MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

By IG. GONZÁLEZ-LLUBERA

Professor of Spanish in the Queen's University, Belfast

In the introductory essay to a sumptuously produced compilation of passages concerning heroic legends, drawn from Leonese and Castilian chronicles, Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal summarizes his views on the historical evolution of Spanish epic poetry (Reliquias de la poesía épica española, Madrid, Espasa Calpe). M.P. no longer sees in Castile the early focus of epic legends and, to his previous hypothesis of a Mozarabic origin of those relating to Witiza and King Roderic, he now adds another: that León was also an early centre of epic production. The passages from various chronicles, Arabic, Latin, and Romance, have been arranged under the following headings: Witiza and Roderic the Goth, Todmir, Covadonga, the Abdication of Alfonso III of León, the Judges and Counts of Castile, the Infantes de Salas, the death of Ferdinand I of Castile and the partición de Reinos. In addition there are definitive eds. of the Poema de Fernán González—with the corresponding prosificaciones—the editor’s reconstruction of the second Cantar of the Infantes de Lara, and the Cantar de Rodrigo. A full critical apparatus is provided and the vol. as a whole is a fitting testimony to a noble life, rewarded by significant discoveries and crowned with achievement in this field of Spanish literature.

Amongst M.P.’s discoveries, as is well known, is a fragment from a Navarrese version of the Roland story, which he edited in 1917. Mr Jules Horrent takes up the study of this work and offers a meticulously edited text, which, although not palaeographical, adheres closely to the MS. (Roncesvalles: Étude sur le fragment de ‘cantar de gesta’, conservé à l’Archivo de Navarra, Paris, Les Belles Lettres). M.P. assumes the original to be a Castilian work, and consequently replaced Aragonesisms in the MS., which he attributed to the copyist, by Castilian forms. H. believes that the copy faithfully reflects the original, and a convincing case is made out for a Navarrese poem dating at
the earliest from the late 13th cent. H. also examines the position of the cantar within the Roland tradition, and its relation, not only to French and Provençal versions, but also to Italian, German, Dutch, and Scandinavian ones. He also attempts to estimate the influence of the Spanish version on the Romancero and the chronicles.

The hypothesis of a double authorship of the Mio Cid, possibly led Max Singleton to see in the Castilian poem two different techniques, corresponding to the main subjects, one strictly epic, and one novelistic, the former in the first two cantares, the latter in the third. But the precise features of these techniques are not defined ('The two techniques of the Poema del Cid', RPh, v, 2/3, 222–7). A possible historical basis for the episode of 'Raquel e Vidas' is discussed, with Arabic precedents, by E. García Gómez ('Esos judíos de Burgos', AI-An, xvi, i, 214–17). A. Ubieto Arteta thinks the narrative of the legend commonly known as 'La Campana de Huesca'—namely the punishment inflicted on his rebellious barons by King Ramiro II of Aragon—in the Aragonese version of the Latin chronicle of Peter the Ceremonious, is a prosificación of a 13th cent. Aragonese cantar de gesta ('La C. de H.', RFE, xxxv, 1/2, 29–61).

E. García Gómez puts forward the view—not for the first time—that harğas, in muwaṣṣaḥa poems (cf. YWML, xi, 137–8, 155; xii, 106–7) may well have been independent compositions ('Sobre un posible tercer tipo de poesía arábigoandaluza', Estudios... Pidal, II, 397–408): a very tempting assumption, which seems probable at least in the case of Romance harğas. The writer sees in these the only popular element in the muwaṣṣaḥa, the latter and the xağal being much more aristocratic and conventional than was assumed by Ribera. Spanish versions, showing the rhythmic scheme of the original Arabic are provided of two muwaṣṣaḥahas from the Diwān of Abū Ğa'far Ahmad ibn Ḥāṭima, a mid-14th-cent. Andalusian poet.

Miss Evelyn S. Procter has published her MacColl lectures for 1948–49 on various aspects of Alfonso X's work (Alfonso X of Castile, Patron of Literature and Learning, Oxford U.P.). They deal with translations from the Arabic, the Cantigas, the legal treatises, the Crónica General, and the king's redactors and translators. Although these subjects are chiefly considered from