

pear by degrees, and are exchanged for those of their French neighbours. They neglect no means of engaging French artists and manufacturers to settle in Spain, and hold not out to them in vain the prospect of a rapid fortune.

These homages are not confined merely to frivolous objects. The best French works on morality, philosophy, and history are, as well as those of the English, translated into the Spanish language, provided they do not appear dangerous to the purity of the faith. French literary works of mere amusement, are for the most part those only which have but little merit in the eyes of the Spaniards; and their taste, in this respect, still appears far from inclining to change.

Their imagination bold to extravagance, for which bombast is but enthusiasm, finds French ideas cold and timid. Accustomed to exaggeration and redundance, they are unable properly to

value either the justness or precision of the language of French writers. The fine shades of French ridicule and manners escape their eyes, too much accustomed to caricature; and with respect to style, their ear, vitiated by the pompous profody of their cadenced periods, by the frequent and affected repetition of their sonorous words, can find no grace in accents which speak more to the mind than the senses; and the roundness of elegant French periods is to them entirely lost.

What chiefly prevents a reform in their literature, are the models they still admire and endeavour to imitate; these are distinguished by that bad taste which infected all the nations of Europe, and to which the first literary men in France have paid an ample tribute. The great Corneille was not always free from it, but the finest productions of Racine, Boileau, Paschal, Bossuet, la Bruyere, Massillon, Bourdaloue, Flechier and Fenelon were erected on its ruins;

as were also those of Voltaire, who, placing the top stone of the edifice, has insured its immortal duration.

Had French literature remained in the state it was when Ronsard, Marot, Benferade, Voiture and Balzac wrote, their very defects would still serve as models, and we should possess wit and imagination without either reason or taste. What might have happened in France, had no improvement been there made in letters by a concurrence of circumstances, has happened to the Spaniards. Since the time of Lopes de Vega, Quevedo, Rebolledo and others, whose imaginations, though wild and licentious, were brilliant and fertile, no author with these splendid qualities, and at the same time endowed with that good sense which directs their use, has appeared in Spain. Letters have, for upwards of a century, been in the same state. These men of genius, frequently extravagant even to absurdity in their conceptions, have remained models of

style; and their example, without having produced any thing comparable with that which in them is justly admired, has served as an excuse to every reprehensible irregularity of imagination, and all the violent bombast of false eloquence. The national taste is formed upon these models in so invariable a manner, that some authors who have endeavoured to introduce, into the theatre the elegant simplicity which French dramatic writers have attempted to revive, have gained no attention, so that the Spanish stage is still in the same situation as when Boileau satirized its extravagance with so much severity.

It would, however, be unjust to judge of this theatre according to Boileau's severe criticism. It undoubtedly still suffers pieces in which the law of the three unities is flagrantly violated. But besides that, this law may be considered as arbitrary, or at least not absolutely indispensable; there are many Spanish pieces in which it is not transgressed in
such

such a manner as to be prejudicial to the interest. The Spaniards themselves pass condemnation upon most of their heroic comedies, in which princes and princesses, from all corners of Europe, assembled without motive, as well as without probability, are by turns either actors or sports of the most incredulous adventures, relate, converse, and joke even in the most critical situations, and conclude by uselessly shedding their blood without having made any spectator shed a tear. Although several of these pieces have original beauties, and all afford proofs of the rare talent of inventing a complicated intrigue, and of finding its *dénouement* in the thread which has served to form it, the Spaniards found not upon this the much contested reputation of their theatre.

But there are some of these productions which they justly consider as intitled to the admiration even of strangers. These are their characteristic pieces, which, though not so well conducted

as the best French pieces of the same kind, and though they cannot boast the same accuracy in the choice of ideas and expressions, are generally pleasing in the ground work, faithful in most of the characters, and prove in their authors an uncommon fertility of imagination.

The pieces the Spaniards call *de Capa y Espada*, are those which more particularly present an exact representation of ancient manners, and these comedies are perhaps the real sources to be resorted to in the study of them. It is in these pieces that the generosity by which those manners are still characterized, those flights of patriotism and religious zeal which formerly rendered the Spaniards capable of the greatest efforts; the swellings of national pride, which the pomp of style renders so noble; that irritability with respect to the delicate subjects of love and honour, which made duels so frequent in Spain, before the causes which softened the manners of all Europe had gained sufficient influence

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over those of the modern Spaniards; the sacrifices and ardour of hopeful love, and the anguishes and arts of a disappointed passion are traced in the most lively colours. All the combats of the passion of love, all its resources, all the disorders it produces, in a word, all the intrigues now in use, were never publickly represented by any nation with greater variety than by the Spaniards at the period when jealousy, the difficulty of approaching women, and a thousand other obstacles arising from the circumstances of the times, rendered lovers more impatient, desires stronger, and temptations more violent. Such is the description given by the comedies of which the Spaniards are as fond as they were at the time they first appeared.

Their authors, of which Lopes de Vega, Roxas, Solis, Moreto, Arellano, and particularly the immortal Calderon de la Barca are the most celebrated, have so established this kind of comedy by their success, that more modern authors,

authors, as Zamora and Canizares, who wrote at the beginning of this century, dare not attempt any other.

