CERVANTES
BY
H·E·WATTS

"Great Writers."

LIFE AND WRITINGS OF MIGUEL DE CERVANTES

Life and Writings of Miguel de Cervantes

BY
HENRY EDWARD WATTS

London and Felling-on-Tyne:
THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LTD.
NEW YORK AND MELBOURNE

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE Life of Cervantes here presented, as one of the series of "Great Writers," is designed to correspond in scale and in character with the literary biographies familiar under that name to the British public. There have been many Lives of Cervantes, of which I have myself written two. The ampler biography prefixed to my edition of *Don Quixote* (1888) was intended especially to serve as an introduction to my translation of Cervantes' great work, in accordance with my theory that the best commentary on the book is the life of the author. It was part of a large scheme which embraced a complete and fully-equipped edition of *Don Quixote*, brought down to the present state of knowledge, on a scale worthy of the book as one of the world's great classics. That edition was so limited in the number of copies printed as scarcely to deserve the name of publication.

The present Life of Cervantes is an entirely new work, built out of the materials which I had collected for my larger edition. It is re-written and re-arranged, with

much matter, intended chiefly for Spanish scholars and more advanced Cervantists, omitted, and much else by way of addition in the shape of criticisms and literary history added, to interest a wider circle of readers. For the leading facts of Cervantes' life I have availed myself of all the existing sources of information in Spain and elsewhere, though for the opinions and theories I have adopted I am myself solely responsible.

The translations from the Spanish, except where acknowledged as being by another hand, are my own, the passages from *Don Quixote* being taken from my version as contained in my edition in five volumes of 1888.

H. E. WATTS.

LIFE OF CERVANTES.

CHAPTER I.

"A CERTAIN strong man, of former time, fought stoutly at Lepanto; worked stoutly as Algerine slave; stoutly delivered himself from such working; with stout cheerfulness endured famine and nakedness and the world's ingratitude; and sitting in gaol, with one arm left him, wrote our joyfullest, and all but our deepest, modern book, and named it *Don Quixote*."

This is Thomas Carlyle's brief summary of the life and work of Miguel de Cervantes. Brief as it is, and true in all essentials, it is unhappy in combining almost every kind of popular error regarding a great writer whose fate it has ever been to be more praised in his work than studied in his life. Cervantes, though he bore himself stoutly in captivity, as in every other of the numerous ills of his luckless life, did not "stoutly deliver himself," having, after all his heroic attempts at self-deliverance, to be tamely ransomed. He had not one arm only, but two arms left him, though the hand of one was, by wounds received in battle, maimed,

disfigured, and rendered useless. His great book was not written in a gaol, only begotten there. Lastly, opinion is divided whether *Don Quixote* is really the "joyfullest" of modern books. Though designed, in the author's own words, as "a pastime for melancholy spirits," those who look for the soul within have found more sadness than mirth in *Don Quixote*. Certainly, though the humour is of the deepest, the springs of it lying close to the fountain of tears, "joyful" is an epithet which jars upon the sense in connection with the book. It could have been in no joyous mood that Cervantes, the old, maimed, and needy soldier, set himself, in the sunset of his life, the close of his hopes and aspirations, to write that burlesque on the chivalric books which is the dirge of chivalry. For none loved a romance of chivalry better than he. He had himself drunk deeply of the draught which had intoxicated his hero. He had been infected with the same disease as the good Alonso Quixano. He had shared in the fond illusion that the function and duty of chivalry was the redressing of the world's wrongs. He had been a Knight Errant himself, and his own life the very matter of a romance. In his youth he had been dazzled with the lustre of a great enterprise, which seemed to revive the glories of the heroic age. He had himself assisted at pageants and deeds of arms which recalled the fabled splendours and feats of Amadis. Can we conceive him, with his illusions spent, disappointed with fortune, a man broken in health and in hope, even though it was at the close of that long night so fatal to romance and to chivalry, the reign of the second Philip, entering upon *Don Quixote* with a joyful heart?—As truly may we speak of *Don*

Quixote as the mournfullest as the joyfullest of books. May not this be the secret of its extraordinary popularity and ever-enduring delight that, written to give vent to a passing humour, which was as much born of a quenched aspiration and a frustrate longing for the chivalric age as of contempt and disgust for the vicious and foolish books of chivalry, *Don Quixote* owes its immortality to its capacity for reflecting the moods and fancies of all its readers as well as to its wealth and truth of human nature?

To understand the book and its purpose we must know the author. The life of Cervantes is to the full as romantic as that of his hero, abounding in strange adventures and beset with troubles and rebuffs, borne and encountered with a gallant resolution and a gay good humour, of the very essence of that chivalry which, by an odd perversion of his purpose, he is charged by a great English poet with having "laughed away." Certainly no life is recorded of any man of letters so full of action, so beset with dangers, so chequered by fortune, so varied, picturesque, and adventurous. For the story of that life we have materials in plenty. Born at the ancient town of Alcalá de Henares, in the province of New Castile, the seat of a famous university, founded by Cardinal Ximenes, Miguel de Cervantes was baptised on the 9th of October 1547. From the name then given to him, it is plausibly conjectured that the date of his birth was the Michaelmas day preceding, it being customary in Spain to christen the infants after the saint on whose day they were born. The date of Miguel de Cervantes' baptism is recorded in the register of the parish church of Santa Maria the Greater. That

he was a native of Alcalá, and a *hidalgo principal* of that town, had been mentioned by Haedo in his *Topography of Algiers*, published in 1612. In several official documents Cervantes had written himself and had been described by others, a native of Alcalá; yet his own countrymen were so incurious or so careless of their greatest writer, that for two hundred years the place of his birth was by them undiscovered. By a singular freak of destiny, which might almost look like poetical justice, the very mystery with which Cervantes deliberately surrounded the birthplace of his hero—*cuyo nombre no quisó acordarse*[1]—with the intent, as he explains at the end of the book, that "all the towns and villages of La Mancha might contend among themselves for the honour of giving him birth, as the Seven Cities contended for Homer,"—overtook himself, for his own place of birth was forgotten; and seven cities actually contended, as one or two still, in the face of all evidence, obstinately contend, for the honour of being the cradle of Miguel de Cervantes—these seven being Madrid, Seville, Toledo, Lucena, Esquivias, Consuegra, and Alcázar de San Juan. The last-named town to this day clings to the belief that it produced the real author of *Don Quixote*, and to the sceptical visitor is proudly shown the parish register in which is recorded that "Miguel, son of Blas Cervantes Saavedra and Catalina Lopez," was born on November 9th, 1558. Opposite to this entry, in a modern hand, are written the words, *Este fué el autor de la historia de Don Quixote.* This, of course, cannot be the true Miguel, as, apart

[1] See the opening words of *Don Quixote*, Part I., chap. i.

from all other evidence (including Cervantes' own repeated declarations), the date would alone settle the question. If born in November 1558 Cervantes must have been not quite thirteen years of age when he took a conspicuous part in the battle of Lepanto. That there was a second Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (probably a far-off cousin), whose obscure and worthless life (he appears to have been a scapegrace) has become entangled with that of the older and more famous man, is certain. The first of native scholars who is entitled to the credit of clearing up all doubts on this subject (doubts which should never have risen) was Juan de Iriarte, librarian to Charles III., who discovered among the royal manuscripts a list of certain captives, redeemed from Algiers in 1580, among whom is included "Miguel de Cervantes, of the age of thirty years (he was really thirty-three), a native of Alcalá de Henares." The question was finally settled by the learned Father Sarmiento in his tract, *Noticia sobre la Verdadera Patria de Cervantes*, written in 1761.

The father of our Miguel de Cervantes was Rodrigo de Cervantes, also a native of Alcalá, and his mother, Leonor de Cortinas, a native of the neighbouring village of Barajas. Both father and mother were of good *hidalgo* strain though of humble fortune. They were married in 1540, and had four children—two sons and two daughters—of whom Miguel was the youngest. The elder brother, Rodrigo, was a soldier of some distinction in the wars of Philip. He served with Miguel in the Levant, was taken prisoner at the same time, and shared for a while his captivity in

Algiers. He is mentioned as having earned much credit under the Marqués de Santa Cruz in the expedition against the Azores, and died in Flanders, at a date unknown, before Miguel. The elder sister, Andrea, was twice married, and as a widow lived with her brother till the end of his life. The younger, Luisa, became a Carmelite nun in 1561. The father of Rodrigo de Cervantes was Juan, who seems to have been of higher station than his immediate descendants, for he had filled the office of *corregidor* (paid magistrate) of the city of Osuna, and is mentioned in history as the friend and associate of the Conde de Ureña,[1] a grandee of influence in Philip's court. The family of Cervantes (who bore, as their arms, two stags, in punning allusion to their name) came originally from Galicia, and by the early genealogists (who certainly never thought of honouring the author of *Don Quixote*) were traced from the blood of the Gothic kings of Leon. Their direct progenitor was the famous Nuño Alfonso, the warlike Alcaide or constable of Toledo in the eleventh century, whose son took the surname of *Cervatos* (*i.e.*, " a place for stags ") from the castle and lands so designated, which he inherited from his father. This younger son changed that designation for the more euphonious one of *Cervantes*, being the first who bore the name. From him, if heralds and genealogists do not lie, was derived in the male line Juan de Cervantes, who was a *veinticuatro*, or alderman, of Seville in the reign of Juan II., from whom to Miguel de Cervantes the descent is

[1] Conde, the Orientalist, was the first to point out that Benengeli (the supposed original author of *Don Quixote*) means in Arabic, " son of a stag."

direct and undoubted.[1] The family branched into La Mancha early in the fifteenth century; and several members of it held command in the military orders of Santiago and San Juan. In order to distinguish himself from others of the same name (the family being rather numerous, as the name is still not uncommon, both in Spain and in Spanish America), Miguel de Cervantes, upon his return from Algiers, in 1580, assumed the additional surname of Saavedra from one of his ancestors, always signing himself thenceforth *Cervantes* (or oftener *Cerbantes*) *Saavedra.*[2]

Of the youth and early years of Miguel de Cervantes nothing is known, except from the slight and too infrequent references to himself which are to be found in some of his prologues and dedications. One of the earliest glimpses we have of the youthful Miguel is from an interesting passage of autobiography contained in the prologue to the Comedies, printed by Cervantes in September 1615, a few months before his death. In this Cervantes tells of his reminiscences of "the great Lope de Rueda," the founder of the Spanish drama, who went about the country with his *troupe* of strollers, acting the pieces he himself had written, with most rustic and primitive apparatus. Doubtless it was from Lope de Rueda, who is described as "the first who brought Comedy out of her swaddling clothes and gave her habitation and decent attire," that the young

[1] See the genealogical tree in the appendix to Navarrete, *Vida de Cervantes*, taken from Mendez de Silva (1648).

[2] The labials *b* and *v* are interchangeable in Spanish, and are identical in sound. Hence the joke of Scaliger, of the bliss of living in a country where *bibo* and *vivo* were the same.

