

THE SWORD IN THE TREASURY OF THE CATHEDRAL OF BARCELONA

Summary

IN the very treasury of the cathedral of Barcelona a famous, historical sword is to be seen among a number of precious objects of historical and artistical value. It once belonged to a most noble personality, the condestable Don Pedro of Portugal, for a few years even count of Barcelona and king of Aragón (Figs. 1 a-b).

Don Pedro was born in Portugal as a son of the duke Don Pedro of Coimbra and Doña Isabel, daughter of the count of Urgel in Spain. In 1449 he was named condestable of Portugal and he received his accolade in the monastery of Saint George of Coimbra by the infant Enrique el Navigante (Henry the Navigator). Only sixteen years old he went to Castille with an army in order to fight against the infants of the kingdom of Aragón on the side of Alvaro de Luna. In Castille he became friend with the famous marquis de Santillana. After his return to Portugal he dedicated himself to poetical works. His political career in Portugal was interrupted at the unfortunate battle of Alfarrobeira in which his father was killed. The king of Portugal, Alfonso V, deprived him his rights in Portugal and Don Pedro was banished. From 1449-1457 he lived in Castille, where he lived in a manner which suits well to his motto: «Paine pour joie», which motto is to be found in the blade of his sword. In these years he wrote his: *Satyra de felice e infelice vida*, dedicated to his sister, the queen Isabel. King Alfonso V in the year 1457 raised the banishment. Don Pedro returned to Portugal and was restored in his rights. Among his literary works from this period is his: *Tragedia de la insigne Reyna doña Isabel* and various coplas. After the death of the prince of Viana the Catalans had broken their allegiance to the king of Aragón, Juan II and they offered the crown to the infant Enrique IV of Castille, who refused. Next they offered the crown to Don Pedro, who as a grandchild of the counts of Urgel had right of inheritance. He received in 1465 but was as a matter of fact from the same moment in war with king Juan II of Aragón. In a battle he was victorious and shortly after he conquered La Bisbal. These troublesome events broke his health. He died in Granollers already in the year 1466 and was buried in the church of Santa María del Mar in Barcelona. Much has been written about this noteworthy personality, at the same time a brave soldier, a poetically gifted person and a lover of art. The chroniclers of the time describe him as the most beautiful person of his days,

with beautiful features and a well-proportioned body. The painter Jaime Huguet has portrayed him several times, amongst others in the retablo of San Bernardino de Siena and his Guardian Angel in the cathedral in Barcelona (Fig. 2), and as one of the kings of the Epiphany on the retablo named that of the Condestable in the chapel of Santa Agueda in Barcelona (Fig. 3). He was known as an admirer of art and jewelry. No wonder that he let his goldsmiths and sword-makers make him a sword like the specimen in the cathedral. This sword may be the work of an Italian master. In the archives we find documentation for a Florentine named John who worked swords and daggers for him, the same Florentine who had made swords even to the prince of Viana.

The sword in fig. 1 a-b possibly came to the cathedral shortly after the death of the condestable-king. It is a two-handed sword, much similar to the sword which once belonged to king Ferdinand the Catholic, now in the Armería Real in Madrid. Its total length is 132,5 cm, the grip is 31,5 cm, the blade 101 cm, ricasso measures 4 cm, the first part of the blade with two fullers 30,5, the middle part with one broad fuller and the inscription: «Paine pour joie» 53,5 cm and the last part with midrib 13 cm. The grip of gilt iron is chichelled with stylized floral ornaments and the flower on the top of the pommel is repeated on the ends of the quillons. The upturned quillons may look strange but they have preserved their original position. A throughout examination of the swordhilt and the ornamentation with the little shield clearly shows that they have kept their original position. Though not usual we find swords with the same position of quillons for instance in various mediaeval miniatures and in the woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer and in the works of the prerafaelites. Certainly the richly gilt sword of the condestable of Portugal was both a parade sword and a sword for practical use. On his simple tomb stone in Santa María del Mar in Barcelona he is represented, not with a sword but with a book in his hands.