

**BLANCHE, QUEEN
OF
CASTILE: A POEM**

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Blanche, Queen of Castile: A Poem by Ronda

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RONDA

**BLANCHE, QUEEN
OF
CASTILE: A POEM**

BLANCHE,
QUEEN OF CASTILE,
A POEM,

BY

RONDA.

LONDON:
THOMAS HOOKHAM
(Formerly of 15, Old Bond Street),
5A, LITTLE RUSSELL STREET, BLOOMSBURY.

1883

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P R E F A C E.

IN the history of the Middle Ages, instances but too frequently occur of cruelty and oppression; it would, however, be difficult, even during that period, to find one where the victim was so blameless and her fate so dark as that of the unfortunate Blanche, Queen of Castile.

The romantic incidents of her short but eventful life appeared to be well suited to a poem. It required the pen of Scott himself to do justice to the subject; but the deep interest of her story, and the world-wide sympathy that must be felt for her tragic fate, will perhaps secure for the following romance more attention than it could

otherwise have hoped to obtain ; and if over one page an eye shall glisten—

“Or if one heart throb higher at its sway,
The wizard note has not been touched in vain.”

It has been well observed by Southey that “the power of story is strikingly exemplified in the Italian heroic poets ; they please universally even in translations, when little but the story remains.” Believing, as the author does, that in any work of art—especially a Poem—simplicity is preferable to obscurity, he has attempted to imitate the measure adopted by one of the greatest of modern bards, remarkable for his clear, manly, and healthy poetry*—and which measure he has termed the “romantic stanza,” adding, that “it

* Sir Walter Scott.

appears so natural to our language, that the very best of our poets have not been able to protract it into the verse properly called heroic, without the use of epithets which are, to say the least, unnecessary."* The gifted author of the "Lays of Ancient Rome" † has acknowledged his obligations to the same illustrious bard, whom he terms "the great restorer of our ballad poetry, who united to the fire of a great poet the minute curiosity and patient diligence of a great antiquary"; and even Scott himself had imitated the metre of a still greater genius than his own, and frankly admitted—"It is to Mr. Coleridge that I am bound to make the acknowledgment due from the pupil to his master."‡

* Introduction to "The Lay of the Last Minstrel."

† Lord Macaulay.

‡ Introduction to "The Lay of the Last Minstrel."

But the author of this poem hopes that what Sir William Jones has said of Horace will not apply to him, that "he not only imitated the measures of the Greek poets, but even translated almost word for word the brightest passages of Alcæus, Anacreon, and others."*

In reference to the power and charm of "Ballad Poetry," Valerius Maximus observes, that "the ancient Roman ballads were probably of more benefit to the young than all the lectures of the Athenian schools, and that to the influence of the national poetry were to be ascribed the virtues of such men as Camillus and Fabricius."†

* See "Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations."

† Preface to "Lays of Ancient Rome."

DON PEDRO, EL CRUEL, King of Castile.
BLANCHE OF BOURBON, his Queen.
DOÑA MARIA DE PADILLA, Mistress of Don Pedro.
DOÑA LEONORA, Dowager Queen of Aragon.
DON HENRIQUE, Count of Trastamara.
DON FADRIQUE, Master of Santiago.
DON JUAN ALONSO DE ALBUQUERQUE, Grand Chancellor.
DON PERO GOMEZ GUDIEL, Bishop of Segovia.
AIMERI, Viscount of Narbonne.
BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN, French Knight.
IÑIGO ORTIZ D'ESTUNIGA, Governor of Xerez.
JUAN PEREZ DE REBOLLEDO, Assassin.