Cervantes derived that impulse to the drama which, to the last, in spite of all rebuffs and failures, he was never able to resist. His early education Cervantes received under a teacher of some celebrity in those days, one Lopez de Hoyos, who wrote verses and dedications (as, indeed, what educated man did not in that age?), and was famous for his learning and urbanity. Lopez de Hoyos kept a school at Madrid, the site of which is still remembered, and thither we must presume the young Miguel to have gone from his native town of Alcalá, some twenty miles distant. There is a tradition, too hastily accepted by Ticknor on the authority of Navarrete (who himself had nothing but a baseless theory to go upon in connection with the novel *La Tia Fingida*, attributed, as I hold wrongly, to Cervantes), that Miguel kept his terms at the University of Salamanca. But this legend may be rejected on the score of many improbabilities. Cervantes' parents were hardly in such circumstances as to be able to afford to send their younger son to Salamanca; nor is it likely that they should have chosen to send him that distance, having a university scarcely less renowned at their doors. There is no proof that Cervantes went to any university; nor was he likely to do so, not being destined for the Church or any learned profession. For such learning as he acquired—and his scholarship, though not profound or exact, was equal to that of the average of the men who wrote in that age, while his general knowledge was superior—he must have been indebted to Hoyos, and to his own reading, which was vast and multifarious beyond that of any of his contemporaries—especially in the literature of his own country and in the poetry of Italy. Hoyos seems to

have entertained for his pupil a singular affection, and he may claim, in fact, the credit of being the first not only to detect the promise of greatness in the youth, but to give a bent to his genius. Upon the sudden and greatly lamented death of Isabel of Valois, the third wife of Philip II., the public grief took the form of innumerable encomiastic sonnets and elegies. Of these a considerable number were contributed by the pupils of Lopez de Hoyos, some half-a-dozen of which were composed by Miguel de Cervantes. These, the first favours of a muse sedulously wooed but seldom kind, are extravagantly praised by Lopez de Hoyos himself for their "elegant style," "rhetorical colours," and "delicate conceits"; and the youthful poet himself (now in his twenty-first year) is referred to as his master's "dear and well-loved pupil." More fortunate than the rest of Cervantes' early pieces, these poems are still in existence, preserved in Aribau's single-volume edition of the works of Cervantes, and also in the sumptuous twelve-volume edition of Argamasilla, which was edited by Hartzenbusch. These early effusions testify rather to Hoyos' kindliness as a critic than to Cervantes' faculty as a poet. To this period also may be referred a pastoral poem entitled "Filena," of which Cervantes, who had ever a dutiful feeling for his own offspring, though his tenderness never ran into self-conceit, makes fond, though obscure, mention in the *Voyage to Parnassus.*[1] Other sonnets, ballads, elegies, and pieces of verse are spoken of by Cervantes among the works of his youth,

[1] See *El Viaje del Parnaso*, chap. iv., p. 108, in Mr. J. Y. Gibson's edition, to which is appended an excellent translation in the metre of the original (1883).

all of which have perished. Whatever may have been their quality, it was sufficient to give their author a certain character in the world, even at this early period, as a poet, though perhaps Navarrete, his Spanish biographer, speaks too partially of him as being already enrolled among "the most celebrated poets of the nation."

CHAPTER II.

IN the year 1568 there arrived in Madrid the Cardinal Acquaviva, sent by His Holiness the Pope, ostensibly to condole with King Philip on the death of his son Don Carlos, but really to negotiate for the settlement of certain differences in respect of jurisdiction over the Milanese. This prelate, who was but a year or two older than Cervantes himself, had acquired already a character as a *virtuoso* and a lover of letters. He was fond of the society of men of talent, and would carry them about with him in public, discussing "divers curious questions of politics, science, learning, and literature."[1] Into the service of the Cardinal Miguel de Cervantes entered as *camarero*, or gentleman of the chamber—an office implying, in that age, no menial duties, which a gentleman of birth and education might hold. A scion even of the proud Mendozas had held it in the previous generation in the person of the famous Hurtado de Mendoza, who rose to be the most powerful man in the State. That Cervantes was recommended to the Cardinal by his literary accomplishments there is no reason to doubt. More questionable is the theory which has been started by some of his Spanish biographers

[1] So Mateo Aleman the author of *Guzman de Alfarache*, who saw his Excellency at Madrid (*Navarrete*, pp. 285, 286).

that Cervantes was moved to enter the Cardinal's service through his great affection for the Church. In the train of Acquaviva Cervantes left Madrid in December 1569, being now in his twenty-third year, taking the road to Rome overland through the south of France. At Rome Cervantes remained but a very few months. The air was full of rumours of war and the din of military preparation. A new crusade was being organised against the Turks. The Pope (Pius V.) had succeeded in influencing the Christian powers of Spain and Venice to lay aside their differences and to combine with Rome in a Holy League against the Sultan, whose naval armaments and encroachments by sea were making him a terror to Christendom. The call to arms to a youth of Cervantes' temperament was irresistible. In 1570 he resigned his place in the Cardinal's chamber to enlist as a soldier in the regiment of Spanish infantry commanded by Don Miguel de Moncada, which regiment was at that time stationed at Rome as part of a contingent which had been lent to the Pope by King Philip. The *tercio de Moncada* was one of the most distinguished regiments of that famous Spanish infantry, then at the height of its glory and at the top of European soldiership. It enlisted none but young men of good family, for whom it was a distinction to serve in the ranks. The regiment of Moncada, with the rest of the Spanish military contingent, was ordered to Naples in the summer of 1570, there to be reorganised for the great armada which was being got ready to be launched at the Turk. At Naples Cervantes tells us that he "trod the streets for more than a year." The Holy League took some time

to form, and when formed was but a partial and imperfect representation of the Christian States—the Emperor and the King of France not only refusing to join, but secretly giving information, if not help, to the enemy. Only Spain and Venice responded to the appeal of the Pope, and at sea the two behaved rather as rivals than as allies. Eventually the treaty was signed on the 20th of May 1571. The allied fleets assembled in the harbour of Messina in August, under the command of Don John of Austria as generalissimo, who had brought with him thither the Spanish contingent from Naples. The infantry were distributed among the ships—Miguel de Cervantes, with a detachment of his regiment, being placed on board the *Marquesa*, a private ship of Doria's, chartered by the Spanish Government. On the 16th of September Don John put to sea with his whole force, which numbered more than two hundred galleys, with twenty-four sailing ships, and 26,000 soldiers on board. No such formidable armament had ever taken the sea under the Christian flag.

The battle of Lepanto, which for ever demolished the naval supremacy of Turkey, without materially lowering the Turkish power by sea, was fought on the 7th of October 1571. Though, for the forces engaged in it and for the immediate results, it is to be reckoned as the greatest of sea-fights up to that date and a very glorious victory, it had not much decisive effect on the issue of the war. The quarrels between the Venetians and the Spaniards, who were each more jealous of the other than angry with the Turk—the dissensions between the commanders—perhaps the youth and inexperience of the generalissimo, who, with all his rare

soldierly qualities, was hardly competent to lead so vast and discordant an array—finally, the superiority of the Turkish seamanship, and the excellent strategy of their admirals, combined to defraud the conquerors of all but the barren laurels of victory. Still, it was a great battle, glorious to all who took part in it. The *Marquesa*, Cervantes' ship, was in the squadron under the immediate command of the Venetian *provedditore*, Agostino Barbarigo, which formed the left wing of the Christian fleet. On the morning of the 7th October, Cervantes, though ill and weak through a fever contracted at Naples, insisted, according to the testimony of his comrades, in being allowed to take a part in the fighting, and was stationed, in command of twelve soldiers, on the quarter-deck by the side of the long-boat (*esquife*). The left wing, under Barbarigo, was completely victorious against the Turkish right, and the *Marquesa*, by all accounts, took her full share of the fighting. Among her immediate opponents was the galley of the Pasha of Alexandria, bearing the royal standard of Egypt, which was captured by boarding—Cervantes being among the first to leap on her deck, receiving in the fight three gunshot wounds in the breast and one through the left hand. Fortunately there has come down to us a minute account of our hero's behaviour on this day. Mateo Santisteban, a soldier who fought alongside of him on the deck of the *Marquesa*, testifies before the king's *alcalde* in 1578—being summoned to speak in support of a petition for aid presented by Rodrigo de Cervantes, his father—that he and his comrades prayed Cervantes, when going into action, to remain below in the galley's cabin, for he

was weak and ill of a fever—that Cervantes replied that if he did so they would say of him he had not done his duty—that he would rather die fighting for God and his king than keep himself under cover and in safety—that he (Santisteban) saw Cervantes fight like a valiant soldier at his station by the *esquife*, where, with other soldiers, the captain had placed him; which testimony is confirmed by Gabriel de Castañeda, another of his comrades.[1] Cervantes has himself given us an animated picture of the fighting in his poetical letter to Mateo Vasquez. I quote from the spirited version of the poem made by my late friend, Mr. J. Y. Gibson, and have the greater pleasure in doing so as neither the original (only discovered in 1863), nor the translation, is so well known as it deserves to be:—

"And on that happy day, when dubious Fate
Look'd on the foeman's fleet with baleful eye,
On ours with smiling glance and fortunate,
Inspired with mingled dread and courage high,
In thickest of the direful fight I stood,
My hope still stronger than my panoply.
I marked the shatter'd host melt like a flood,
And thousand spots upon old Neptune's breast
Dyed red with heathen and with Christian blood;
Death, like a fury, running with foul zest
Hither and thither, sending crowds in ire
To lingering torture, or to speedy rest;
The cries confused, the horrid din and dire,
The mortal writhings of the desperate,
Who breath'd their last 'mid water and 'mid fire;
The deep-drawn sighs, the groanings loud and great
That sped from wounded breasts in many a throe,
Cursing their bitter and detested fate;

[1] See *Navarrete*, p. 317, for the full depositions.

The blood that still was left them ceased to flow,
What time our trumpets, pealing far and near,
Proclaimed our glory and their overthrow;
The sounds triumphant, ringing loud and clear,
Bore through the smitten air, in jubilant flood,
The Christians' victory, from ear to ear!
At that sweet moment I, unlucky, stood
With one hand buckled firmly to my blade,
The other dripping downward streams of blood;
Within my breast a cruel thrust had made
A deep and gaping wound, and my left hand
Was bruised and shatter'd, past all human aid."

Lepanto has become an empty name. The great victory which rang all Europe through from side to side is forgotten. The brilliant figure of the young conqueror—"the Man sent from God, whose name was John," as Pope Pius in his ecstasy dubbed him—which sheds a passing gleam of romance even over the dull page of Philip's reign—an apparition which must have cheated for a while the youthful fancy of Miguel de Cervantes to imagine that the age of chivalry had come again—has faded out of the world's knowledge. Of all who took part in that famous battle, who included the flower of the youth of Spain and Italy, and the most illustrious captains of the age—it is the private in Moncada's regiment whose memory survives. It is the fortunes of the *Marquesa* galley we follow throughout the fighting. It is Miguel de Cervantes who is the hero of the battle: *Don Quixote*, which has made Lepanto immortal. Still, it would be a poor compliment to the memory of the great writer were we to forget or lightly estimate that which he esteemed as the chief honour of his life—his share in the victory of Lepanto.

