

# Cervantes and Don Quixote

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Four generations had laughed over "Don Quixote" before it occurred to anyone to ask, who and what manner of man was this Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra whose name is on the title-page; and it was too late for a satisfactory answer to the question when it was proposed to add a life of the author to the London edition published at Lord Carteret's instance in 1738. All traces of the personality of Cervantes had by that time disappeared. Any floating traditions that may once have existed, transmitted from men who had known him, had long since died out, and of other record there was none; for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were incurious as to "the men of the time," a reproach against which the nineteenth has, at any rate, secured itself, if it has produced no Shakespeare or Cervantes. All that Mayans y Siscar, to whom the task was entrusted, or any of those who followed him, Rios, Pellicer, or Navarrete, could do was to eke out the few allusions Cervantes makes to himself in his various prefaces with such pieces of documentary evidence bearing upon his life as they could find.

This, however, has been done by the last-named biographer to such good purpose that he has superseded all predecessors. Thoroughness is the chief characteristic of Navarrete's work. Besides sifting, testing, and methodising with rare patience and judgment what had been previously brought to light, he left, as the saying is, no stone unturned under which anything to illustrate his subject might possibly be found. Navarrete has done all that industry and acumen could do, and it is no fault of his if he has not given us what we want. What Hallam says of Shakespeare may be applied to the almost parallel case of Cervantes: "It is not the register of his baptism, or the draft of his will, or the orthography of his name that we seek; no letter of his writing, no record of his conversation, no character of him drawn ... by a contemporary has been produced."

It is only natural, therefore, that the biographers of Cervantes, forced to make brick without straw, should have recourse largely to conjecture, and that conjecture should in some instances come by degrees to take the place of established fact. All that I propose to do here is to separate what is matter of fact from what is matter of conjecture, and leave it to the reader's judgment to decide whether the data justify the inference or not.

The men whose names by common consent stand in the front rank of Spanish literature, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Quevedo, Calderon, Garcilaso de la Vega, the Mendozas, Gongora, were all men of ancient families, and, curiously, all, except the last, of families that traced their origin to the same mountain district in the North of Spain. The family of Cervantes is commonly said to have been of Galician origin, and unquestionably it was in possession of lands in Galicia at a very early date; but I think the balance of the evidence tends to show that the "solar," the original site of the family, was at Cervatos in the north-west corner of Old Castile, close to the junction of Castile, Leon, and the Asturias. As it happens, there is a complete history of the Cervantes family from the tenth century down to the seventeenth extant under the title of "Illustrious Ancestry, Glorious Deeds, and Noble Posterity of the Famous Nuno Alfonso, Alcaide of Toledo," written in 1648 by the industrious genealogist Rodrigo

Mendez Silva, who availed himself of a manuscript genealogy by Juan de Mena, the poet laureate and historiographer of John II.

The origin of the name Cervantes is curious. Nuno Alfonso was almost as distinguished in the struggle against the Moors in the reign of Alfonso VII as the Cid had been half a century before in that of Alfonso VI, and was rewarded by divers grants of land in the neighbourhood of Toledo. On one of his acquisitions, about two leagues from the city, he built himself a castle which he called Cervatos, because "he was lord of the solar of Cervatos in the Montana," as the mountain region extending from the Basque Provinces to Leon was always called. At his death in battle in 1143, the castle passed by his will to his son Alfonso Munio, who, as territorial or local surnames were then coming into vogue in place of the simple patronymic, took the additional name of Cervatos. His eldest son Pedro succeeded him in the possession of the castle, and followed his example in adopting the name, an assumption at which the younger son, Gonzalo, seems to have taken umbrage.

Everyone who has paid even a flying visit to Toledo will remember the ruined castle that crowns the hill above the spot where the bridge of Alcantara spans the gorge of the Tagus, and with its broken outline and crumbling walls makes such an admirable pendant to the square solid Alcazar towering over the city roofs on the opposite side. It was built, or as some say restored, by Alfonso VI shortly after his occupation of Toledo in 1085, and called by him San Servando after a Spanish martyr, a name subsequently modified into San Servan (in which form it appears in the "Poem of the Cid"), San Servantes, and San Cervantes: with regard to which last the "Handbook for Spain" warns its readers against the supposition that it has anything to do with the author of "Don Quixote." Ford, as all know who have taken him for a companion and counsellor on the roads of Spain, is seldom wrong in matters of literature or history. In this instance, however, he is in error. It has everything to do with the author of "Don Quixote," for it is in fact these old walls that have given to Spain the name she is proudest of to-day. Gonzalo, above mentioned, it may be readily conceived, did not relish the appropriation by his brother of a name to which he himself had an equal right, for though nominally taken from the castle, it was in reality derived from the ancient territorial possession of the family, and as a set-off, and to distinguish himself (*diferenciarse*) from his brother, he took as a surname the name of the castle on the bank of the Tagus, in the building of which, according to a family tradition, his great-grandfather had a share.

Both brothers founded families. The Cervantes branch had more tenacity; it sent offshoots in various directions, Andalusia, Estremadura, Galicia, and Portugal, and produced a goodly line of men distinguished in the service of Church and State. Gonzalo himself, and apparently a son of his, followed Ferdinand III in the great campaign of 1236-48 that gave Cordova and Seville to Christian Spain and penned up the Moors in the kingdom of Granada, and his descendants intermarried with some of the noblest families of the Peninsula and numbered among them soldiers, magistrates, and Church dignitaries, including at least two cardinal-archbishops.

Of the line that settled in Andalusia, Deigo de Cervantes, Commander of the Order of Santiago, married Juana Avellaneda, daughter of Juan Arias de Saavedra, and had several sons, of whom one was Gonzalo Gomez, Corregidor of Jerez and ancestor of the Mexican and Columbian branches of the family; and another, Juan, whose son Rodrigo married Dona Leonor de Cortinas, and by her had four children, Rodrigo, Andrea, Luisa, and Miguel, our author.

The pedigree of Cervantes is not without its bearing on "Don Quixote." A man who could look back upon an ancestry of genuine knights-errant extending from well-nigh the time of Pelayo to the siege of Granada was likely to have a strong feeling on the subject of the sham chivalry of the romances. It gives a point, too, to what he says in more than one place about families that have once been great and have tapered away until they have come to nothing, like a pyramid. It was the case of his own.

He was born at Alcala de Henares and baptised in the church of Santa Maria Mayor on the 9th of October, 1547. Of his boyhood and youth we know nothing, unless it be from the glimpse he gives us in the preface to his "Comedies" of himself as a boy looking on with delight while Lope de Rueda and his company set up their rude plank stage in the plaza and acted the rustic farces which he himself afterwards took as the model of his interludes. This first glimpse, however, is a significant one, for it shows the early development of that love of the drama which exercised such an influence on his life and seems to have grown stronger as he grew older, and of which this very preface, written only a few months before his death, is such a striking proof. He gives us to understand, too, that he was a great reader in his youth; but of this no assurance was needed, for the First Part of "Don Quixote" alone proves a vast amount of miscellaneous reading, romances of chivalry, ballads, popular poetry, chronicles, for which he had no time or opportunity except in the first twenty years of his life; and his misquotations and mistakes in matters of detail are always, it may be noticed, those of a man recalling the reading of his boyhood.

Other things besides the drama were in their infancy when Cervantes was a boy. The period of his boyhood was in every way a transition period for Spain. The old chivalrous Spain had passed away. The new Spain was the mightiest power the world had seen since the Roman Empire and it had not yet been called upon to pay the price of its greatness. By the policy of Ferdinand and Ximenez the sovereign had been made absolute, and the Church and Inquisition adroitly adjusted to keep him so. The nobles, who had always resisted absolutism as strenuously as they had fought the Moors, had been divested of all political power, a like fate had befallen the cities, the free constitutions of Castile and Aragon had been swept away, and the only function that remained to the Cortes was that of granting money at the King's dictation.

