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DON QUIXOTE

by Miguel de Cervantes

Translated by John Ormsby

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

I: ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

IT WAS with considerable reluctance that I abandoned in favour of the present undertaking what had long been a favourite project: that of a new edition of Shelton's "Don Quixote," which has now become a somewhat scarce book. There are some- and I confess myself to be one- for whom Shelton's racy old version, with all its defects, has a charm that no modern translation, however skilful or correct, could possess. Shelton had the inestimable advantage of belonging to the same generation as Cervantes; "Don Quixote" had to him a vitality that only a contemporary could feel; it cost him no dramatic effort to see things as Cervantes saw them; there is no anachronism in his language; he put the Spanish of Cervantes into the English of Shakespeare. Shakespeare himself most likely knew the book; he may have carried it home with him in his saddle-bags to Stratford on one of his last journeys, and under the mulberry tree at New Place joined hands with a kindred genius in its pages.

But it was soon made plain to me that to hope for even a moderate popularity for Shelton was vain. His fine old crusted English would, no doubt, be relished by a minority, but it would be only by a minority. His warmest admirers must admit that he is not a satisfactory representative of Cervantes. His translation of the First Part was very hastily made and was never revised by him. It has all the freshness and vigour, but also a full measure of the faults, of a hasty production. It is often very literal- barbarously literal frequently- but just as often very loose. He had evidently a good colloquial knowledge of Spanish, but apparently not much more. It

never seems to occur to him that the same translation of a word will not suit in every case.

It is often said that we have no satisfactory translation of "Don Quixote." To those who are familiar with the original, it savours of truism or platitude to say so, for in truth there can be no thoroughly satisfactory translation of "Don Quixote" into English or any other language. It is not that the Spanish idioms are so utterly unmanageable, or that the untranslatable words, numerous enough no doubt, are so superabundant, but rather that the sententious terseness to which the humour of the book owes its flavour is peculiar to Spanish, and can at best be only distantly imitated in any other tongue.

The history of our English translations of "Don Quixote" is instructive. Shelton's, the first in any language, was made, apparently, about 1608, but not published till 1612. This of course was only the First Part. It has been asserted that the Second, published in 1620, is not the work of Shelton, but there is nothing to support the assertion save the fact that it has less spirit, less of what we generally understand by "go," about it than the first, which would be only natural if the first were the work of a young man writing *currente calamo*, and the second that of a middle-aged man writing for a bookseller. On the other hand, it is closer and more literal, the style is the same, the very same translations, or mistranslations, occur in it, and it is extremely unlikely that a new translator would, by suppressing his name, have allowed Shelton to carry off the credit.

In 1687 John Phillips, Milton's nephew, produced a "Don Quixote" "made English," he says, "according to the humour of our modern language." His "Quixote" is not so much a translation as a travesty, and a travesty that for coarseness, vulgarity, and buffoonery is almost unexampled even in the literature of that day.

Ned Ward's "Life and Notable Adventures of Don Quixote, merrily translated into Hudibrastic Verse" (1700), can scarcely be reckoned

a translation, but it serves to show the light in which "Don Quixote" was regarded at the time.

A further illustration may be found in the version published in 1712 by Peter Motteux, who had then recently combined tea-dealing with literature. It is described as "translated from the original by several hands," but if so all Spanish flavour has entirely evaporated under the manipulation of the several hands. The flavour that it has, on the other hand, is distinctly Franco-cockney. Anyone who compares it carefully with the original will have little doubt that it is a concoction from Shelton and the French of Filleau de Saint Martin, eked out by borrowings from Phillips, whose mode of treatment it adopts. It is, to be sure, more decent and decorous, but it treats "Don Quixote" in the same fashion as a comic book that cannot be made too comic.

To attempt to improve the humour of "Don Quixote" by an infusion of cockney flippancy and facetiousness, as Motteux's operators did, is not merely an impertinence like larding a sirloin of prize beef, but an absolute falsification of the spirit of the book, and it is a proof of the uncritical way in which "Don Quixote" is generally read that this worse than worthless translation -worthless as failing to represent, worse than worthless as misrepresenting- should have been favoured as it has been.