In after-life he cherished his hurts received in that fight as his most precious of blessings. He would rather, he says in his reply to his venomous secret assailant, Avellaneda, bear his losses and his sufferings than be whole and have had no share in the glory of the day. He had lost his left hand for "the greater glory of his right."[1]

The recognition of Cervantes' services in the battle, even though those services were rendered in the capacity of a common soldier, was sufficiently notable when we consider that he was but one out of some twenty thousand, though it took a shape which may move a smile. His pay was raised by six crowns a month. He was visited by Don John himself in the hospital at Messina, whither the sick and wounded were taken, and where he was long detained. The wounds in the breast and in the hand tormented him, as we know from his own words, for two years afterwards. His hand was "still dripping blood" at Tunis, where he was engaged under Don John in the capture of *La Goleta*. The use of this hand, which was "shattered in a thousand places," was never recovered, though the popular notion, which has been kept alive by forged portraits and fraudulent statues, that Cervantes was wholly deprived of his hand by a shot or a surgical operation, is erroneous. His own words are that he lost "*el movimiento de la mano izquierda*"[2]—the movement, or use, of the left hand; not that he lost the hand altogether. Nor could he have served as an infantry soldier for four years after

[1] See Prologue to the second part of *Don Quixote*, in vol. iv. of my edition, p. 6.

[2] See *Viaje del Parnaso*, chap. i.

his wound had he been disabled by the total loss of his hand. On the 29th of April 1572, he was sufficiently recovered to leave the hospital at Messina. He then joined the regiment of Figueroa, as famous as his old regiment of Moncada, and took part in Don John's abortive second naval campaign in the Levant, of which so graphic an account is given in the "Story of the Captive" in the second part of *Don Quixote*. The next year he was engaged in the expedition against Tunis. From the end of 1573 to May 1574 he was in garrison with his regiment in the island of Sardinia; thence, at the latter date, he was transferred to Lombardy, under the orders of Don John. In August 1575 we find him at Naples, whence, there appearing no further prospect of active service, the League being dissolved, and Don John called away from his designs of empire in Africa by his jealous half-brother, Cervantes got leave of absence to revisit his native country. He was furnished with many certificates of conduct and letters of recommendation, of a character and emphasis which we must regard as extraordinary, seeing that he was still but a private soldier, and they who wrote in his behalf were the most illustrious captains and dignitaries of the age. Don Carlos de Aragon, Duke of Sesa and Viceroy of Sicily, wrote to the king and to the Council, in most flattering terms, in favour of "a soldier as deserving as he was unfortunate, who, by his noble virtue and gentle disposition, had won the esteem of his comrades and chiefs."[1] Don John himself, the

[1] See *Navarrete*, p. 314. The Duke de Sesa was he who afterwards became Lope de Vega's great patron, in which character he forgot his old friend and fellow-soldier of Lepanto.

commander-in-chief, gave him letters to the king, in which he was strongly recommended for a company, as "a man of valour, of merit, and of many signal services." Provided with these letters, which proved to be of most woful disservice instead of the expected advantage to the possessor, Cervantes set sail for Spain on board the galley *El Sol*, in company with several other distinguished soldiers, including his brother Rodrigo and one Don Pero Diaz de *Quesada*, ex-governor of the Goletta.[1]

It could have been in no very cheerful mood, however fair his prospects of advancement might have seemed, that Cervantes set out to return home. His six years' arduous service had resulted in no bettering of his fortune. His dreams of military glory must have been rudely disturbed. That era of knightly enterprise which seemed to dawn when Don John, in person and character no ill-embodiment of one of his heroes of romance, entered upon his command in the East, had closed abruptly, leaving the promise of great deeds but half accomplished. The vision of chivalry which broke upon the young soldier's eyes when the great fleet went forth to battle upon that memorable morning in October was dissolved. The Turk was beaten, only to renew the fight next year in greater strength. The victories in Africa had been quickly turned to defeat and disaster. The Christian champion—the "man sent from God"—who had begun the fight so gloriously against the Paynim, alas! had been forced to turn his back to the enemy with the duel only half fought out. So ignoble an ending to a campaign so loftily inspired and

[1] "They affirm that his name was Quejada or Quesada."—*Don Quixote*, Part I., chap. i., in vol. i., p. 33, of my edition.

so gloriously begun, might well damp the enthusiasm of a soldier like Miguel de Cervantes and afflict even his sanguine soul with despair of chivalry.

But a still greater affliction was in store for our disillusioned and wounded hero, to extinguish his hopes and to spoil his life. The galley *El Sol*, when almost in sight of the Spanish coast, was set upon by a squadron of Algerine corsairs under the command of the redoubtable Arnaut Mami, an Albanian renegade, the terror of the narrow seas. After a running fight between *El Sol* and three of the swiftest of the pirate galleys, in which Cervantes is reported by his companions to have borne himself valiantly, the Spaniards were overpowered, and had to yield themselves prisoners.[1] They were divided, according to their supposed value—that is, their ransom-yielding capacity—among the captors, Cervantes himself falling to the lot of a corsair captain, one Déli Mami, a renegade Greek, noted even among the renegades for his singular brutality. The letters of Don Juan and other chiefs which were found upon him led his captors to believe that he was a person of extraordinary importance, upon whom, therefore, an excessive ransom might be set. Thus the very favours which were conferred on Cervantes, and the acknowledgments which he received for his services, were, by a peculiar stroke of ill-fortune, turned to his greater injury and were the special cause of his suffering. He was brought to Algiers, loaded with chains, and treated with exceptional harshness, in order that, according to true corsair policy, he might be the more eager, being so considerable a personage, to purchase his freedom.

[1] This fight is supposed to be described by Cervantes in his *Galatea*, book iii.

CHAPTER III.

NO passage in Cervantes' chequered and ill-starred life is so full of melancholy interest as his five years' captivity in Algiers. That dismal record called the *Calamities of Authors* contains many a painful chapter; but to no man of letters did it ever happen to endure a torture so exquisite as that which it was the unhappy lot of the author of *Don Quixote* to bear. Camoens, in his old age, half-blind and crippled, begging his daily bread in the streets of Lisbon, is a sufficiently pathetic figure. But Camoens was at least among his own people, and it was by Portuguese, whom he glorified and tried to exalt, that he was starved and neglected. Cervantes, in whom we recognise so many traits, physical and moral, in common with the poet of the *Lusiads*, was in the prime and flower of manhood, with the bloom of his valiant deeds in soldiership fresh upon him, when he was taken prisoner and left to drag out his life in chains, a slave to the hereditary persecutors of his nation and creed. The mind cannot conceive, for one gifted with the poet's and soldier's temperament, at the threshold of what seemed a career full of promise, a more terrible stroke of fortune than that which now fell on Cervantes. Algiers, that den of pirates which had insolently raised itself in the very face of the most

potent of the Christian states and barred the road to the inland sea, was then at the height of its power—a power which, strange to say, no maritime nation dared to contest. The armaments directed against the Turk would have sufficed to beat down the walls of Algiers and extirpate that hornet's nest. But for some reason, which those who interpret the policy of nations have failed to explain, none of the Christian states ventured to assail this outwork of Islam, which was ten times more dangerous to the peace and welfare of Christendom than the Grand Signor at Constantinople. Since the time of Charles V. no Spanish monarch seemed to have thought it worth his while to clear the seas of this brood of rovers, though it was Spain which suffered most by their enterprises. In the time of Cervantes, Algiers was a dependency of Turkey, having been conquered from the Moors by one of the brothers Barbarossa, in 1516. The Viceroy, or Dey, nominated from Constantinople, was usually chosen from among the most select of the cut-throats, and was little more than the corsair commodore—his jurisdiction limited to the strip of *littorale* commanded by the pirate galleys, and his revenue derived entirely from prizes taken at sea. The corsair captains were mostly renegades, the converts from Christianity being invariably found to make the most savage and truculent of Mohammedans. In 1575 the Viceroy of Algiers was Rabadan Pasha, a Sardinian renegade. The total population over whom he ruled did not amount, according to Father Haedo (who is the best and most trustworthy authority on all that relates to the affairs of Algiers), to more than 100,000, of whom the renegades, including individuals of every Christian race, formed one-

third. Of the thirty-five corsair captains who are enumerated by Haedo, twenty-four were renegades or sons of renegades, ten Turks, and one Jew. The captives retaining the name of Christians were estimated at nearly 25,000, among whom were persons of the highest quality, chiefly Spaniards and Italians. These were treated, in ordinary times, with tolerable leniency. The meaner sort were made to work for their masters, but those from whom ransoms were expected, though kept in strict confinement, were allowed considerable indulgences. If the property of the Viceroy, they did no menial work. They were suffered the free exercise of their religion, and even to act comedies and otherwise recreate themselves.[1] The one unpardonable offence in the captive was attempting to escape, which was resented by the owner as an invasion of his pecuniary rights. A price was set upon every slave according to the local estimate of his worth and quality, the business of ransoming being a regular traffic, conducted upon fixed principles, with recognised agents on either side.

Shortly after Cervantes' arrival in Algiers, Rabadan Pasha was replaced as Viceroy by Hassan Pasha, a Venetian renegade, a monster of cruelty, noted even among the Algerines for his lust of blood and singular brutality. His character is described by Cervantes himself, through the mouth of the Captive in *Don Quixote:*— "And though hunger and nakedness might trouble us at times, and indeed almost always, nothing afflicted us so

[1] Cervantes himself is said to have written plays to amuse his fellow-captives. That one of them, however, which is attributed to him, *La Virgen de Guadelupe* (printed by the Seville Society of Bibliophiles), could scarcely have been calculated to recreate even an Algerine slave. I cannot see any trace in it of Cervantes' hand.

much as to hear and see at every turn the till then unheard-of and unseen cruelties which my master (Hassan Pasha) inflicted upon the Christians. Every day he hanged some one, impaled another, and cut off the ears of a third; and this upon so small a pretext or on none at all, that even the Turks acknowledged that he did so for nothing else than because it was his will to do it, and because by nature he was the homicide of the human race (*homicida de todo el género humano*)."[1]

This tyrant, who was said to keep a house full of noseless Christians for his private entertainment, was master of Algiers during the whole five years of Cervantes' captivity. Very soon after Cervantes was taken, and while he was still a slave to Déli Mami, he made the first of his many attempts at escape. In company with some of his friends, he tried to reach Oran—then a Spanish possession—by land; but the party were deserted by the Moor whom they had engaged for their guide, and were compelled to return to Algiers. Two or three other attempts were made, as Cervantes himself mentions in his comedy of *Life in Algiers* (*El Trato de Argel*); but in every case, though he displayed extraordinary cunning and craft in planning the enterprise, he was foiled, either by the timidity or the treachery of some one of his comrades—he being always the first to give himself up, when the attempt had miscarried, and take the blame upon his own shoulders.