The transition extended to literature. Men who, like Garcilaso de la Vega and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, followed the Italian wars, had brought back from Italy the products of the post-Renaissance literature, which took root and flourished and even threatened to extinguish the native growths. Damon and Thyrsis, Phyllis and Chloe had been fairly naturalised in Spain, together with all the devices of pastoral

poetry for investing with an air of novelty the idea of a despairing shepherd and inflexible shepherdess. As a set-off against this, the old historical and traditional ballads, and the true pastorals, the songs and ballads of peasant life, were being collected assiduously and printed in the *cancioneros* that succeeded one another with increasing rapidity. But the most notable consequence, perhaps, of the spread of printing was the flood of romances of chivalry that had continued to pour from the press ever since Garci Ordenez de Montalvo had resuscitated "Amadis of Gaul" at the beginning of the century.

For a youth fond of reading, solid or light, there could have been no better spot in Spain than Alcala de Henares in the middle of the sixteenth century. It was then a busy, populous university town, something more than the enterprising rival of Salamanca, and altogether a very different place from the melancholy, silent, deserted Alcala the traveller sees now as he goes from Madrid to Saragossa. Theology and medicine may have been the strong points of the university, but the town itself seems to have inclined rather to the humanities and light literature, and as a producer of books Alcala was already beginning to compete with the older presses of Toledo, Burgos, Salamanca and Seville.

A pendant to the picture Cervantes has given us of his first playgoings might, no doubt, have been often seen in the streets of Alcala at that time; a bright, eager, tawny-haired boy peering into a book-shop where the latest volumes lay open to tempt the public, wondering, it may be, what that little book with the woodcut of the blind beggar and his boy, that called itself "Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, segunda impresion," could be about; or with eyes brimming over with merriment gazing at one of those preposterous portraits of a knight-errant in outrageous panoply and plumes with which the publishers of chivalry romances loved to embellish the title-pages of their folios. If the boy was the father of the man, the sense of the incongruous that was strong at fifty was lively at ten, and some such reflections as these may have been the true genesis of "Don Quixote."

For his more solid education, we are told, he went to Salamanca. But why Rodrigo de Cervantes, who was very poor, should have sent his son to a university a hundred and fifty miles away when he had one at his own door, would be a puzzle, if we had any reason for supposing that he did so. The only evidence is a vague statement by Professor Tomas Gonzalez, that he once saw an old entry of the matriculation of a Miguel de Cervantes. This does not appear to have been ever seen again; but even if it had, and if the date corresponded, it would prove nothing, as there were at least two other Miguels born about the middle of the century; one of them, moreover, a Cervantes Saavedra, a cousin, no doubt, who was a source of great embarrassment to the biographers.

That he was a student neither at Salamanca nor at Alcala is best proved by his own works. No man drew more largely upon experience than he did, and he has nowhere left a single reminiscence of student life—for the "Tia Fingida," if it be his, is not one — nothing, not even "a college joke," to show that he remembered days that most men

remember best. All that we know positively about his education is that Juan Lopez de Hoyos, a professor of humanities and belles-lettres of some eminence, calls him his "dear and beloved pupil." This was in a little collection of verses by different hands on the death of Isabel de Valois, second queen of Philip II, published by the professor in 1569, to which Cervantes contributed four pieces, including an elegy, and an epitaph in the form of a sonnet. It is only by a rare chance that a "Lycidas" finds its way into a volume of this sort, and Cervantes was no Milton. His verses are no worse than such things usually are; so much, at least, may be said for them.

By the time the book appeared he had left Spain, and, as fate ordered it, for twelve years, the most eventful ones of his life. Giulio, afterwards Cardinal, Acquaviva had been sent at the end of 1568 to Philip II by the Pope on a mission, partly of condolence, partly political, and on his return to Rome, which was somewhat brusquely expedited by the King, he took Cervantes with him as his camarero (chamberlain), the office he himself held in the Pope's household. The post would no doubt have led to advancement at the Papal Court had Cervantes retained it, but in the summer of 1570 he resigned it and enlisted as a private soldier in Captain Diego Urbina's company, belonging to Don Miguel de Moncada's regiment, but at that time forming a part of the command of Marc Antony Colonna. What impelled him to this step we know not, whether it was distaste for the career before him, or purely military enthusiasm. It may well have been the latter, for it was a stirring time; the events, however, which led to the alliance between Spain, Venice, and the Pope, against the common enemy, the Porte, and to the victory of the combined fleets at Lepanto, belong rather to the history of Europe than to the life of Cervantes. He was one of those that sailed from Messina, in September 1571, under the command of Don John of Austria; but on the morning of the 7th of October, when the Turkish fleet was sighted, he was lying below ill with fever. At the news that the enemy was in sight he rose, and, in spite of the remonstrances of his comrades and superiors, insisted on taking his post, saying he preferred death in the service of God and the King to health. His galley, the Marquesa, was in the thick of the fight, and before it was over he had received three gunshot wounds, two in the breast and one in the left hand or arm. On the morning after the battle, according to Navarrete, he had an interview with the commander-in-chief, Don John, who was making a personal inspection of the wounded, one result of which was an addition of three crowns to his pay, and another, apparently, the friendship of his general.

How severely Cervantes was wounded may be inferred from the fact, that with youth, a vigorous frame, and as cheerful and buoyant a temperament as ever invalid had, he was seven months in hospital at Messina before he was discharged. He came out with his left hand permanently disabled; he had lost the use of it, as Mercury told him in the "Viaje del Parnaso" for the greater glory of the right. This, however, did not absolutely unfit him for service, and in April 1572 he joined Manuel Ponce de Leon's company of Lope de Figueroa's regiment, in which, it seems probable, his brother Rodrigo was serving, and shared in the operations of the next three years, including the capture of the Goletta and Tunis. Taking advantage of the lull which followed

the recapture of these places by the Turks, he obtained leave to return to Spain, and sailed from Naples in September 1575 on board the Sun galley, in company with his brother Rodrigo, Pedro Carrillo de Quesada, late Governor of the Goletta, and some others, and furnished with letters from Don John of Austria and the Duke of Sesa, the Viceroy of Sicily, recommending him to the King for the command of a company, on account of his services; a *donno infelice* as events proved. On the 26th they fell in with a squadron of Algerine galleys, and after a stout resistance were overpowered and carried into Algiers.

By means of a ransomed fellow-captive the brothers contrived to inform their family of their condition, and the poor people at Alcala at once strove to raise the ransom money, the father disposing of all he possessed, and the two sisters giving up their marriage portions. But Dali Mami had found on Cervantes the letters addressed to the King by Don John and the Duke of Sesa, and, concluding that his prize must be a person of great consequence, when the money came he refused it scornfully as being altogether insufficient. The owner of Rodrigo, however, was more easily satisfied; ransom was accepted in his case, and it was arranged between the brothers that he should return to Spain and procure a vessel in which he was to come back to Algiers and take off Miguel and as many of their comrades as possible. This was not the first attempt to escape that Cervantes had made. Soon after the commencement of his captivity he induced several of his companions to join him in trying to reach Oran, then a Spanish post, on foot; but after the first day's journey, the Moor who had agreed to act as their guide deserted them, and they had no choice but to return. The second attempt was more disastrous. In a garden outside the city on the sea-shore, he constructed, with the help of the gardener, a Spaniard, a hiding-place, to which he brought, one by one, fourteen of his fellow-captives, keeping them there in secrecy for several months, and supplying them with food through a renegade known as El Dorador, "the Gilder." How he, a captive himself, contrived to do all this, is one of the mysteries of the story. Wild as the project may appear, it was very nearly successful. The vessel procured by Rodrigo made its appearance off the coast, and under cover of night was proceeding to take off the refugees, when the crew were alarmed by a passing fishing boat, and beat a hasty retreat. On renewing the attempt shortly afterwards, they, or a portion of them at least, were taken prisoners, and just as the poor fellows in the garden were exulting in the thought that in a few moments more freedom would be within their grasp, they found themselves surrounded by Turkish troops, horse and foot. The Dorador had revealed the whole scheme to the Dey Hassan.