The Spanish theatre therefore still continues, excepting some difference, what it was in the last century; and notwithstanding all I have just said, I cannot but allow that it is full of defects. Incidents unseasonably succeed each other, and are without probability; inequalities are numerous and every thing is confounded. Real tragedy is never seen without a mixture unworthy of its noble nature; and all the comedies, like some of our chamber pieces, equally condemned by reason and taste, associate with affecting and sometimes terrible scenes, a wretched parade, fit only for the booths of a fair. An insipid buffoon, under the name of *Gracioso*, incessantly disturbs the attention with his vulgar grimace, and by the bursts of laughter he provokes, arrests the tears which were ready to flow. Lovers are prolix haranguers; an expression of sentiment or delicacy from them, is preceded by a long

long and cold metaphysical dissertation upon love. Instead of a mother, son, king or warrior, you would imagine you were hearing some professor of rhetoric, who to distinguish himself in his art, abuses the talent of speech. Custom has made it necessary that each comedy should contain several recitals or narratives, in which the author and actor, losing sight of the story and the audience, seem to be wholly employed in making a parade, one of his vain eloquence, the other of his pretended talent of enforcing at the expence of his lungs, and by ridiculous, vulgar, and monotonous gestures, the multiplied descriptions of his long declamation. Both are certain to receive, as a recompence for their effort of strength, an ample share of applause. On the other hand the plot is so confused, that there are few Spanish pieces to which these lines of Boileau may not be applied :

Et qui debrouillant mal une pénible intrigue
D'un divertissement me fait une fatigue. *

* And who badly developing a laboured plot, renders amusement a fatigue.

What

What however appears singular is, this fatigue seems not to be felt by Spanish auditors, although they are for the most part of those classes which a total want of education, or at least one much neglected; renders incapable of reflection and combination. I have known many well informed strangers, acquainted with the language of the country, who have declared to me, after the representation of a Spanish comedy, that they should have great difficulty in giving an analysis of it, whilst uneducated Spaniards proved by their recitals, that they had not for a single instant lost the thread of the labyrinth in which others had been bewildered.

Has habitually frequenting the theatre, added to a knowledge of the language and manners, which strangers can never possess to the same degree as natives of the country, exclusively bestowed on these persons this singular aptitude? or have the Spaniards received to a greater degree than others the gift of imagining complicated plots, and of following through
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all their workings those which they themselves have not invented? They have however, this incontestible advantage over the French. Several of my countrymen, who want neither wit nor education, have confessed to me, that at a first representation they have not been able to conceive the whole of some of our modern comedies, which in fact, approach in certain respects those of the Spaniards, and it is perhaps the only reason why several of the latter, which, were a few particulars changed, ought to be every where approved, would not be successfully represented on the French stage. This is a homage which our ancestors were more disposed to render them than we are.

The advantages which Moliere and Corneille derived from the Spanish theatre are well known. The principal beauties of the Cid and of Heraclius were taken from Guillen de Castro and Calderon. The Spanish theatre might still be to us an abundant source of dramatic wealth,
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especially at present, when our imagination, much less fertile than that of our neighbours, appears to be exhausted, and when our taste more refined and fixed than in the time of Corneille, would be better able to extract from that mine the treasures it conceals. Exact translations of the best Spanish pieces would furnish the means. These we have hitherto wanted; Mr. Linguet gave some of them to the public on entering his literary career. But he confessed that he knew not enough of the Spanish language, completely to fulfil the task; on which account his translations are no more than abridgements, in which, nothing but the skeleton of a dramatic poem is preserved; and the passages not rendered, were not those which displeased the translator, but such as he did not understand. Still these essays, imperfect as they may be, are sufficient to prove the great talents of the Spaniards for the theatre, their fertile imagination, their art in forming and working up a plot, and producing interesting situations and unexpected discoveries,

coveries. With all these advantages, they still want more natural dialogue to possess every essential to produce a good comedy. Authors who would enrich themselves with their works, must consult reason and their own national taste, to add to the pieces they may borrow this additional grace. They would not fail to retrench the long and tedious narratives, the cold dissertations, and the disgusting buffooneries of the *Gracioso*, which are displeasing even to such of the Spaniards as are familiar with the real beauties of foreign writers, and ancient and modern literature. They would also sacrifice those points, the play of words, the *conceitti*, a tribute paid by every nation to false wit at the revival of letters, which several authors of the age of Louis XIV. such as Voiture, Balzac, and Moliere himself, did not escape, and to which the modern Spaniards are still subject. I have frequently remarked with astonishment, that they honoured with the appellation of ingenious thoughts, and applauded with a kind of ecstasy, many pleasantries which we, who from our levity seem to be less nice about

any thing capable of exciting it, should place in the class of low witticism. When I observed to them that a play upon words was contrary to fine taste, that it should be abandoned to the populace, or confined to familiar conversation, in which, every thing is found agreeable provided it excites laughter, they obstinately maintained that in Spanish it had a subtilty which it was impossible for a stranger to perceive. It is true that even their serious works are so interlarded with these miserable quibbles, that there are some of them, which to me, it seems impossible to translate.* The Spaniards have no theatrical pieces in which they are not profusely bestowed; and the success they have with the multitude, proves their authors to be

* This is the case of all playing upon words, because it results from a fortuitous resemblance between two words in a language which have different meanings. It is easy to perceive, that a work in which there are many of these quibbles cannot be rendered in another language. Who would undertake to translate *la Béquille*? Several passages, and even whole works of some writers, as those of Quevedo, in other respects full of wit and originality, would be almost as difficult to render in French.