In the second year of his captivity Cervantes managed to communicate with some of his friends at home regarding his own and his brother's deplorable condition.

[1] *Don Quixote*, Part I., chap. xl.

His father, Rodrigo, responded to his appeal by raising a sum of money for their ransom, which was remitted to Algiers. The money was rejected by Déli Mami as insufficient for the redemption of a captive so illustrious as Miguel, but it obtained the release of his brother Rodrigo. The elder brother being free, a plan was concocted between the two for the deliverance of Miguel and some of his companions, through the agency of an armed Spanish ship, which was to appear off the shore on a certain day. This plan miscarried, as did every other, though through no fault of Miguel's, whose conduct throughout was marked by extraordinary coolness, daring, and magnanimity. In the garden of a Greek renegade named Hassan, six miles to the eastward of Algiers, was a cavern by the sea-shore, where, from time to time, some forty or fifty escaped captives, chiefly gentlemen of quality, had taken refuge. They were maintained and supplied with food by Cervantes, with the aid of a Navarrese slave called Juan. Here they awaited the arrival of the promised ship from Spain which was to carry them away—Cervantes being the last to take refuge in the cavern. The appointed day arrived. A frigate, sent from Majorca, came off Hassan's garden in the night, and succeeded in establishing a communication with the captives. Some Moorish fishermen, however, having given the alarm, the ship was obliged to put to sea again. Meanwhile there was a traitor at work, as usual, among those whom Cervantes was risking so much to save. A certain renegade called *El Dorador* (*The Gilder*), who had been enlisted in the scheme, took fright and revealed it to the Viceroy himself, who

sent a strong party of armed Turks to the cavern. Quick to perceive that his plans had failed, Cervantes came forward to declare before the Viceroy's soldiers that he alone had managed the affair, and that none of his companions were to blame. When brought before the Viceroy, he repeated his declaration, nor could he be induced, even with a rope round his neck and the threat of instant death by torture, to implicate any one in his scheme of flight.

There is something inexplicable in the behaviour of the Viceroy on this and other similar occasions, when confronted with this captive. This monster of cruelty, who was never known to spare any one in his wrath, whose daily pastime was torture and mutilation, who had a fancy, revolting even to the Algerine mind, for hanging offenders with his own hands, seems to have quailed before the intrepid bearing of this one Christian slave. According to the remarkable testimony of Father Haedo, who compiled his history of Algiers from the mouths of those who had been captives during Cervantes' time, Hassan Pasha was wont to say that, "could he preserve himself against this maimed Spaniard, he would hold safe his Christians, his ships, and his city." Cervantes himself records, with a pardonable self-complacency, in *Don Quixote*, that "the only one who held his own with him (Hassan) was a Spanish soldier —a certain Saavedra (*i.e.*, Cervantes himself)—to whom, though he did things which will dwell in the memory of those people for many years, and all for the recovery of his liberty, his master never gave a blow nor bade any one to do so, nor even spoke to him an ill word." How are we to account for the strange, unique, immunity

enjoyed by Cervantes? That they took him for a person of higher rank than he was is certain; but that circumstance alone, with the prospect of large ransom, would not account for his being spared the indignities and torments to which the highest captives were subject. Some have supposed that they had hopes of converting their prisoner to Mohammedanism, as so many of his bold and fearless nature had been converted. But nothing in Cervantes' life or conduct in Algiers gives colour to this theory. On the contrary, all the evidence goes to prove that he was distinguished among the captives for his correct behaviour, for his benevolence and kindliness of heart towards the poorer Christian captives, and his efforts to comfort them in affliction and keep them steadfast in the faith. Another theory is that Cervantes had a powerful friend at court in the person of one of the corsair captains, one Morato (Murad), called *Maltrapillo* (*The Sloven*), a Murcian renegade, who was one of Hassan Pasha's principal favourites. This circumstance clearly does not go far enough to explain the influence which Cervantes exercised during his captivity, not only over the Viceroy, but, as a consequence of that perhaps, over the other Christian captives.

In order to keep his dreaded prisoner more close Hassan Pasha purchased him from his master, Déli Mami, for 500 gold crowns; and henceforth, being upon ransom and a slave of the Viceroy's, he was exempt from menial labour, according to custom, though still forced to wear chains. About this time it was, having been now two years in captivity, that he wrote his poetical epistle to Mateo Vasquez, the King of Spain's

secretary, which was discovered some five-and-twenty years ago among the archives of the house of Altamira, and forms one of the most valuable of the documents connected with his biography. In this poem, which consists of eighty-one tercets in the metre of *The Voyage to Parnassus*, the author begins with an autobiographical sketch, reciting his acts and services by sea and land, concluding with a proposal for a general rising of the Christian slaves in Algiers, to be seconded by an armament from Spain. The king is entreated to complete the work which was attempted by his illustrious father, Charles V.; to destroy the pirates' den; to take pity on the poor Christians, who, with straining eyes, watch for the Spanish fleet to come and unlock their prison doors. The poet is confident that the benign royal bosom is touched by pity of the poor wretches who pine in chains almost in sight of the sacred invincible shores of their native land. The land of the infidel was weak, the city ill-fortified, and its defenders divided by blood and race —held together only by a common faith and lust of gain.[1]

The adventure was one which was not by any means desperate; and had Philip II. been inspired by any particle of chivalry, or even by any feeling of national duty, he might have succeeded in winning Algiers. Haedo avers that "had Cervantes' fortune corresponded to his intrepidity, his industry, and his projects, this day Algiers would belong to the Christians." But there is no evidence that the letter to Mateo Vasquez ever

[1] Mr. J. Y. Gibson has translated the epistle to Mateo Vasquez, which will be found included in the volume containing his version of *The Voyage to Parnassus*.

reached the royal eyes. That "benign bosom" (there is always a suspicion of sarcasm in Cervantes' references to Philip II.) was occupied just then with a safer and more tempting adventure—the seizure of Portugal—the throne of which kingdom had become vacant through the disaster which overwhelmed the madcap Don Sebastian and his army at Alcázarquiver.

Undaunted by the ill-fortune which seemed to dog his steps, Cervantes made several other attempts to escape from his abhorred prison. Shortly after his last failure he sent a secret message to the Governor of Oran, entreating him to meet himself and a party of captives at the frontier. The messenger, with Cervantes' letter on him, was seized and brought before the Viceroy, who ordered the one to be impaled and the other to receive two thousand blows with the stick. Once more Cervantes, to the astonishment of Christians and Moslems, was spared—once more to resume his attempts at deliverance. In September 1578 he found a Spanish renegade, one Abderrahman, formerly the Licentiate Giron of Granada, to conspire with him, together with two Valencian merchants resident in Algiers, in a means of escape. These, at their own cost, were to provide an armed vessel, which was to take off sixty of the principal captives, under the direction of Cervantes. The traitor on this occasion was one Blanco de Paz, an Aragonese and a Dominican monk, said to be an agent of the Holy Inquisition, who had for some reason unknown conceived a bitter hatred for Cervantes. This creature, whose mysterious conduct and wholly inexplicable baseness gave Cervantes a good deal of trouble in Algiers, went before the Viceroy to reveal the plot and

denounce the author. The intrusion of the Holy Inquisition (not for the only time) in Cervantes' affairs is a curious circumstance, which the Spanish biographers have passed over with the usual reserve when motives of faith are in question. The fact that the Holy Office had an agent in Algiers, with free access to the Viceroy, is in itself strange. Upon Blanco de Paz's information, Cervantes was once more summoned to appear before Hassan Pasha, public proclamation being made that any one harbouring him should be punished with death. Cervantes came forward voluntarily, and, presenting himself before the Viceroy, was seized and bound hand and foot, with a rope put round his neck, and threatened with instant death. Again we are told that, moved by his fearless demeanour and his "ingenious and witty answers," the Viceroy was induced to pardon him, ordering him, for his only punishment, to be confined in the Moors' prison, which was in his own palace, and laden with extra chains and guarded with special rigour. The cheerfulness, constancy, and fortitude with which these severities and his unvarying ill-fortune were borne by Cervantes won him, says one of the witnesses of his conduct and fellow-captives, Luis de Pedrosa, "great fame, praise, honour, and glory among the Christians." We have the remarkable testimony, indeed, of Haedo, who wrote his *Topography of Algiers* upon the information obtained from various gentlemen of rank and condition who had been captives in Algiers, to prove that the case of Cervantes attracted singular attention among his contemporaries, for the extraordinary rigours to which he was subject, his daring attempts at escape, and his influence over his fellow-captives, which seems to have been without

precedent. Haedo (whose book, though not published till 1612, was written before *Don Quixote* appeared, and therefore before his testimony could have been influenced by Cervantes' celebrity as a writer) says distinctly that the captivity of Cervantes was "one of the worst there ever was in Algiers." Protracted through the causes we have indicated, the over-estimate put by the Algerines upon the value of their prisoner and the inability of his family to raise the required ransom, it was destined to come to an end, for the world's good fortune. In 1579 the large preparations made by Philip II. for the conquest of Portugal spread terror throughout Barbary, it being supposed that his real object was a descent on Algiers. Accordingly, while the hardships and sufferings of the poorer captives were increased through the strenuous efforts of the Algerines to add to the defences of the port, there was a greater eagerness in the masters to realise their property in slaves, so that ransoms began to be reduced. The friends of Cervantes had never ceased their efforts to procure the sum demanded for his redemption, though it was out of all proportion to their means. In March 1578 a petition was presented to the King's Council by Rodrigo Cervantes, the elder, reciting his son's services, and praying for assistance to free him from captivity. The Duke of Sesa backed up this petition, speaking warmly of Cervantes as a good soldier, who had fought for his Majesty, whom he had himself recommended for promotion, and who was deserving of all favour and consideration. The father, Rodrigo Cervantes, died in 1579, leaving the burden of Miguel's liberation to rest upon his mother and the widowed sister, Andrea. The two women managed

between them to raise a sum of 300 ducats, equivalent to £35 in English money. From various other sources another sum of 300 ducats was got, chiefly by way of loan—(a burden which hung round the neck of Miguel for years after)—and the whole placed in the hands of Father Juan Gil, the Redemptorist Father, and Official Redeemer of Castile—a good and holy man, whom Cervantes, in his gratitude, has made immortal.

Father Gil arrived at Algiers in May 1580 with his 600 ducats in gold. But Hassan Pasha would not abate a jot of his demand for Cervantes, which was 1000 ducats, or double the amount he had himself given for this slave to his old master, Déli Mami. Being on the point of returning to Constantinople, on his recall from his government, Hassan had already placed Cervantes on board of one of his galleys, among his other gear, chained and fettered. At the last moment, when the galley was putting off, Father Gil, through his pious entreaties and efforts among the local merchants and others (among whom we should be glad to include the friendly "Sloven"), was enabled to raise a further sum of 500 crowns (*escudos*) in Spanish gold, with which Hassan was satisfied.[1] Then Cervantes was once more a free man, having completed just five years of captivity.