When Cervantes saw what had befallen them, he charged his companions to lay all the blame upon him, and as they were being bound he declared aloud that the whole plot was of his contriving, and that nobody else had any share in it. Brought before the Dey, he said the same. He was threatened with impalement and with torture; and as cutting off ears and noses were playful freaks with the Algerines, it may be conceived what their tortures were like; but nothing could make him swerve from his original statement that he and he alone was responsible. The upshot was that the unhappy

gardener was hanged by his master, and the prisoners taken possession of by the Dey, who, however, afterwards restored most of them to their masters, but kept Cervantes, paying Dali Mami 500 crowns for him. He felt, no doubt, that a man of such resource, energy, and daring, was too dangerous a piece of property to be left in private hands; and he had him heavily ironed and lodged in his own prison. If he thought that by these means he could break the spirit or shake the resolution of his prisoner, he was soon undeceived, for Cervantes contrived before long to despatch a letter to the Governor of Oran, entreating him to send him some one that could be trusted, to enable him and three other gentlemen, fellow-captives of his, to make their escape; intending evidently to renew his first attempt with a more trustworthy guide. Unfortunately the Moor who carried the letter was stopped just outside Oran, and the letter being found upon him, he was sent back to Algiers, where by the order of the Dey he was promptly impaled as a warning to others, while Cervantes was condemned to receive two thousand blows of the stick, a number which most likely would have deprived the world of "Don Quixote," had not some persons, who they were we know not, interceded on his behalf.

After this he seems to have been kept in still closer confinement than before, for nearly two years passed before he made another attempt. This time his plan was to purchase, by the aid of a Spanish renegade and two Valencian merchants resident in Algiers, an armed vessel in which he and about sixty of the leading captives were to make their escape; but just as they were about to put it into execution one Doctor Juan Blanco de Paz, an ecclesiastic and a compatriot, informed the Dey of the plot. Cervantes by force of character, by his self-devotion, by his untiring energy and his exertions to lighten the lot of his companions in misery, had endeared himself to all, and become the leading spirit in the captive colony, and, incredible as it may seem, jealousy of his influence and the esteem in which he was held, moved this man to compass his destruction by a cruel death. The merchants finding that the Dey knew all, and fearing that Cervantes under torture might make disclosures that would imperil their own lives, tried to persuade him to slip away on board a vessel that was on the point of sailing for Spain; but he told them they had nothing to fear, for no tortures would make him compromise anybody, and he went at once and gave himself up to the Dey.

As before, the Dey tried to force him to name his accomplices. Everything was made ready for his immediate execution; the halter was put round his neck and his hands tied behind him, but all that could be got from him was that he himself, with the help of four gentlemen who had since left Algiers, had arranged the whole, and that the sixty who were to accompany him were not to know anything of it until the last moment. Finding he could make nothing of him, the Dey sent him back to prison more heavily ironed than before.

The poverty-stricken Cervantes family had been all this time trying once more to raise the ransom money, and at last a sum of three hundred ducats was got together and entrusted to the Redemptorist Father Juan Gil, who was about to sail for Algiers. The Dey, however, demanded more than double the sum offered, and as his term of



office had expired and he was about to sail for Constantinople, taking all his slaves with him, the case of Cervantes was critical. He was already on board heavily ironed, when the Dey at length agreed to reduce his demand by one-half, and Father Gil by borrowing was able to make up the amount, and on September 19, 1580, after a captivity of five years all but a week, Cervantes was at last set free. Before long he discovered that Blanco de Paz, who claimed to be an officer of the Inquisition, was now concocting on false evidence a charge of misconduct to be brought against him on his return to Spain. To checkmate him Cervantes drew up a series of twenty-five questions, covering the whole period of his captivity, upon which he requested Father Gil to take the depositions of credible witnesses before a notary. Eleven witnesses taken from among the principal captives in Algiers deposed to all the facts above stated and to a great deal more besides. There is something touching in the admiration, love, and gratitude we see struggling to find expression in the formal language of the notary, as they testify one after another to the good deeds of Cervantes, how he comforted and helped the weak-hearted, how he kept up their drooping courage, how he shared his poor purse with this deponent, and how "in him this deponent found father and mother."

On his return to Spain he found his old regiment about to march for Portugal to support Philip's claim to the crown, and utterly penniless now, had no choice but to rejoin it. He was in the expeditions to the Azores in 1582 and the following year, and on the conclusion of the war returned to Spain in the autumn of 1583, bringing with him the manuscript of his pastoral romance, the "Galatea," and probably also, to judge by internal evidence, that of the first portion of "Persiles and Sigismunda." He also brought back with him, his biographers assert, an infant daughter, the offspring of an amour, as some of them with great circumstantiality inform us, with a Lisbon lady of noble birth, whose name, however, as well as that of the street she lived in, they omit to mention. The sole foundation for all this is that in 1605 there certainly was living in the family of Cervantes a Dona Isabel de Saavedra, who is described in an official document as his natural daughter, and then twenty years of age.

With his crippled left hand promotion in the army was hopeless, now that Don John was dead and he had no one to press his claims and services, and for a man drawing on to forty life in the ranks was a dismal prospect; he had already a certain reputation as a poet; he made up his mind, therefore, to cast his lot with literature, and for a first venture committed his "Galatea" to the press. It was published, as Salva y Mallen shows conclusively, at Alcala, his own birth-place, in 1585 and no doubt helped to make his name more widely known, but certainly did not do him much good in any other way.

While it was going through the press, he married Dona Catalina de Palacios Salazar y Vozmediano, a lady of Esquivias near Madrid, and apparently a friend of the family, who brought him a fortune which may possibly have served to keep the wolf from the door, but if so, that was all. The drama had by this time outgrown market-place stages and strolling companies, and with his old love for it he naturally turned to it for a

congenial employment. In about three years he wrote twenty or thirty plays, which he tells us were performed without any throwing of cucumbers or other missiles, and ran their course without any hisses, outcries, or disturbance. In other words, his plays were not bad enough to be hissed off the stage, but not good enough to hold their own upon it. Only two of them have been preserved, but as they happen to be two of the seven or eight he mentions with complacency, we may assume they are favourable specimens, and no one who reads the "Numancia" and the "Trato de Argel" will feel any surprise that they failed as acting dramas. Whatever merits they may have, whatever occasional they may show, they are, as regards construction, incurably clumsy. How completely they failed is manifest from the fact that with all his sanguine temperament and indomitable perseverance he was unable to maintain the struggle to gain a livelihood as a dramatist for more than three years; nor was the rising popularity of Lope the cause, as is often said, notwithstanding his own words to the contrary. When Lope began to write for the stage is uncertain, but it was certainly after Cervantes went to Seville.

Among the "Nuevos Documentos" printed by Senor Asensio y Toledo is one dated 1592, and curiously characteristic of Cervantes. It is an agreement with one Rodrigo Osorio, a manager, who was to accept six comedies at fifty ducats (about 6l.) apiece, not to be paid in any case unless it appeared on representation that the said comedy was one of the best that had ever been represented in Spain. The test does not seem to have been ever applied; perhaps it was sufficiently apparent to Rodrigo Osorio that the comedies were not among the best that had ever been represented. Among the correspondence of Cervantes there might have been found, no doubt, more than one letter like that we see in the "Rake's Progress," "Sir, I have read your play, and it will not doo."

He was more successful in a literary contest at Saragossa in 1595 in honour of the canonisation of St. Jacinto, when his composition won the first prize, three silver spoons. The year before this he had been appointed a collector of revenues for the kingdom of Granada. In order to remit the money he had collected more conveniently to the treasury, he entrusted it to a merchant, who failed and absconded; and as the bankrupt's assets were insufficient to cover the whole, he was sent to prison at Seville in September 1597. The balance against him, however, was a small one, about 26l., and on giving security for it he was released at the end of the year.

