

**THE DRAMAS OF DON  
ANTONIO DE SOLÍS Y  
RIVADENEYRA. THESIS**

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The Dramas of Don Antonio de Solis Y Rivadeneyra. Thesis by Daniel Ernest Martell

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**DANIEL ERNEST MARTELL**

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RIVADENEYRA. THESIS**



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The Dramas

OF

Don Antonio de Solís

124492

y Rivadeneyra

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THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Philosophy of the  
University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

BY

DANIEL ERNEST MARTELL

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## I.—Introduction.

Although a number of volumes have been published upon the works of the two greatest of the Spanish dramatists, Lope de Vega and Calderon, yet little work of a detailed nature has ever been done concerning the minor dramatists, amongst whom Don Antonio de Solis occupies a prominent place. The best known writers on Spanish literature and art dismiss him, as a rule, with comparatively little notice; some giving a brief epitome of his life and a short general criticism of his work; others, again, content themselves with barely a mention of his name. All agree, however, with one notable exception, in bestowing much praise upon him, especially the critics of his own nationality. The exception I refer to is Schack, in his well-known work on Spanish Dramatic Art, although he also grants him a fair meed of merit.

The *eruditos* who, at the beginning of the XVII century, had censured with so much bitterness the national form of the Spanish Drama, and had recommended the observation of the rules of the ancients regarding the "Unities," grew almost completely silent toward the end of the epoch in which Lope de Vega and Calderon lived. The last writer of any importance who insisted on the propriety of imitating the ancient dramas, was Jusepe Gonzalez de Sulas, died 1651. In his work, *Nueva Idea de la Tragedia*, he treats, in the first three chapters, of the theory of the tragedy, arranging the same in accordance with the rules of ancient philosophy; and terminates this work with an appendix, in which is described and recommended the external arrangement of the Greek theatres. His later work, *Teatro Escenico à todos los Hombrés*, is an apology for the theatre in general, in which he

makes certain observations relative to the Spanish theatre, but not in the condemnatory manner of some of his contemporaries. The author desires for the drama of his nation a more regular and fixed form, but in spite of this he qualifies the existing drama in so favorable a manner, as to give the assurance that the Spanish theatre, in his estimation, is much superior to that of the ancients. Another eminent critic of this period, Nicolas Antonio, in his *Biblioteca Hispana Nova* (1788), goes very wide of the dictum which qualified the limited circle of the ancients as the only medium of salvation for the theatre. So far does he go from this opinion, that he actually declares that no poet of ancient or modern times can compare with Lope de Vega, because to him the Spanish drama owes its origin, which, "discarding from it certain insignificant defects, is, without dispute, by its great beauty the first in the world." (1)

The first half of the XVII century in Spain gave birth to a large number of dramatists, of more or less merit. The encouragement which Philip IV gave to the drama doubtless contributed not a little to this; but the chief reason is perhaps to be sought in the eager desire to emulate those great masters Lope and Calderon. There was no intention to reform the principles on which the Spanish drama was founded; nor even much attempt at originality. We may safely affirm that the vast bulk of the output of the second-rate dramatists was inspired and influenced by the work of the more celebrated poets. Their plays resemble each other to a greater or less extent, and contain the same general characteristics. It was the *Comedia Nueva* as it had been brought into vogue by the great Lope, and this model was carefully followed, and its distinguishing marks closely adhered to by the other dramatists, among whom was Calderon, who exaggerated

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(1) Historia de la lit. y del arte dramático en España, por el Conde de Schack, trad. por E. de Mier (Madrid, 1887) vol. V, p. 193, *et seq.*

some of its features, often descending into an artificiality and mannerism which contrasts strongly with the simplicity and naturalness of Lope.

Of the multitude of such writers who were attracted by the brilliant success to be found in writing for the stage, the greater part were mere imitators of Calderon, and only a few deserve more than a passing recognition. Among these minor dramatists was Don Antonio de Solis y Rivadeneira. He wrote the preludes (*loas*) to some of Calderon's plays, and appears to have been connected by the ties of friendship with that great poet, whose junior he was by ten years, and to have shared somewhat in his celebrity. (?)

Solis was born in Alcalá (some say Plasencia) July 18, 1610; and from an early age showed a zeal for learning above his fellows, and a strong aptitude for letters. He received his earlier education at the university of his native city, and then proceeded to the University of Salamanca. When only seventeen years old, and while at Salamanca, he wrote a play, entitled *AMOR Y OBLIGACION*, which was well received, and which had been considered as lost, but a manuscript copy of which is preserved in the Biblioteca Nacional at Madrid.\* Later he entered the service, as Secretary, of Don Duarte de Toledo y Portugal, Count of Oropesa, and Viceroy of Navarre, a distinguished patron of letters. He showed himself a keen man of affairs, and continued at the same time to cultivate the Muses, producing, in 1642, the play

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(\*) Vorlesungen über Dramatische Kunst und Literatur, von A. Wilh. von Schlegel (Leipzig, 1846), p. 387.

\* The play was unknown to Barrera. See the *Catálogo de las Piezas de Teatro que se conservan en el Departamento de Manuscritos de la Biblioteca Nacional*, [por D. Antonio Paz y Melia], Madrid, 1899, No. 187, where the lines quoted from the beginning and end of the play show that it is different from the play of the same title by Moreto, which is printed in the *Parte XII. de Varios*.