There took place a further delay before Cervantes could embark for Spain, caused by the obdurate malevolence of Cervantes' old enemy, Blanco de Paz. Baffled in his attempts upon Cervantes' life in Algiers, the Dominican had been spreading certain calumnies in

[1] The total sum paid for Cervantes' ransom was a little more than £100 of English money of that time—equivalent at this day to £500.

Spain respecting Cervantes' behaviour in captivity. It was necessary for Cervantes, who believed that he had established a claim upon the king for his services, and who looked for civil or military employment of some kind on his return to Spain, that he should come back to his native country with a fair character. The process which ensued seems to have been regarded at the time as unusual, and to us must appear a little superfluous. However, a formal investigation was held in the presence of Father Juan Gil, with all the forms of a judicial inquiry, into the conduct of Miguel de Cervantes during his captivity. A number of witnesses were summoned, including all the gentlemen of note who had been or still were prisoners in Algiers, and the proceedings terminated with the solemn testimony of the judge, Father Juan Gil; for all which the world cannot be too grateful to the memory of Blanco de Paz, who figured as Cervantes' accuser on the occasion. The report of the process, with the depositions of all the witnesses, has come down to us, and it is from it that we are enabled to obtain a most minute, vivid, and pathetic picture of Cervantes' life in Algiers. Had there survived no other record than this to tell us what kind of man Cervantes was before he became a great writer, this would have been sufficient. The enthusiasm, the alacrity, and the unanimity with which the witnesses, who include the captives of the highest rank and character then in Algiers, gave their testimony in favour of their beloved comrade, are very remarkable and most touching. They speak of him in terms such as might glorify any knight of romance; of his courage in danger, his resolution under suffering, his patience in trouble,

his daring and fertility of resource in action. Miguel de Cervantes, during his five years' slavery, had clearly won the hearts of his fellow-captives as completely as he had quelled the fury of his barbarous tyrants and softened their temper.[1]

So ended the fiery ordeal through which the "mutilated of Lepanto" had to pass when yet the world knew him for nothing but a soldier. The story of his life in Algiers, usually passed over hastily by his biographers, it is necessary to tell at large, for it was in that rough school the writer was developed out of the soldier. Algiers, which spoilt his life and ended his dream of romance, roused in him that finer humanity of which *Don Quixote* was the outcome. Throughout all his life and in all his works we see the influence of the hard training which he had gone through in Algiers. How deeply impressed he was by his Algerine experiences, which gave him, doubtless, a larger view of human nature, with a deeper knowledge and a wider tolerance, is made evident in the numerous references he makes to his captivity and to the scenes and characters he had witnessed and studied in that curious little world, with its motley group of people of all races and creeds. Of several of his plays Algiers was made the scene, and his own and his companions' adventures the subject. In several of his novels Algerine corsairs and Christian captives are introduced. In *Don Quixote* we have the episode of the captive Luis de Viedma, doubtless a real passage in the life of one of Cervantes' companions, and the moving story

[1] The whole report of the case, with all the depositions of the witnesses, is given in *Navarrete*, pp. 319-349. I have abridged it in an appendix to vol. i. of my edition of *Don Quixote*.

of the Morisco Ricote and his daughter. In all his writings we have the frequent recurrence of Eastern ideas and Eastern expressions, with, what is the most notable fruit of his Algerine experience and a singular evidence of his own good nature and generosity of heart, a degree of tolerance and charity for Mohammedans, which was certainly unusual at that age, and unique in a Spanish great writer.

CHAPTER IV.

CERVANTES landed in Spain on one of the last days of 1580. He had been absent just ten years from his native country. He was now thirty-three years of age; and it may be convenient, at this period of his life, to describe what manner of man he was. Unhappily, and to the scandal of Spain, even then entering upon the golden age of her native art, there is no authentic portrait extant of the author of *Don Quixote*. Though said to have been twice painted in his lifetime—by Francisco Pacheco, the master and father-in-law of the great Velasquez, and by Juan de Jauréguy, an artist of eminence—these pictures have been lost or are no longer to be identified. The well-known effigy, in a court suit bedizened with lace and frill, with a ruff of portentous dimensions, all of the period—the hooked nose, big round eyes, and baby mouth—which has stood for the last hundred years and more the counterfeit presentment of Miguel de Cervantes, must be pronounced, for the credit of nature and in the interests of physiognomy, a forgery. A counterfeit indeed it is, but no true presentment. This portrait is a pure fabrication, and a work of fancy, of which the history is not the least of the strange mystifications of which our hero has been the victim. I have told the story in detail else-

where,[1] and need only recapitulate the main facts. When in the year 1738, the English Minister, Lord Carteret (who, with other claims to remembrance of which he has been so strangely deprived, is to be welcomed as an enthusiastic Cervantist), in order to please Queen Caroline, published his edition of *Don Quixote*—the first in any country in which the text was treated with due honour as a classic, and still, in Tonson's beautiful type, one of the handsomest—he endeavoured to obtain for his frontispiece a portrait of the author. But though, as we are told by Dr. Oldfield in the preface, every effort was made through the English ambassador in Madrid to find a portrait of Cervantes, none such could be heard of in Spain. Therefore, to match the other fanciful illustrations in the four volumes—gorgeous and ghastly sculptures in the Dutch manner by Vanderbank and Vandergucht—the English artist, William Kent, was set to prepare "a representation which should figure the ingenious author in his great design." William Kent accordingly "invented and delineated" a portrait of Cervantes. A three-quarters figure, since familiar to all the world by his hooked nose and his starched ruff, supposed to be the ingenious author of *Don Quixote*, is seated in his library with a pen in his hand, and paper and ink (for the greater assistance of the imagination) on a table by his side. His left arm ends in a stump, gaily frilled. By his side is depicted a knight on horseback in full armour, with Sancho and his ass in the rear. We have only to compare this print with all the other

[1] In the first volume of my edition of *Don Quixote*, p. 117, etc.

engraved portraits in the Spanish or the English editions, to perceive that they are all copies of this, William Kent's fanciful sketch. That neither the English artist nor the editors of Lord Carteret's *Don Quixote* had any idea of deception is proved by the epigraph in large letters at the foot of the picture: *Retrato de Cervantes de Saavedra por el mismo* (*Portrait of Cervantes Saavedra by himself*), meaning, of course, a portrait drawn after Cervantes' own description of his person. On this basis, as I have shown, as the best and most candid of Spanish critics are now agreed, every existing print purporting to be a portrait of Cervantes has been worked. Sometimes the face is turned to the right—sometimes to the left. Generally the lower limbs are omitted, with the stump, the pen, the writing-table, and the other decorative accessories. Everywhere, however, are repeated the hooked nose, the curly moustache, the round eyes, which grow rounder—the baby mouth, which grows smaller—the ruff, which grows stiffer and more newly got up, with every repetition. The editors of the great Spanish edition of 1780, issued by the Academy out of very shame at the homage paid to Cervantes by the foreigner, made a feeble attempt to assert for their own portrait (which was a bust only, in an oval frame) a legitimate paternity. It was taken, they said, from a picture painted by Alonso del Arco, which the Conde de Aguila, a patriotic nobleman of Seville, had purchased from a dealer in Madrid. The first difficulty here is that Alonso del Arco, the deaf and dumb painter, was not born till 1625—nine years after Cervantes' death; so that his work could have no claim to be painted from the life. Another awkward circumstance, which everybody can detect, is, that the face in

the Academy's portrait is identical in feature, in look, and in *pose* with Kent's ideal portrait of 1738. For this mystery the scholars of the Spanish Academy suggested a most ingenious, but, what will appear to all candid minds, a most desperate solution—namely, that it was their own portrait which was the original, and Lord Carteret's the copy—a theory which requires us to believe that the English editors of 1734, having before them a genuine portrait of Cervantes wherewith, for the first time, to adorn an edition of *Don Quixote* and give it value, preferred, out of their preposterous vanity or abundant deceitfulness or sheer perverseness, to make the world believe the real portrait was a sham one.

The facility with which the Spanish Academy in 1780 convinced themselves that their portrait of Cervantes was a true and perfect likeness closely resembles the process by which *Don Quixote* was made to accept the helmet—which in the first essay we learn he demolished with ease—as "a good and perfect helmet," which needed no further trial. Ever since that time the Spaniards have gone on repeating that false image as though it were a real effigy of their Prince of Wits —painters and sculptors reproducing those delusive features, poets singing and patriots gushing over them, until William Kent's ideal Cervantes has become stamped on every one's fancy as the true Miguel. Of late years there has been a revolt against the absurd and childish superstition, led by Spanish critics of the new school of *Cervantistas*. The most enlightened of them reject the Kent portrait and the fable which connects it with a Spanish original. In 1864 the hearts of all true Cervantophiles were rejoiced with the report of the discovery of a

new portrait, believed to be the *vera effigies* of the author of *Don Quixote*. The discoverer was Don José Maria Asensio, a gentleman of Seville, who is noted for the enlightened zeal and industry with which he has followed up every trace of Cervantes. The story, as told by Asensio,[1] is briefly as follows:—In 1850, Don José found an anonymous manuscript (not dated), which had once belonged to Don Rafael Monti, of Seville, entitled *Relacion de cosas de Sevilla de* 1590 *á* 1640. In this manuscript it was written that in one of the six pictures, painted by Francisco Pacheco and another for the convent of *La Merced*—a picture representing a Redemptorist Father landing with some captives from Algiers—there was a portrait of Miguel de Cervantes, among other real personages. This statement was confirmed to Don José by a manuscript notice of a collection of portraits in chalk of eminent contemporaries by Pacheco, which (in an incomplete form) is still extant. Induced by these hints to search among the pictures in the *Museo* of Seville (which was formerly the convent *Casa Grande de la Merced*), Don José found one in the series of six described in the catalogue as *San Pedro de Nolasco en uno de los pasos de su vida* (St. Peter of Nola in one of the passages of his life). This represents a boat putting off from shore, in and about which are seven figures, one of which is the saint himself. The others are evidently captives lately redeemed. All are believed, on evidence which has satisfied Señor Asensio, to be portraits of real personages. Among them, conspicuous above all, is a man standing in the stern of

[1] *Nuevos Documentos para ilustrar la vida de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.* Seville, 1864.