It was as he journeyed from town to town collecting the king's taxes, that he noted down those bits of inn and wayside life and character that abound in the pages of "Don Quixote:" the Benedictine monks with spectacles and sunshades, mounted on their tall mules; the strollers in costume bound for the next village; the barber with his basin on his head, on his way to bleed a patient; the recruit with his breeches in his bundle, tramping along the road singing; the reapers gathered in the venta gateway listening to "Felixmarte of Hircania" read out to them; and those little Hogarthian touches that he so well knew how to bring in, the ox-tail hanging up with the landlord's comb stuck in it, the wine-skins at the bed-head, and those notable examples of hostelry art, Helen

going off in high spirits on Paris's arm, and Dido on the tower dropping tears as big as walnuts. Nay, it may well be that on those journeys into remote regions he came across now and then a specimen of the pauper gentleman, with his lean hack and his greyhound and his books of chivalry, dreaming away his life in happy ignorance that the world had changed since his great-grandfather's old helmet was new. But it was in Seville that he found out his true vocation, though he himself would not by any means have admitted it to be so. It was there, in Triana, that he was first tempted to try his hand at drawing from life, and first brought his humour into play in the exquisite little sketch of "Rinconete y Cortadillo," the germ, in more ways than one, of "Don Quixote."

Where and when that was written, we cannot tell. After his imprisonment all trace of Cervantes in his official capacity disappears, from which it may be inferred that he was not reinstated. That he was still in Seville in November 1598 appears from a satirical sonnet of his on the elaborate catafalque erected to testify the grief of the city at the death of Philip II, but from this up to 1603 we have no clue to his movements. The words in the preface to the First Part of "Don Quixote" are generally held to be conclusive that he conceived the idea of the book, and wrote the beginning of it at least, in a prison, and that he may have done so is extremely likely.

There is a tradition that Cervantes read some portions of his work to a select audience at the Duke of Bejar's, which may have helped to make the book known; but the obvious conclusion is that the First Part of "Don Quixote" lay on his hands some time before he could find a publisher bold enough to undertake a venture of so novel a character; and so little faith in it had Francisco Robles of Madrid, to whom at last he sold it, that he did not care to incur the expense of securing the copyright for Aragon or Portugal, contenting himself with that for Castile. The printing was finished in December, and the book came out with the new year, 1605. It is often said that "Don Quixote" was at first received coldly. The facts show just the contrary. No sooner was it in the hands of the public than preparations were made to issue pirated editions at Lisbon and Valencia, and to bring out a second edition with the additional copyrights for Aragon and Portugal, which he secured in February.

No doubt it was received with something more than coldness by certain sections of the community. Men of wit, taste, and discrimination among the aristocracy gave it a hearty welcome, but the aristocracy in general were not likely to relish a book that turned their favourite reading into ridicule and laughed at so many of their favourite ideas. The dramatists who gathered round Lope as their leader regarded Cervantes as their common enemy, and it is plain that he was equally obnoxious to the other clique, the cultu poets who had Gongora for their chief. Navarrete, who knew nothing of the letter above mentioned, tries hard to show that the relations between Cervantes and Lope were of a very friendly sort, as indeed they were until "Don Quixote" was written. Cervantes, indeed, to the last generously and manfully declared his admiration of Lope's powers, his unflinching invention, and his marvellous fertility; but in the preface of the First Part of "Don Quixote" and in the verses of "Urganda the Unknown," and one or two other places, there are, if we read between the lines, sly hits at Lope's

vanities and affectations that argue no personal good-will; and Lope openly sneers at "Don Quixote" and Cervantes, and fourteen years after his death gives him only a few lines of cold commonplace in the "Laurel de Apolo," that seem all the colder for the eulogies of a host of nonentities whose names are found nowhere else.

In 1601 Valladolid was made the seat of the Court, and at the beginning of 1603 Cervantes had been summoned thither in connection with the balance due by him to the Treasury, which was still outstanding. He remained at Valladolid, apparently supporting himself by agencies and scrivener's work of some sort; probably drafting petitions and drawing up statements of claims to be presented to the Council, and the like. So, at least, we gather from the depositions taken on the occasion of the death of a gentleman, the victim of a street brawl, who had been carried into the house in which he lived. In these he himself is described as a man who wrote and transacted business, and it appears that his household then consisted of his wife, the natural daughter Isabel de Saavedra already mentioned, his sister Andrea, now a widow, her daughter Constanza, a mysterious Magdalena de Sotomayor calling herself his sister, for whom his biographers cannot account, and a servant-maid.

Meanwhile "Don Quixote" had been growing in favour, and its author's name was now known beyond the Pyrenees. In 1607 an edition was printed at Brussels. Robles, the Madrid publisher, found it necessary to meet the demand by a third edition, the seventh in all, in 1608. The popularity of the book in Italy was such that a Milan bookseller was led to bring out an edition in 1610; and another was called for in Brussels in 1611. It might naturally have been expected that, with such proofs before him that he had hit the taste of the public, Cervantes would have at once set about redeeming his rather vague promise of a second volume.

But, to all appearance, nothing was farther from his thoughts. He had still by him one or two short tales of the same vintage as those he had inserted in "Don Quixote" and instead of continuing the adventures of Don Quixote, he set to work to write more of these "Novelas Exemplares" as he afterwards called them, with a view to making a book of them.

The novels were published in the summer of 1613, with a dedication to the Conde de Lemos, the Maecenas of the day, and with one of those chatty confidential prefaces Cervantes was so fond of. In this, eight years and a half after the First Part of "Don Quixote" had appeared, we get the first hint of a forthcoming Second Part. "You shall see shortly," he says, "the further exploits of Don Quixote and humours of Sancho Panza." His idea of "shortly" was a somewhat elastic one, for, as we know by the date to Sancho's letter, he had barely one-half of the book completed that time twelvemonth.

But more than poems, or pastorals, or novels, it was his dramatic ambition that engrossed his thoughts. The same indomitable spirit that kept him from despair in the bagnios of Algiers, and prompted him to attempt the escape of himself and his comrades again and again, made him persevere in spite of failure and discouragement in his efforts to win the ear of the public as a dramatist. The temperament of Cervantes was essentially sanguine. The portrait he draws in the preface to the novels, with the

aquiline features, chestnut hair, smooth untroubled forehead, and bright cheerful eyes, is the very portrait of a sanguine man. Nothing that the managers might say could persuade him that the merits of his plays would not be recognised at last if they were only given a fair chance. The old soldier of the Spanish Salamis was bent on being the Aeschylus of Spain. He was to found a great national drama, based on the true principles of art, that was to be the envy of all nations; he was to drive from the stage the silly, childish plays, the “mirrors of nonsense and models of folly” that were in vogue through the cupidity of the managers and shortsightedness of the authors; he was to correct and educate the public taste until it was ripe for tragedies on the model of the Greek drama — like the “Numancia” for instance — and comedies that would not only amuse but improve and instruct. All this he was to do, could he once get a hearing: there was the initial difficulty.

He shows plainly enough, too, that “Don Quixote” and the demolition of the chivalry romances was not the work that lay next his heart. He was, indeed, as he says himself in his preface, more a stepfather than a father to “Don Quixote.” Never was great work so neglected by its author. That it was written carelessly, hastily, and by fits and starts, was not always his fault, but it seems clear he never read what he sent to the press. He knew how the printers had blundered, but he never took the trouble to correct them when the third edition was in progress, as a man who really cared for the child of his brain would have done. He appears to have regarded the book as little more than a mere *libro de entretenimiento*, an amusing book, a thing, as he says in the “Viaje,” “to divert the melancholy moody heart at any time or season.” No doubt he had an affection for his hero, and was very proud of Sancho Panza. It would have been strange indeed if he had not been proud of the most humorous creation in all fiction. He was proud, too, of the popularity and success of the book, and beyond measure delightful is the naivete with which he shows his pride in a dozen passages in the Second Part. But it was not the success he coveted. In all probability he would have given all the success of “Don Quixote,” nay, would have seen every copy of “Don Quixote” burned in the Plaza Mayor, for one such success as Lope de Vega was enjoying on an average once a week.

And so he went on, dawdling over “Don Quixote,” adding a chapter now and again, and putting it aside to turn to “Persiles and Sigismunda” — which, as we know, was to be the most entertaining book in the language, and the rival of “Theagenes and Chariclea” — or finishing off one of his darling comedies; and if Robles asked when “Don Quixote” would be ready, the answer no doubt was: En breve—shortly, there was time enough for that. At sixty-eight he was as full of life and hope and plans for the future as a boy of eighteen.

Nemesis was coming, however. He had got as far as Chapter LIX, which at his leisurely pace he could hardly have reached before October or November 1614, when there was put into his hand a small octave lately printed at Tarragona, and calling itself “Second Volume of the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha: by the Licentiate Alonso Fernandez de Avellaneda of Tordesillas.” The last half of Chapter LIX

and most of the following chapters of the Second Part give us some idea of the effect produced upon him, and his irritation was not likely to be lessened by the reflection that he had no one to blame but himself. Had Avellaneda, in fact, been content with merely bringing out a continuation to "Don Quixote," Cervantes would have had no reasonable grievance. His own intentions were expressed in the very vaguest language at the end of the book; nay, in his last words, "forse altro cantera con miglior plettro," he seems actually to invite some one else to continue the work, and he made no sign until eight years and a half had gone by; by which time Avellaneda's volume was no doubt written.

In fact Cervantes had no case, or a very bad one, as far as the mere continuation was concerned. But Avellaneda chose to write a preface to it, full of such coarse personal abuse as only an ill-conditioned man could pour out. He taunts Cervantes with being old, with having lost his hand, with having been in prison, with being poor, with being friendless, accuses him of envy of Lope's success, of petulance and querulousness, and so on; and it was in this that the sting lay. Avellaneda's reason for this personal attack is obvious enough. Whoever he may have been, it is clear that he was one of the dramatists of Lope's school, for he has the impudence to charge Cervantes with attacking him as well as Lope in his criticism on the drama. His identification has exercised the best critics and baffled all the ingenuity and research that has been brought to bear on it. Navarrete and Ticknor both incline to the belief that Cervantes knew who he was; but I must say I think the anger he shows suggests an invisible assailant; it is like the irritation of a man stung by a mosquito in the dark. Cervantes from certain solecisms of language pronounces him to be an Aragonese, and Pellicer, an Aragonese himself, supports this view and believes him, moreover, to have been an ecclesiastic, a Dominican probably.

Any merit Avellaneda has is reflected from Cervantes, and he is too dull to reflect much. "Dull and dirty" will always be, I imagine, the verdict of the vast majority of unprejudiced readers. He is, at best, a poor plagiarist; all he can do is to follow slavishly the lead given him by Cervantes; his only humour lies in making Don Quixote take inns for castles and fancy himself some legendary or historical personage, and Sancho mistake words, invert proverbs, and display his gluttony; all through he shows a proclivity to coarseness and dirt, and he has contrived to introduce two tales filthier than anything by the sixteenth century novellieri and without their sprightliness.

But whatever Avellaneda and his book may be, we must not forget the debt we owe them. But for them, there can be no doubt, "Don Quixote" would have come to us a mere torso instead of a complete work. Even if Cervantes had finished the volume he had in hand, most assuredly he would have left off with a promise of a Third Part, giving the further adventures of Don Quixote and humours of Sancho Panza as shepherds. It is plain that he had at one time an intention of dealing with the pastoral romances as he had dealt with the books of chivalry, and but for Avellaneda he would have tried to carry it out. But it is more likely that, with his plans, and projects, and hopefulness, the volume would have remained unfinished till his death, and that

we should have never made the acquaintance of the Duke and Duchess, or gone with Sancho to Barataria.

From the moment the book came into his hands he seems to have been haunted by the fear that there might be more Avellanedas in the field, and putting everything else aside, he set himself to finish off his task and protect Don Quixote in the only way he could, by killing him. The conclusion is no doubt a hasty and in some places clumsy piece of work and the frequent repetition of the scolding administered to Avellaneda becomes in the end rather wearisome; but it is, at any rate, a conclusion and for that we must thank Avellaneda.

The new volume was ready for the press in February, but was not printed till the very end of 1615, and during the interval Cervantes put together the comedies and interludes he had written within the last few years, and, as he adds plaintively, found no demand for among the managers, and published them with a preface, worth the book it introduces tenfold, in which he gives an account of the early Spanish stage, and of his own attempts as a dramatist. It is needless to say they were put forward by Cervantes in all good faith and full confidence in their merits. The reader, however, was not to suppose they were his last word or final effort in the drama, for he had in hand a comedy called "Engano a los ojos," about which, if he mistook not, there would be no question.

Of this dramatic masterpiece the world has no opportunity of judging; his health had been failing for some time, and he died, apparently of dropsy, on the 23rd of April, 1616, the day on which England lost Shakespeare, nominally at least, for the English calendar had not yet been reformed. He died as he had lived, accepting his lot bravely and cheerfully.

Was it an unhappy life, that of Cervantes? His biographers all tell us that it was; but I must say I doubt it. It was a hard life, a life of poverty, of incessant struggle, of toil ill paid, of disappointment, but Cervantes carried within himself the antidote to all these evils. His was not one of those light natures that rise above adversity merely by virtue of their own buoyancy; it was in the fortitude of a high spirit that he was proof against it. It is impossible to conceive Cervantes giving way to despondency or prostrated by dejection. As for poverty, it was with him a thing to be laughed over, and the only sigh he ever allows to escape him is when he says, "Happy he to whom Heaven has given a piece of bread for which he is not bound to give thanks to any but Heaven itself." Add to all this his vital energy and mental activity, his restless invention and his sanguine temperament, and there will be reason enough to doubt whether his could have been a very unhappy life. He who could take Cervantes' distresses together with his apparatus for enduring them would not make so bad a bargain, perhaps, as far as happiness in life is concerned.

Of his burial-place nothing is known except that he was buried, in accordance with his will, in the neighbouring convent of Trinitarian nuns, of which it is supposed his daughter, Isabel de Saavedra, was an inmate, and that a few years afterwards the nuns removed to another convent, carrying their dead with them. But whether the remains

of Cervantes were included in the removal or not no one knows, and the clue to their resting-place is now lost beyond all hope. This furnishes perhaps the least defensible of the items in the charge of neglect brought against his contemporaries. In some of the others there is a good deal of exaggeration. To listen to most of his biographers one would suppose that all Spain was in league not only against the man but against his memory, or at least that it was insensible to his merits, and left him to live in misery and die of want. To talk of his hard life and unworthy employments in Andalusia is absurd. What had he done to distinguish him from thousands of other struggling men earning a precarious livelihood? True, he was a gallant soldier, who had been wounded and had undergone captivity and suffering in his country's cause, but there were hundreds of others in the same case. He had written a mediocre specimen of an insipid class of romance, and some plays which manifestly did not comply with the primary condition of pleasing: were the playgoers to patronise plays that did not amuse them, because the author was to produce "Don Quixote" twenty years afterwards?

The scramble for copies which, as we have seen, followed immediately on the appearance of the book, does not look like general insensibility to its merits. No doubt it was received coldly by some, but if a man writes a book in ridicule of periwigs he must make his account with being coldly received by the periwig wearers and hated by the whole tribe of wigmakers. If Cervantes had the chivalry-romance readers, the sentimentalists, the dramatists, and the poets of the period all against him, it was because "Don Quixote" was what it was; and if the general public did not come forward to make him comfortable for the rest of his days, it is no more to be charged with neglect and ingratitude than the English-speaking public that did not pay off Scott's liabilities. It did the best it could; it read his book and liked it and bought it, and encouraged the bookseller to pay him well for others.