the boat using a pole, dressed like a sailor, with bare legs and feet, and a wide-brimmed, low-crowned hat. His face is turned full to the spectator, as though the artist wished him expressly to be seen. This, according to Señor Asensio, is Miguel de Cervantes. There is much to strengthen and support this conjecture; but alas! it is only a conjecture. Cervantes might well have been chosen as one of the captives to be represented in a scene intended to illustrate the good deeds of the Redemptorists. His case had made a great noise in Spain. Moreover, we know that he was a personal friend and intimate of Pacheco, by whom, we know also, he was painted. The figure in the boat is a handsome man in the prime of early manhood, as Cervantes was in 1580. The face, though badly modelled and ill-drawn, is a singularly fine face, with a broad forehead, beautiful eyes, a well-defined and rather prominent nose; defective only in the jaw and chin, of which the weakness has probably been exaggerated by bad drawing, though it is true to Cervantes' known defects of character, his indecision and infirmity of purpose. Of this portrait it may be truly said, what cannot be said of its rival, the hook-nosed impostor, that it might be the portrait of Cervantes. No lover of Cervantes who ever looked upon the original at Seville, dimmed by age as it is and hung in a bad light, but must have devoutly wished that its claims to be a true portrait could be verified. Unfortunately they rest only upon a long chain of conjectures, of which one or two of the links are rather weak.[1] One piece of evidence,

[1] I have a copy in colours of the head and bust of *El Barquero*, for which I am indebted to the kindness of my friend, Don José

which would have been conclusive, is lacking. The collection of portraits by Pacheco of his contemporaries done in chalks, which has been recently reproduced under the auspices of Señor Asensio, is unfortunately wanting in the sketch of Cervantes. In its absence, we can only hope that something will turn up to confirm our faith in *El Barquero*. Meanwhile we must be content to take Cervantes' own portrait of himself in words, which, in the absence of the promised engraving from Jauréguy's picture, he gave us in the Prologue to the *Novelas Exemplares*, published in 1613:—"He whom you see here, of aquiline features, with chestnut hair, a smooth, unruffled forehead, with sparkling eyes, and a nose arched, though well proportioned—a beard of silver which, not twenty years since, was of gold, great moustaches, a small mouth, the teeth of no account, for he has but six of them, and they are in bad condition, and worse arranged, for they do not hold correspondence one with another; the body between two extremes, neither great nor little; the complexion bright, rather white than brown, somewhat heavy in the shoulders—this, I say, is the aspect of the author of *Don Quixote* of *La Mancha*." This description, allowing for the difference of years, tallies exactly with Pacheco's figure of the boatman. The smooth, unruffled forehead, the sparkling eyes, the well-arched nose, are all in the picture. The colour of the boatman's hair is of a ruddy chestnut, and the shoulders—*algo cargadas*—strikingly evident.

Maria Asensio. The engravings of the head in Sir W. Stirling-Maxwell's *Life of Don John* and in the frontispiece of Gibson's translation of the *Viaje del Parnaso*, do not do justice to the picture.

To assist the imagination, in the absence of a pictured likeness, in calling up before the mind's eye the man as he was in his prime of life, let it be added that he was near-sighted, and had an impediment in his speech.[1] From his physical attributes, as well as from the features of his mind and character, we may assume Cervantes to have belonged by blood to the ancient Gothic red-haired and fair-skinned type of Spaniards—the type which seems to be gradually dying out in these latter days, beaten, under the modern conditions of the struggle for life, by the darker, black-haired race—the type to which Camoens also belonged, and the best of the *Conquistadores*, and every prominent hero, fighting and writing man, of the Peninsula from the Cid to Don Enrique the Navigator.

For such a man, on his return to Spain after five years' captivity, the prospect, with Philip the Prudent in full glory, was no pleasant one. Cervantes was now in his thirty-third year, with a spirit unbroken by trouble and a heart which no adversity seemed able to sour. Yet his condition was doleful enough to need all the resources of his gay and sanguine temperament to preserve him from despair. He had come back to Spain, after ten years' absence, blighted in all his hopes, disappointed in the promise of his life, without a profession, without a career, neither a soldier nor a civilian, not knowing whether he was in the king's service or out of it, and with the treasure of the prime talent within him still

[1] See *Viaje del Parnaso*, chap. iii.; and the epistle to Mateo Vasquez. Avellaneda, in the bitter, venomous prologue to the false *Don Quixote*, speaks of his rival with incredible brutality as having "more tongue than hands"—*mas lengua que manos.*

undiscovered. To begin the world afresh, as he had to do, he was even less well equipped, except in the matter of experience, than when he was a young man, before Lepanto. His wounds had left him in a great measure disabled for the profession of arms which he had adopted. His chief patron, Don John of Austria, was now dead. Such interest as he had won by his services and good character was already exhausted in the efforts for his release. Those services were precisely, as it happened, those least likely to recommend him for preferment to Philip, who hated the memory, as he had grudged to the victors the glory, of Lepanto. The family of Cervantes was reduced to dire poverty through their exertions to raise his ransom, and henceforward he had to bear the charge of his widowed mother and sister. He himself, without any revenue, was burdened with the debt which had been incurred by his family for his redemption. What was there for the poor maimed soldier of Lepanto to do in the Spain of Philip II.?

CHAPTER V.

CERVANTES returned to Spain at the close of 1580, as poor as he had left it ten years before, the richer only in his experience of life and in that liberty which he has declared to be "the greatest gift bestowed by God on man." His hopes of employment in the public service were doomed to be disappointed, so he was driven to resume his profession of soldier, joining his old regiment of Figueroa. That he was enabled to carry a musket in the ranks testifies not only to the fact that his claims to promotion were ignored, but also to his being less crippled by his wounds than is usually supposed. The regiment of Figueroa was now on the frontier of Portugal, forming part of the force under the Duke of Alva which Philip II. was collecting for the invasion of Portugal. It does not appear to have arrived in time to take part in the review of the army by King Philip at Badajoz; nor was there any fighting by land in which it could distinguish itself, the Portuguese resistance being most feeble, and the veteran Alva bearing down all before him by his skill and cruelty combined. An animated picture of life and character in this very regiment of Figueroa during this campaign, is given by Calderon in his play of *El Alcalde de Zalamea*—Don Lope de Figueroa, the well-known

commandant, being introduced as one of the personages in the drama. Lope de Vega also, who, it is interesting to know, was himself serving at this date in the ranks of the Figueroa regiment, wrote a play in which this tough old soldier, who seems to have been accepted as the very type of the Castilian man-at-arms, figures as a leading character. The picture which the dramatists give of the internal economy of the regiment is not one which is creditable to the morals or the discipline of the famous *Tercio de Flandés*. The men were badly paid and starved, so that it is no wonder that the habits acquired in the campaign in Flanders, and the severities which it had been accustomed to practise on the heretical subjects of Philip, made it the terror of the country people as much as of the foreign enemy. Cervantes himself in several of his works bears testimony to the lawlessness and recklessness of the Spanish soldier, which were the natural reflection of the stern and barbarous treatment to which he was subject.

Philip claimed the throne of Portugal in right of his mother Isabella, who was sister to King Joam III. But there was another claimant put forth by the native party, in the person of Don Antonio, known in history as the Prior of Ocrato, whose pretensions were supported by France and England. Driven from the country by the superior force and genius of Alva, Don Antonio took refuge with his adherents in the Azores, which he occupied with the Portuguese fleet, strengthened by a contingent of English and French ships. Thither, after a considerable delay, caused by disputes between the military and naval commanders, was despatched, in the summer of 1582, a strong naval armament under the

veteran Don Alvaro de Bazan, Marquess of Santa Cruz. The regiment of Figueroa formed part of the expedition, Miguel de Cervantes serving in it as a private, and Rodrigo, his brother, as *alferez*, or ensign—both on board the galleon *San Mateo*. A great battle was fought off Terceira on the 25th of July 1582, in which the Spaniards gained a signal and glorious victory over Don Antonio and his allies—the *San Mateo* bearing, according to the historians, a conspicuous part in the fight, and taking several of the French ships. The fleet returned to Lisbon in the autumn; but, Don Antonio's partisans again making head, the Marquess of Santa Cruz was a second time obliged to take to the sea in the year following, and Terceira was again the scene of an obstinate naval battle, in which Rodrigo de Cervantes so greatly distinguished himself as to attract the notice of the admiral and secure his promotion. Don Antonio being finally suppressed, the fleet returned to Lisbon, after a series of naval operations, which certainly deserve a place among the most glorious, as they were almost the last, of all the achievements of Spain by sea.

Miguel de Cervantes' own share in these transactions, crippled as he was by the damage he had received at Lepanto, could not have been very great. But in his memorial to the king, presented some years afterwards, he refers to his service under the Marquess of Santa Cruz, and in his sonnets he has celebrated "the great Marquess," that "thunderbolt of war," whose fame in the years following was destined to suffer eclipse.[1]

[1] The Marquess of Santa Cruz was the first designated Admiral-in-Chief of the Invincible Armada, but is said not to have approved of the expedition and died a few days after its despatch.

With the return of the Spanish fleet to Lisbon, Cervantes seems to have closed his career as a soldier. He lingered in Portugal for a time, seduced by the courteous and liberal manners of the people, which, as well as the praises of the beauty and grace of their women, he was never weary of reciting. It was in Lisbon that he formed an attachment to a lady, it is said of high birth, of which the fruit was a daughter, Isabel, Cervantes' only child and his constant companion till his death.[1] How deep was the impression left by this romantic episode in his life is proved by the fond and frequent references Cervantes makes to Portugal, and especially to Lisbon, and this in an age when there was even less love between the two races of the Peninsula than there is now. In his very last work, *Persiles and Sigismunda*, written but a few months before his death, he returns to speak of Portugal and the Portuguese with singular enthusiasm, exalting their beauty and high qualities, and commending even their language as sweet and pleasant. Nor was there any attribute of our hero more singular in him than this, his large charity towards all mankind, without distinction of race or creed. He was tolerant even of Moors and of Englishmen, in that fanatical time when the one for their hostility to the faith were not regarded as more outside the pale of humanity than the other for their heresy; nor is there any great Spanish writer of that or any other succeeding age who, steeped as he is in *Españolismo*, is uniformly so courteous to all foreigners.

His military career in Portugal ended, Cervantes seems

[1] Doña Isabel de Saavedra, after her father's death, took the veil, entering a convent of barefooted Trinitarian nuns at Madrid.

for a time to have been indulged with hopes of civil employment. At some date, not precisely to be fixed but probably after his return from the second of the expeditions to the Azores, Cervantes was at Mostagan, on the coast of Barbary—then an outpost of Spain—whence he was made the bearer of despatches to the king, by whom he was ordered on a service supposed to be connected with the provisioning of the Spanish garrison at Oran. The service must have been of a trifling and temporary character; and there is no record of Cervantes being employed by the State in any capacity until some years afterwards.