It has been also made a reproach to Spain that she has erected no monument to the man she is proudest of; no monument, that is to say, of him; for the bronze statue in the little garden of the Plaza de las Cortes, a fair work of art no doubt, and unexceptionable had it been set up to the local poet in the market-place of some provincial town, is not worthy of Cervantes or of Madrid. But what need has Cervantes of "such weak witness of his name;" or what could a monument do in his case except testify to the self-glorification of those who had put it up? *Si monumentum quoeris, circumspice*. The nearest bookseller's shop will show what bathos there would be in a monument to the author of "Don Quixote."

Nine editions of the First Part of "Don Quixote" had already appeared before Cervantes died, thirty thousand copies in all, according to his own estimate, and a tenth was printed at Barcelona the year after his death. So large a number naturally supplied the demand for some time, but by 1634 it appears to have been exhausted; and from that time down to the present day the stream of editions has continued to flow rapidly and regularly. The translations show still more clearly in what request the book has been from the very outset. In seven years from the completion of the work it had been translated into the four leading languages of Europe. Except the Bible, in fact, no



book has been so widely diffused as "Don Quixote." The "Imitatio Christi" may have been translated into as many different languages, and perhaps "Robinson Crusoe" and the "Vicar of Wakefield" into nearly as many, but in multiplicity of translations and editions "Don Quixote" leaves them all far behind.

Still more remarkable is the character of this wide diffusion. "Don Quixote" has been thoroughly naturalised among people whose ideas about knight-errantry, if they had any at all, were of the vaguest, who had never seen or heard of a book of chivalry, who could not possibly feel the humour of the burlesque or sympathise with the author's purpose. Another curious fact is that this, the most cosmopolitan book in the world, is one of the most intensely national. "Manon Lescaut" is not more thoroughly French, "Tom Jones" not more English, "Rob Roy" not more Scotch, than "Don Quixote" is Spanish, in character, in ideas, in sentiment, in local colour, in everything. What, then, is the secret of this unparalleled popularity, increasing year by year for well-nigh three centuries? One explanation, no doubt, is that of all the books in the world, "Don Quixote" is the most catholic. There is something in it for every sort of reader, young or old, sage or simple, high or low. As Cervantes himself says with a touch of pride, "It is thumbed and read and got by heart by people of all sorts; the children turn its leaves, the young people read it, the grown men understand it, the old folk praise it."

But it would be idle to deny that the ingredient which, more than its humour, or its wisdom, or the fertility of invention or knowledge of human nature it displays, has insured its success with the multitude, is the vein of farce that runs through it. It was the attack upon the sheep, the battle with the wine-skins, Mambrino's helmet, the balsam of Fierabras, Don Quixote knocked over by the sails of the windmill, Sancho tossed in the blanket, the mishaps and misadventures of master and man, that were originally the great attraction, and perhaps are so still to some extent with the majority of readers. It is plain that "Don Quixote" was generally regarded at first, and indeed in Spain for a long time, as little more than a queer droll book, full of laughable incidents and absurd situations, very amusing, but not entitled to much consideration or care. All the editions printed in Spain from 1637 to 1771, when the famous printer Ibarra took it up, were mere trade editions, badly and carelessly printed on vile paper and got up in the style of chap-books intended only for popular use, with, in most instances, uncouth illustrations and clap-trap additions by the publisher.

To England belongs the credit of having been the first country to recognise the right of "Don Quixote" to better treatment than this. The London edition of 1738, commonly called Lord Carteret's from having been suggested by him, was not a mere edition de luxe. It produced "Don Quixote" in becoming form as regards paper and type, and embellished with plates which, if not particularly happy as illustrations, were at least well intentioned and well executed, but it also aimed at correctness of text, a matter to which nobody except the editors of the Valencia and Brussels editions had given even a passing thought; and for a first attempt it was fairly successful, for though some of its emendations are inadmissible, a good many of them have been adopted by all subsequent editors.

The zeal of publishers, editors, and annotators brought about a remarkable change of sentiment with regard to "Don Quixote." A vast number of its admirers began to grow ashamed of laughing over it. It became almost a crime to treat it as a humorous book. The humour was not entirely denied, but, according to the new view, it was rated as an altogether secondary quality, a mere accessory, nothing more than the stalking-horse under the presentation of which Cervantes shot his philosophy or his satire, or whatever it was he meant to shoot; for on this point opinions varied. All were agreed, however, that the object he aimed at was not the books of chivalry. He said emphatically in the preface to the First Part and in the last sentence of the Second, that he had no other object in view than to discredit these books, and this, to advanced criticism, made it clear that his object must have been something else.

One theory was that the book was a kind of allegory, setting forth the eternal struggle between the ideal and the real, between the spirit of poetry and the spirit of prose; and perhaps German philosophy never evolved a more ungainly or unlikely camel out of the depths of its inner consciousness. Something of the antagonism, no doubt, is to be found in "Don Quixote," because it is to be found everywhere in life, and Cervantes drew from life. It is difficult to imagine a community in which the never-ceasing game of cross-purposes between Sancho Panza and Don Quixote would not be recognized as true to nature. In the stone age, among the lake dwellers, among the cave men, there were Don Quixotes and Sancho Panzas; there must have been the troglodyte who never could see the facts before his eyes, and the troglodyte who could see nothing else. But to suppose Cervantes deliberately setting himself to expound any such idea in two stout quarto volumes is to suppose something not only very unlike the age in which he lived, but altogether unlike Cervantes himself, who would have been the first to laugh at an attempt of the sort made by anyone else.

The extraordinary influence of the romances of chivalry in his day is quite enough to account for the genesis of the book. Some idea of the prodigious development of this branch of literature in the sixteenth century may be obtained from the scrutiny of Chapter VII, if the reader bears in mind that only a portion of the romances belonging to by far the largest group are enumerated. As to its effect upon the nation, there is abundant evidence. From the time when the Amadis and Palmerins began to grow popular down to the very end of the century, there is a steady stream of invective, from men whose character and position lend weight to their words, against the romances of chivalry and the infatuation of their readers. Ridicule was the only besom to sweep away that dust.

That this was the task Cervantes set himself, and that he had ample provocation to urge him to it, will be sufficiently clear to those who look into the evidence; as it will be also that it was not chivalry itself that he attacked and swept away. Of all the absurdities that, thanks to poetry, will be repeated to the end of time, there is no greater one than saying that "Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away." In the first place there was no chivalry for him to smile away. Spain's chivalry had been dead for more than a century. Its work was done when Granada fell, and as chivalry was essentially

republican in its nature, it could not live under the rule that Ferdinand substituted for the free institutions of mediaeval Spain. What he did smile away was not chivalry but a degrading mockery of it.

The true nature of the "right arm" and the "bright array," before which, according to the poet, "the world gave ground," and which Cervantes' single laugh demolished, may be gathered from the words of one of his own countrymen, Don Felix Pacheco, as reported by Captain George Carleton, in his "Military Memoirs from 1672 to 1713." "Before the appearance in the world of that labour of Cervantes," he said, "it was next to an impossibility for a man to walk the streets with any delight or without danger. There were seen so many cavaliers prancing and curvetting before the windows of their mistresses, that a stranger would have imagined the whole nation to have been nothing less than a race of knight-errants. But after the world became a little acquainted with that notable history, the man that was seen in that once celebrated drapery was pointed at as a Don Quixote, and found himself the jest of high and low. And I verily believe that to this, and this only, we owe that dampness and poverty of spirit which has run through all our councils for a century past, so little agreeable to those nobler actions of our famous ancestors."

To call "Don Quixote" a sad book, preaching a pessimist view of life, argues a total misconception of its drift. It would be so if its moral were that, in this world, true enthusiasm naturally leads to ridicule and discomfiture. But it preaches nothing of the sort; its moral, so far as it can be said to have one, is that the spurious enthusiasm that is born of vanity and self-conceit, that is made an end in itself, not a means to an end, that acts on mere impulse, regardless of circumstances and consequences, is mischievous to its owner, and a very considerable nuisance to the community at large. To those who cannot distinguish between the one kind and the other, no doubt "Don Quixote" is a sad book; no doubt to some minds it is very sad that a man who had just uttered so beautiful a sentiment as that "it is a hard case to make slaves of those whom God and Nature made free," should be ungratefully pelted by the scoundrels his crazy philanthropy had let loose on society; but to others of a more judicial cast it will be a matter of regret that reckless self-sufficient enthusiasm is not oftener requited in some such way for all the mischief it does in the world.

A very slight examination of the structure of "Don Quixote" will suffice to show that Cervantes had no deep design or elaborate plan in his mind when he began the book. When he wrote those lines in which "with a few strokes of a great master he sets before us the pauper gentleman," he had no idea of the goal to which his imagination was leading him. There can be little doubt that all he contemplated was a short tale to range with those he had already written, a tale setting forth the ludicrous results that might be expected to follow the attempt of a crazy gentleman to act the part of a knight-errant in modern life.

It is plain, for one thing, that Sancho Panza did not enter into the original scheme, for had Cervantes thought of him he certainly would not have omitted him in his hero's outfit, which he obviously meant to be complete. Him we owe to the landlord's chance

remark in Chapter III that knights seldom travelled without squires. To try to think of a Don Quixote without Sancho Panza is like trying to think of a one-bladed pair of scissors.

The story was written at first, like the others, without any division and without the intervention of Cide Hamete Benengeli; and it seems not unlikely that Cervantes had some intention of bringing Dulcinea, or Aldonza Lorenzo, on the scene in person. It was probably the ransacking of the Don's library and the discussion on the books of chivalry that first suggested it to him that his idea was capable of development. What, if instead of a mere string of farcical misadventures, he were to make his tale a burlesque of one of these books, caricaturing their style, incidents, and spirit?

In pursuance of this change of plan, he hastily and somewhat clumsily divided what he had written into chapters on the model of "Amadis," invented the fable of a mysterious Arabic manuscript, and set up Cide Hamete Benengeli in imitation of the almost invariable practice of the chivalry-romance authors, who were fond of tracing their books to some recondite source. In working out the new ideas, he soon found the value of Sancho Panza. Indeed, the keynote, not only to Sancho's part, but to the whole book, is struck in the first words Sancho utters when he announces his intention of taking his ass with him. "About the ass," we are told, "Don Quixote hesitated a little, trying whether he could call to mind any knight-errant taking with him an esquire mounted on ass-back; but no instance occurred to his memory." We can see the whole scene at a glance, the stolid unconsciousness of Sancho and the perplexity of his master, upon whose perception the incongruity has just forced itself. This is Sancho's mission throughout the book; he is an unconscious Mephistopheles, always unwittingly making mockery of his master's aspirations, always exposing the fallacy of his ideas by some unintentional *ad absurdum*, always bringing him back to the world of fact and commonplace by force of sheer stolidity.

By the time Cervantes had got his volume of novels off his hands, and summoned up resolution enough to set about the Second Part in earnest, the case was very much altered. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza had not merely found favour, but had already become, what they have never since ceased to be, veritable entities to the popular imagination. There was no occasion for him now to interpolate extraneous matter; nay, his readers told him plainly that what they wanted of him was more Don Quixote and more Sancho Panza, and not novels, tales, or digressions. To himself, too, his creations had become realities, and he had become proud of them, especially of Sancho. He began the Second Part, therefore, under very different conditions, and the difference makes itself manifest at once. Even in translation the style will be seen to be far easier, more flowing, more natural, and more like that of a man sure of himself and of his audience. Don Quixote and Sancho undergo a change also. In the First Part, Don Quixote has no character or individuality whatever. He is nothing more than a crazy representative of the sentiments of the chivalry romances. In all that he says and does he is simply repeating the lesson he has learned from his books; and therefore, it is absurd to speak of him in the gushing strain of the sentimental critics when they

dilate upon his nobleness, disinterestedness, dauntless courage, and so forth. It was the business of a knight-errant to right wrongs, redress injuries, and succour the distressed, and this, as a matter of course, he makes his business when he takes up the part; a knight-errant was bound to be intrepid, and so he feels bound to cast fear aside. Of all Byron's melodious nonsense about Don Quixote, the most nonsensical statement is that "t is his virtue makes him mad!" The exact opposite is the truth; it is his madness makes him virtuous.

In the Second Part, Cervantes repeatedly reminds the reader, as if it was a point upon which he was anxious there should be no mistake, that his hero's madness is strictly confined to delusions on the subject of chivalry, and that on every other subject he is discrete, one, in fact, whose faculty of discernment is in perfect order. The advantage of this is that he is enabled to make use of Don Quixote as a mouthpiece for his own reflections, and so, without seeming to digress, allow himself the relief of digression when he requires it, as freely as in a commonplace book.

It is true the amount of individuality bestowed upon Don Quixote is not very great. There are some natural touches of character about him, such as his mixture of irascibility and placability, and his curious affection for Sancho together with his impatience of the squire's loquacity and impertinence; but in the main, apart from his craze, he is little more than a thoughtful, cultured gentleman, with instinctive good taste and a great deal of shrewdness and originality of mind.

As to Sancho, it is plain, from the concluding words of the preface to the First Part, that he was a favourite with his creator even before he had been taken into favour by the public. An inferior genius, taking him in hand a second time, would very likely have tried to improve him by making him more comical, clever, amiable, or virtuous. But Cervantes was too true an artist to spoil his work in this way. Sancho, when he reappears, is the old Sancho with the old familiar features; but with a difference; they have been brought out more distinctly, but at the same time with a careful avoidance of anything like caricature; the outline has been filled in where filling in was necessary, and, vivified by a few touches of a master's hand, Sancho stands before us as he might in a character portrait by Velazquez. He is a much more important and prominent figure in the Second Part than in the First; indeed, it is his matchless mendacity about Dulcinea that to a great extent supplies the action of the story.

His development in this respect is as remarkable as in any other. In the First Part he displays a great natural gift of lying. His lies are not of the highly imaginative sort that liars in fiction commonly indulge in; like Falstaff's, they resemble the father that begets them; they are simple, homely, plump lies; plain working lies, in short. But in the service of such a master as Don Quixote he develops rapidly, as we see when he comes to palm off the three country wenches as Dulcinea and her ladies in waiting. It is worth noticing how, flushed by his success in this instance, he is tempted afterwards to try a flight beyond his powers in his account of the journey on Clavileno.

In the Second Part it is the spirit rather than the incidents of the chivalry romances that is the subject of the burlesque. Enchantments of the sort travestied in those

of Dulcinea and the Trifaldi and the cave of Montesinos play a leading part in the later and inferior romances, and another distinguishing feature is caricatured in Don Quixote's blind adoration of Dulcinea. In the romances of chivalry love is either a mere animalism or a fantastic idolatry. Only a coarse-minded man would care to make merry with the former, but to one of Cervantes' humour the latter was naturally an attractive subject for ridicule. Like everything else in these romances, it is a gross exaggeration of the real sentiment of chivalry, but its peculiar extravagance is probably due to the influence of those masters of hyperbole, the Provençal poets. When a troubadour professed his readiness to obey his lady in all things, he made it incumbent upon the next comer, if he wished to avoid the imputation of tameness and commonplace, to declare himself the slave of her will, which the next was compelled to cap by some still stronger declaration; and so expressions of devotion went on rising one above the other like biddings at an auction, and a conventional language of gallantry and theory of love came into being that in time permeated the literature of Southern Europe, and bore fruit, in one direction in the transcendental worship of Beatrice and Laura, and in another in the grotesque idolatry which found exponents in writers like Feliciano de Silva. This is what Cervantes deals with in Don Quixote's passion for Dulcinea, and in no instance has he carried out the burlesque more happily. By keeping Dulcinea in the background, and making her a vague shadowy being of whose very existence we are left in doubt, he invests Don Quixote's worship of her virtues and charms with an additional extravagance, and gives still more point to the caricature of the sentiment and language of the romances.