Meanwhile Cervantes must have revisited his old home at Alcalá and formed acquaintances in the district, for out of a new romance which now crossed his life was begotten his first acknowledged work, *Galatea*, a pastoral of mixed prose and poetry, after the Italian model—a model which the Portuguese Jorge Montemayor, in his *Diana*, had recently brought into fashion. A Valencian poet, Gil Polo, had followed Montemayor with his *Diana Enamorada;* and both pieces were then highly popular and believed to represent the finest culture as imported from Italy. The *Galatea* is written in a flowing, melodious style—a style for correctness superior to that which was natural to the author—profusely interspersed with poems, in the shape of ode, eclogue, and sonnet—abounding in fancy, and what was then regarded as passion. The characters are all shepherds and shepherdesses, but have very little to do, as usual, with sheep. One tells another of a girl who loves him or whom he loves. Sometimes it is the lady who loves the gentleman, and the gentleman will

not. Or it is the other way about, and it is the lady who is unkind, loving another, who carries on the game by bestowing his affections on some one else. They all make long speeches, and have a tendency to break out into verse, which is as stiff with embroidery as the shepherdesses themselves. What is to be done with such themes? The whole life is unreal; the sentiments false; the passions artificial and affected. No human genius can make anything of a pastoral; and it is no discredit in Cervantes to have failed in a kind of composition for which he, of all men, was most unfit. Nor has any one ridiculed the pastoral life of romance more happily than Cervantes himself in one of the last chapters of *Don Quixote;* though it may be doubted whether *Don Quixote* brought him more fame in his lifetime than *Galatea* had done. Into the body of the piece is inserted, without any connection with the story, a long poem called *El Canto de Caliope*, in a more ambitious strain than Cervantes had yet attempted. It is so far the most interesting portion of the book as that it is a catalogue of all the leading poets of Spain, who are discovered to be very numerous and invested with the rarest qualities, which nobody but Cervantes (the most good-natured of critics) has ever been able to discern. Another feature of interest in *Galatea* is that most of the characters, perhaps all, are real personages, disguised under fantastic names. In the shepherdess Galatea herself is figured the lady whom the poet afterwards took to wife, and for whose delectation the story is said to have been written. Cervantes himself appears as the shepherd Elicio; while even so grave and reverent a personage as Hurtado de Mendoza, the famous

statesman and diplomatist, is represented as a shepherd recently deceased.

Absurd and insipid as *Galatea* is to the modern reader, it is clearly unfair to judge of it by the standards of our time. By his contemporaries Cervantes' pastoral was received with great applause, and we have evidence to show that it brought him immediate fame outside of his country. As a pastoral it certainly compares favourably with other pastorals. Nothing so good in that kind had appeared in Spain. Some of the occasional incidents and episodes are told with all Cervantes' grace and skill as a story-teller. Even to this day the piece may be read (in the original) by young men and maidens with a certain pleasure, and without any harm. The author himself has pronounced, in the famous Inquisition on Don Quixote's library, a very fair verdict on the book which was the first fruit of his genius, by saying, through the mouth of the Priest, that "it contains a little of good invention."

The immediate purpose for which *Galatea* was written was happily accomplished. A few days before its publication, on the 12th of December 1584, Miguel de Cervantes was married at Esquivias, a small town of New Castile, to Doña Catalina de Palacios y Salazar. The young lady appears to have been of a family somewhat superior in worldly circumstances to her husband's; and there is a tradition that one of her kinsmen opposed the match on the ground that Cervantes was not sufficiently endowed with fortune. The tradition goes further, and says that it was in revenge for this opposition that Cervantes made Don Rodrigo de Pacheco, who is identified with Doña Catalina's churlish cousin, the

hero of *Don Quixote*.[1] This legend may be dismissed with all the other wild theories and speculations which hang by the silly notion that *Don Quixote* was a satire, intended for personal application. Not much is known about Cervantes' wife, who was probably one of the good wives who leave biographers little to speak about. She was very much younger than her husband, Cervantes at the date of his marriage being in his thirty-eighth year; she bore him no children, and survived him more than ten years. As in her will she requested to be buried by his side, we may suppose that she did not regret her choice. Upon her marriage all her own goods were settled on her by Cervantes, in a deed which is still extant, with an inventory of Doña Catalina's effects, which has a pathetic interest for us as showing what were the circumstances of the young lady who is supposed to have brought a fortune to Cervantes. The list includes several plantations of vines in the district of Esquivias, and goes minutely into the enumeration of various articles of domestic furniture—"two linen sheets, one good blanket, and one worn; tables, chairs, a brasier, a grater, several sacred images, one cock and forty-five pullets."[2]

In 1585 Cervantes moved from his wife's town of Esquivias to Madrid. He now seems to have finally adopted literature as a profession, despairing of employment in the public service and having no other means than his pen by which to support his household. In this were now included his wife, his little natural

[1] See vol. i., pp. 130 and 157, of my edition of *Don Quixote* (1888).

[2] See Pellicer's *Don Quixote*, vol. i. p. 205.

daughter Isabel, his widowed sister Andrea, with her daughter Constanza, eight years old. All these women were maintained by him for many years—in fact, during their lives and his life, through every phase of his slender fortune.

CHAPTER VI.

MADRID in 1585 was the centre of a kingdom which, to all outward seeming, was then at the height of its greatness and power. The monarch of Spain, now for the first time ruler of the entire Peninsula, was lord of a dominion such as till then never had been on earth. In Europe he held sway, outside of his own states, over more than half of Italy, including Lombardy and Naples, with the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Tuscany and Genoa were his vassals. The Duke of Savoy was his dependent. Of the Low Countries he still held military possession, which the recent assassination of William of Orange seemed to render whole and indisputable. By the conquest of Portugal he had added all her extensive colonial empire in the East and West to his own. All South and Central America was his, besides Florida and the Antilles. In Africa and Asia he possessed vast territories. By land and sea there was no single power to match that of Philip II. At home he had contrived to absorb all right and law into his single person, and was a more absolute despot than Spain had ever seen. Whatever of local privileges the states of the Peninsula had enjoyed under their ancient *fueros* were practically extinguished. The Cortes met only to register the king's decrees. The

Church, once the representative and champion of the national liberties, had been bribed and coerced in the name of Faith to be the king's right arm and in all civil matters the minister of his will.

In all the arts of luxury and refinement Spain was then the foremost state in Christendom. The wealth of the Indies, then no figure of speech but a very substantial tribute which yearly came to swell the king's coffers, had wrought a great change in the ancient Spanish manners. The sudden and extraordinary influx of the precious metals led to great inequalities of social condition, with a general rise in the cost of living, which tended to increase the national poverty and widen the gulf between rich and poor. The question of whether the discovery and possession of America were productive of any real benefit to Spain—whether they were not indeed the immediate causes of her decadence—has been elsewhere and often amply discussed. The process of national decay had already begun under Philip II., and was doubtless accelerated, if not caused, by the narrow and bigoted spirit with which he dispensed his extraordinary power. The period of Spain's greatest fertility and vigour unhappily coincided with that of her worst corruption and blindest rule. The Church and America together sapped the springs of her growth. All the best manhood of the nation had been flowing now for nearly a century westward, and what America did not receive of energy and intellect was absorbed by the Church. The figures which the native historians give of the enormous multiplication of priests and monks and religious institutions under Philip the Prudent are almost incredible.

Never in the history of the world did any state expend so much of its manhood in the service of God. The number of monastic houses within the whole dominion of Philip was reckoned at 60,000; of secular priests over 300,000; of monks and friars about 600,000.[1] The Holy Inquisition was then in the very pride and flower of its energy, roasting a heretic about every other day, besides imprisoning and torturing at the rate of some 6000 a year. It sat like an ugly vampire upon the nation, shadowing every process of life, dulling the individual spirit—an abiding terror by day and night. For a genius like that of Cervantes it is impossible to conceive any sphere more hopelessly uncongenial than that which he found at Madrid.

The very fertility of the Spanish mind at this period rendered his prospects, from a worldly point of view, more disheartening. Never was Spain so prolific of writers. The time of quickest growth seemed, by some curious destiny, to have coincided with a season of greatest unkindliness. Though Philip himself did nothing to encourage either letters or art, except so far as they could be brought into the service of the Church —though he is not known to have taken pleasure in any product of human wit—never was the Spanish intellect so busy as during his long reign. In letters and in art there was a spring of life of astonishing force and exuberance. It was the dawn of the golden age of Spanish literature. In poetry especially the outburst was phenomenal. The Castilian tongue, with its double resource of consonant and assonant, lends itself to rhyme

[1] See Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, vol. ii. p. 476, where all the authorities are cited.

with a fatal facility. Its very harmonies are a snare to the true poet. In Cervantes' time, when the language had attained its highest perfection, almost every one who wrote was a rhymester who called himself a poet. Their multitude was so great as to be a standing joke with the wits. "In every street four thousand poets," writes Lope de Vega, himself the most prolific of all. To write verses was so common an art as to cease to be a mark of liberal education. Those who could hardly read, complains Suarez de Figueroa, wrote farces in rhyme. Cervantes himself, who had but a modest estimate of his own gift of poetry, ridicules the *poet-ambre*—the poetastery—"the squadron of seven-month poets, twenty thousand strong"—"the useless rabble who attempt to storm the mount when they are not worthy to stand under its shade."[1]

Amidst this crowd of hungry bards Cervantes had to struggle for a living, as yet unconscious of his true powers, and with scanty help from any friend or patron. He may claim to be the first man of letters who attempted to live by his pen. Every other great writer of the period had some preferment, or private source of revenue. Many were ecclesiastics; others were courtiers; all depended on some other means of life than literature. A public, in the modern sense of the word, there was none. The patron was a necessary appendage of the author; and at this period of his life we do not hear of Cervantes having any special patrons. For an original genius of independent spirit the prospect was gloomy. The publisher, as we know him, did not exist.

[1] See *The Voyage to Parnassus*, chap. ii.

There were booksellers, but readers were few and editions limited. There was no general law of copyright even for Spain. To make any kind of livelihood by writing, in such a society as that of Madrid, was about as desperate an undertaking as the most romantic imagination could conceive. Madrid had only been made the capital since 1568, the unhappy choice of Philip II. Though designated "the only Court"—*La Corte*—it was far from popular as a residence of the nobility. Of commerce or of industry there was none. More than one city in the provinces excelled Madrid in population, in wealth, and in splendour and gaiety of life. To our poet the struggle for existence must have been a severe one, though of the details of his life at this period we know but little. He had won some fame by his *Galatea*, as appears by the flattering allusions to him in the commendatory sonnets of the time. He himself tells us that he wrote an infinite number of ballads—that on "Jealousy" being the one most esteemed—most of which he supposes are among the damned.[1] In the ample Spanish *romanceros* and *cancioneros* it may be that some of these are still extant, if no longer to be identified. There are some five or six ballads about the famous Uchali (Aluch Ali), the Turkish admiral who brought away the remnant of the Moslem fleet from Lepanto, which are probably by Cervantes, especially one, which contains the lament of a Christian slave for his mistress *Talinca*, which, by reasonable conjecture, is made to be an anagram of *Catalina*, the name of Cervantes' wife.

[1] *Viaje del Parnaso*, chap. ii.