One of the great merits of "Don Quixote," and one of the qualities that have secured its acceptance by all classes of readers and made it the most cosmopolitan of books, is its simplicity. There are, of course, points obvious enough to a Spanish seventeenth century audience which do not immediately strike a reader now-a-days, and Cervantes often takes it for granted that an allusion will be generally understood which is only intelligible to a few. For example, on many of his readers in Spain, and most of his readers out of it, the significance of his choice of a country for his hero is completely lost. It would be going too far to say that no one can thoroughly comprehend "Don Quixote" without having seen La Mancha, but undoubtedly even a glimpse of La Mancha will give an insight into the meaning of Cervantes such as no commentator can give. Of all the regions of Spain it is the last that would suggest the idea of romance. Of all the dull central plateau of the Peninsula it is the dullest tract. There is something impressive about the grim solitudes of Estremadura; and if the plains of Leon and Old Castile are bald and dreary, they are studded with old cities renowned in history and rich in relics of the past. But there is no redeeming feature in the Manchegan landscape; it has all the sameness of the desert without its dignity; the few towns and villages that break its monotony are mean and commonplace, there is nothing venerable about them, they have not even the picturesqueness of poverty; indeed, Don Quixote's own village, Argamasilla, has a sort of oppressive respectability in the prim regularity of

its streets and houses; everything is ignoble; the very windmills are the ugliest and shabbiest of the windmill kind.

To anyone who knew the country well, the mere style and title of "Don Quixote of La Mancha" gave the key to the author's meaning at once. La Mancha as the knight's country and scene of his chivalries is of a piece with the pasteboard helmet, the farm-labourer on ass-back for a squire, knighthood conferred by a rascally ventero, convicts taken for victims of oppression, and the rest of the incongruities between Don Quixote's world and the world he lived in, between things as he saw them and things as they were.

It is strange that this element of incongruity, underlying the whole humour and purpose of the book, should have been so little heeded by the majority of those who have undertaken to interpret "Don Quixote." It has been completely overlooked, for example, by the illustrators. To be sure, the great majority of the artists who illustrated "Don Quixote" knew nothing whatever of Spain. To them a *venta* conveyed no idea but the abstract one of a roadside inn, and they could not therefore do full justice to the humour of Don Quixote's misconception in taking it for a castle, or perceive the remoteness of all its realities from his ideal. But even when better informed they seem to have no apprehension of the full force of the discrepancy. Take, for instance, Gustave Dore's drawing of Don Quixote watching his armour in the inn-yard. Whether or not the *Venta de Quesada* on the Seville road is, as tradition maintains, the inn described in "Don Quixote," beyond all question it was just such an inn-yard as the one behind it that Cervantes had in his mind's eye, and it was on just such a rude stone trough as that beside the primitive draw-well in the corner that he meant Don Quixote to deposit his armour. Gustave Dore makes it an elaborate fountain such as no *arriero* ever watered his mules at in the corral of any *venta* in Spain, and thereby entirely misses the point aimed at by Cervantes. It is the mean, prosaic, commonplace character of all the surroundings and circumstances that gives a significance to Don Quixote's vigil and the ceremony that follows.

Cervantes' humour is for the most part of that broader and simpler sort, the strength of which lies in the perception of the incongruous. It is the incongruity of Sancho in all his ways, words, and works, with the ideas and aims of his master, quite as much as the wonderful vitality and truth to nature of the character, that makes him the most humorous creation in the whole range of fiction. That unsmiling gravity of which Cervantes was the first great master, "Cervantes' serious air," which sits naturally on Swift alone, perhaps, of later humourists, is essential to this kind of humour, and here again Cervantes has suffered at the hands of his interpreters. Nothing, unless indeed the coarse buffoonery of Phillips, could be more out of place in an attempt to represent Cervantes, than a flippant, would-be facetious style, like that of Motteux's version for example, or the sprightly, jaunty air, French translators sometimes adopt. It is the grave matter-of-factness of the narrative, and the apparent unconsciousness of the author that he is saying anything ludicrous, anything but the merest commonplace, that give its peculiar flavour to the humour of Cervantes. His, in fact, is the exact

opposite of the humour of Sterne and the self-conscious humourists. Even when Uncle Toby is at his best, you are always aware of “the man Sterne” behind him, watching you over his shoulder to see what effect he is producing. Cervantes always leaves you alone with Don Quixote and Sancho. He and Swift and the great humourists always keep themselves out of sight, or, more properly speaking, never think about themselves at all, unlike our latter-day school of humourists, who seem to have revived the old horse-collar method, and try to raise a laugh by some grotesque assumption of ignorance, imbecility, or bad taste.

It is true that to do full justice to Spanish humour in any other language is well-nigh an impossibility. There is a natural gravity and a sonorous stateliness about Spanish, be it ever so colloquial, that make an absurdity doubly absurd, and give plausibility to the most preposterous statement. This is what makes Sancho Panza’s drollery the despair of the conscientious translator. Sancho’s curt comments can never fall flat, but they lose half their flavour when transferred from their native Castilian into any other medium. But if foreigners have failed to do justice to the humour of Cervantes, they are no worse than his own countrymen. Indeed, were it not for the Spanish peasant’s relish of “Don Quixote,” one might be tempted to think that the great humourist was not looked upon as a humourist at all in his own country.

The craze of Don Quixote seems, in some instances, to have communicated itself to his critics, making them see things that are not in the book and run full tilt at phantoms that have no existence save in their own imaginations. Like a good many critics now-a-days, they forget that screams are not criticism, and that it is only vulgar tastes that are influenced by strings of superlatives, three-piled hyperboles, and pompous epithets. But what strikes one as particularly strange is that while they deal in extravagant eulogies, and ascribe all manner of imaginary ideas and qualities to Cervantes, they show no perception of the quality that ninety-nine out of a hundred of his readers would rate highest in him, and hold to be the one that raises him above all rivalry.

To speak of “Don Quixote” as if it were merely a humorous book would be a manifest misdescription. Cervantes at times makes it a kind of commonplace book for occasional essays and criticisms, or for the observations and reflections and gathered wisdom of a long and stirring life. It is a mine of shrewd observation on mankind and human nature. Among modern novels there may be, here and there, more elaborate studies of character, but there is no book richer in individualised character. What Coleridge said of Shakespeare in *minimis* is true of Cervantes; he never, even for the most temporary purpose, puts forward a lay figure. There is life and individuality in all his characters, however little they may have to do, or however short a time they may be before the reader. Samson Carrasco, the curate, Teresa Panza, Altisidora, even the two students met on the road to the cave of Montesinos, all live and move and have their being; and it is characteristic of the broad humanity of Cervantes that there is not a hateful one among them all. Even poor Maritornes, with her deplorable morals, has a kind heart of her own and “some faint and distant resemblance to a Christian about her;” and as for Sancho, though on dissection we fail to find a lovable trait in him, unless it be a



sort of dog-like affection for his master, who is there that in his heart does not love him?

But it is, after all, the humour of “Don Quixote” that distinguishes it from all other books of the romance kind. It is this that makes it, as one of the most judicial-minded of modern critics calls it, “the best novel in the world beyond all comparison.” It is its varied humour, ranging from broad farce to comedy as subtle as Shakespeare’s or Moliere’s that has naturalised it in every country where there are readers, and made it a classic in every language that has a literature.

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