Besides writing ballads and sonnets, it was about this time that Cervantes made his essay as a dramatist, upon a field which, could his genius have fully compassed it, would have been the most profitable of all to him as a writer. The Spanish comedy, which was shortly to develop into such extraordinary grandeur and luxuriance, was then just emerging from its infancy. Lope de Vega had not yet begun to practise his marvellous talent for play-writing. Cervantes, in fact, may be said to be the first of the great writers of Spain who wrote for the stage, his appearance as a playwright being exactly coincident with that of Peele and Marlowe on the English stage. In what year he began to cater for the new taste for the drama, soon to attain, under Lope de Vega and Calderon, to such enormous vogue, and what kind of favour he received, we are not told in any of the histories of the period. Our sole authority for all that we know of Cervantes' career as a dramatic author is an interesting passage in the characteristic prologue to the collection of *Comedies and Interludes*, published by Cervantes thirty years afterwards. He composed, he tells us, about twenty or thirty plays (not included among the number printed), which were all put upon the stage and received with favour—that is, they were acted "without their receiving tribute of cucumbers or of any other missile." "They ran their course without hisses, cries, or disturbances." The names of some of these plays are enumerated by Cervantes in the delightful prose appendix to the *Voyage to Parnassus*. He speaks with special pride of one, *La Confusa* ("The Perplexed Lady"), as "good among the best of the comedies of the Cloak and Sword (*de capa y espada*) which had been

up to that time acted." According to Pellicer, he received payment at the full rate, being 800 reals for each play, which was no less than the sum usually paid to the popular favourite, Lope de Vega. Cervantes, in his prologue (full of those touches of modest self-allusion which invest all his prologues and side utterances with so peculiar a charm), speaks of himself as the first who reduced the number of acts in the Spanish comedy from five to three, and also the first who introduced moral and allegorical figures on the stage. Neither claim, as Ticknor has shown, can be maintained; and the second is of more than doubtful merit.

Of all Cervantes' plays only two of those which were represented have come down to us, the *Numancia* and *El Trato de Argel* ("Life in Algiers")—two so different in quality and in style as scarcely to seem the work of one and the same hand. The *Numancia* is a tragedy, having for its subject the siege of the Iberian city so named by the Romans under Scipio Africanus—the most splendid page in the heroic annals of ancient Spain. Cervantes has treated this theme, almost too tragic for representation, with a nobility and passion of sentiment, according to Schlegel and Bouterwek, only to be matched in the masterpieces of Æschylus. In grandeur of conception; in the sublimity of its pathos; in intensity of patriotic feeling and concentrated heroic energy, it would be difficult to find a parallel for the *Numancia* in the whole range of tragedy. Let it be remembered that the drama in Europe was still in its swaddling clothes; that Cervantes was the first in Spain to give shape and consistency to the rude experiments of Lope de Rueda and Naharro. The stage was only just beginning to be evolved from

the booth and the cart of the itinerant showman. Dramatic art was in its infancy, with no examples but those of ancient Greece and Rome to direct the modern playwright. Shakespeare had not begun to write for the theatre. Corneille and Racine were not born. Italy, to whom Spain was inclined to look for her models in poetic art, had as yet produced only the pastoral comedy. The *Numancia* must be reckoned as the first play with any attempt at concerted action and poetical expression which was put upon the Spanish stage. It was a tragedy such as no living man had witnessed. That it is deficient in the ordinary artifices of the stage and sublimely careless of effect, without a plot in any proper sense, without construction, with nothing to attract the spectator but the passion and force of national sentiment, and a catastrophe the most tremendous which any dramatist has ever dared to introduce into a play—this is what must be said of the *Numancia*, which is not to be compared with any other drama. Cervantes never rose to so high a strain in poetry before or since. The verse, in spite of its monotony and its unsuitableness to dramatic action—it is the *ottava rima* in all the narrative passages—is of rare quality, with a majesty of thought and depth of passion such as we may look for in vain in the more highly developed Spanish drama of an after age. Something of Marlowe's vigour and picturesqueness of expression may be found in the *Numancia*, but Marlowe never gave us any passages of tender pathos to equal *Liria's* despairing appeal to *Morandro*—a scene which has moved even the frigid Ticknor and the judicious Hallam to an unwonted enthusiasm. The rising of the corpse on the invocation of the wizard *Marquino* is an effect which, for

sublimity of horror, neither Marlowe nor Shakespeare ever equalled—without parallel in ancient or modern tragedy. The wonder is how such a play could ever have been acted. Yet acted it was, with an effect such as no play ever reached and with a *mise en scene* unparalleled, on one memorable occasion. When the French cannon were thundering at the gates and crumbling walls of Zaragoza, the defenders of the city, by a happy inspiration, conceived the idea of playing *Numancia* before the citizens. The result was to excite the garrison to such a frenzy of enthusiasm that the French were driven from the walls and the city preserved.[1]

August Schlegel is perhaps too extravagant in his estimate of the positive worth of the *Numancia* as a drama, and certainly so when he says that it was here that Cervantes found the true development of his inventive genius. *La Numancia* remains the highest effort of the author in his serious mood. He never attained to this height in any other drama. The only other extant comedy of his, dating from this period, is *El Trato de Argel*, which is a confused medley of personal experiences of Algiers, mixed with comedy and sentiment, written in the monotonous octosyllabic verse, with real characters introduced side by side with demons and abstractions like *Necessity* and *Opportunity*. It is difficult to imagine how such a play could have been put on the stage, and even more difficult to conceive how it could have been written, even for bread, by one who had, as

[1] The *Numancia* has been done into very spirited and flowing English, with all its various kinds of verse faithfully rendered, by Mr. J. Y. Gibson.

Cervantes proved afterwards that he had, so true and excellent a notion of the office and character of the drama. Cervantes, however, was not the first great writer who, while perfectly able to make the creatures of his imagination live and move, could not combine them in set scenes to make a play which should be a mirror of life.

Cervantes left off writing for the stage about 1588; he tells us himself, with charming candour, why. He had found other things to occupy him. "I gave up the pen and comedies," he says in the prologue to the *Comedies* printed in 1614, "and there entered presently the monster (or prodigy) of nature (*monstruo de naturaleza*), the great Lope de Vega, and assumed the dramatic throne." It has been disputed whether the phrase applied by Cervantes to his great rival was intended to be complimentary or sarcastic. *Monstruo de naturaleza* may be used in either sense, and perhaps, as Cervantes was fond of double meanings, he deliberately chose the phrase because of its dubiousness. But I cannot help thinking that, seeing the words quoted were written in his old age, when he could no longer be blind to Lope de Vega's bitter and furious enmity, he used them as much in sarcasm as in praise. And considering what had been the relations between the two, and that Lope de Vega (as will be seen hereafter) had more than once attempted to take the bread out of Cervantes' mouth, the reference to Lope's appearance on the dramatic throne is nothing discreditable to Cervantes' magnanimity. Lope de Vega was at this time (1588) twenty-six years of age, being fifteen years younger than his rival. He began to write plays for the stage immediately after his return from the

Invincible Armada, on board of one of the ships of which he had enlisted as a soldier.

Finding himself eclipsed by this new and prodigious comedy-maker, of whom it is reported that he could produce an original play of three acts in forty-eight hours, Cervantes was driven to seek for a livelihood elsewhere and by other means. He does not appear to have finally abandoned the hope of succeeding as a playwright until some years after, for there has been lately discovered the text of a contract, dated in 1592, between him and one Rodrigo Osorio, according to which the latter agrees to give Cervantes fifty ducats each for six comedies, provided they are successful. It does not appear that the payment for the six plays was ever earned; perhaps through failure in the condition annexed.

Before this Cervantes had removed from Madrid to Seville, in quest of the means of life. Seville was then the richest, busiest, and most populous of Spanish cities—the great port for the trade of the Indies—the emporium of the commerce and trade which had been created by the New World. Here Cervantes seems to have been happier and more at home than in the cold and gloomy atmosphere of Philip's capital. That he entered deeply into all the life of this gay and brilliant city, with every phase of which he acquired a profound and minute acquaintance, all his subsequent works bear testimony. *Don Quixote* is full of allusions to Seville—"the support of the poor and the refuge of the outcast," while more than one of the *Novelas* has Seville for its scene. There our author seems to have found friends, through whose interest he

obtained a small place as one of four commissaries employed to purchase stores for the fleet in Andalucia. His commission is signed June 12th, 1588. From that date, for some years afterwards, he was engaged in the purchase of oil and grain in the districts around Seville and Granada—an occupation which doubtless furnished him with ample material for his future work, in extending his knowledge of country life and manners. There are still extant, preserved with a care which is in striking contrast with the negligence shown towards all other works of Cervantes, a great number of receipts, invoices, and schedules of expenditure relating to these transactions in grain and oil, all written in Cervantes' clear and bold hand.

In May 1590, sick of the oil and grain buying business, Cervantes made application for a place in the Indies, at that time the universal "refuge and sustenance," as he says, "of desperate men of Spain,"—addressing the king through the President of the Council in a memorial which recited all his services by land and sea, his sufferings in Algiers, his subsequent employment in Portugal and the Azores, "in all which time he had received no preferment," and prayed for one of four offices which he learns to be then vacant—namely, accountant of New Granada, governor of the province of Socomusco in Central America, paymaster of the galleys of Cartagena, or magistrate of the city of La Paz. There is a tradition that this petition was not unfavourably received, and that Cervantes might have succeeded in obtaining one of the places he asked for, had he not been guilty of some indiscretion or negligence not specified. He has himself alluded, in the autobiographical chapter of the *Voyage to*

Parnassus, to certain defects of temperament which marred his future and spoilt his destiny—defects which, without any prejudice to his genius or character, might well have been a bar to his usefulness as an official.

The only formal notice of his memorial was an endorsement by one Nuñez Morquecho, probably a secretary, to the effect that the applicant "might seek about here (*i.e.*, nearer home) for the preferment he wants." No such preferment coming to him, he continued his purchases of wine, oil, and grain for his Majesty's service. About this time also he seems to have undertaken the duties of rate-collector for the State—an office which brought him an income of 3000 reals, or £30 a year. He proved his unfitness for this business by over-confidence in those whom he had to trust, so that more than once he was brought into money troubles through the failure or dishonesty of his agents. The most serious of these was in connection with one Simon Freire, who was entrusted by Cervantes with a sum of 7400 reals to carry from Seville to Madrid. Freire became a bankrupt and fled the country, and Cervantes had to make good his default. He was imprisoned for three months at Seville, and suffered damage to his credit for some years afterwards on account of this affair, although there was no charge affecting his personal honour.

During all this period, which is the darkest in his life, Cervantes did not wholly neglect the pursuit of letters. It was probably at Seville that he wrote some of his novels, which were not published, however, until many years after. In 1595, on the occasion of the canonisation of San Jacinto, Cervantes entered into the competition for *three silver spoons* which were offered by a Dominican house

at Zaragoza as the first prize for a poem in praise of the saint, and was successful. In the year after, upon the sacking of Cadiz by the English fleet under Lord Howard of Effingham, Cervantes wrote a satirical sonnet which expressed the popular view of the conduct of the Duke of Medina Celi, who marched in with his beplumed soldiers just when the English earl had departed, after doing all the damage he could to the Spanish shipping. Of this incident of the English irruption Cervantes made happy use in one of the most charming of his novels, *La Española Inglesa.*