It had the effect, however, of bringing out a translation undertaken and executed in a very different spirit, that of Charles Jervas, the portrait painter, and friend of Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot, and Gay. Jervas has been allowed little credit for his work, indeed it may be said none, for it is known to the world in general as Jarvis's. It was not published until after his death, and the printers gave the name according to the current pronunciation of the day. It has been the most freely used and the most freely abused of all the translations. It has seen far more editions than any other, it is admitted on all hands to be by far the most faithful, and yet nobody seems to have a good word to say for it or for its author. Jervas no doubt

prejudiced readers against himself in his preface, where among many true words about Shelton, Stevens, and Motteux, he rashly and unjustly charges Shelton with having translated not from the Spanish, but from the Italian version of Franciosini, which did not appear until ten years after Shelton's first volume. A suspicion of incompetence, too, seems to have attached to him because he was by profession a painter and a mediocre one (though he has given us the best portrait we have of Swift), and this may have been strengthened by Pope's remark that he "translated 'Don Quixote' without understanding Spanish." He has been also charged with borrowing from Shelton, whom he disparaged. It is true that in a few difficult or obscure passages he has followed Shelton, and gone astray with him; but for one case of this sort, there are fifty where he is right and Shelton wrong. As for Pope's dictum, anyone who examines Jervas's version carefully, side by side with the original, will see that he was a sound Spanish scholar, incomparably a better one than Shelton, except perhaps in mere colloquial Spanish. He was, in fact, an honest, faithful, and painstaking translator, and he has left a version which, whatever its shortcomings may be, is singularly free from errors and mistranslations.

The charge against it is that it is stiff, dry- "wooden" in a word,- and no one can deny that there is a foundation for it. But it may be pleaded for Jervas that a good deal of this rigidity is due to his abhorrence of the light, flippant, jocose style of his predecessors. He was one of the few, very few, translators that have shown any apprehension of the unsmiling gravity which is the essence of Quixotic humour; it seemed to him a crime to bring Cervantes forward smirking and grinning at his own good things, and to this may be attributed in a great measure the ascetic abstinence from everything savouring of liveliness which is the characteristic of his translation. In most modern editions, it should be observed, his style has been smoothed and smartened, but without any reference to the original Spanish, so that if he has been made to read more agreeably he has also been

robbed of his chief merit of fidelity.

Smollett's version, published in 1755, may be almost counted as one of these. At any rate it is plain that in its construction Jervas's translation was very freely drawn upon, and very little or probably no heed given to the original Spanish.

The later translations may be dismissed in a few words. George Kelly's, which appeared in 1769, "printed for the Translator," was an impudent imposture, being nothing more than Motteux's version with a few of the words, here and there, artfully transposed; Charles Wilmot's (1774) was only an abridgment like Florian's, but not so skilfully executed; and the version published by Miss Smirke in 1818, to accompany her brother's plates, was merely a patchwork production made out of former translations. On the latest, Mr. A. J. Duffield's, it would be in every sense of the word impertinent in me to offer an opinion here. I had not even seen it when the present undertaking was proposed to me, and since then I may say *vidi tantum*, having for obvious reasons resisted the temptation which Mr. Duffield's reputation and comely volumes hold out to every lover of Cervantes.

From the foregoing history of our translations of "Don Quixote," it will be seen that there are a good many people who, provided they get the mere narrative with its full complement of facts, incidents, and adventures served up to them in a form that amuses them, care very little whether that form is the one in which Cervantes originally shaped his ideas. On the other hand, it is clear that there are many who desire to have not merely the story he tells, but the story as he tells it, so far at least as differences of idiom and circumstances permit, and who will give a preference to the conscientious translator, even though he may have acquitted himself somewhat awkwardly.

But after all there is no real antagonism between the two classes; there is no reason why what pleases the one should not please the other, or why a translator who makes it his aim to treat "Don Quixote"

with the respect due to a great classic, should not be as acceptable even to the careless reader as the one who treats it as a famous old jest-book. It is not a question of caviare to the general, or, if it is, the fault rests with him who makes so. The method by which Cervantes won the ear of the Spanish people ought, *mutatis mutandis*, to be equally effective with the great majority of English readers. At any rate, even if there are readers to whom it is a matter of indifference, fidelity to the method is as much a part of the translator's duty as fidelity to the matter. If he can please all parties, so much the better; but his first duty is to those who look to him for as faithful a representation of his author as it is in his power to give them, faithful to the letter so long as fidelity is practicable, faithful to the spirit so far as he can make it.

My purpose here is not to dogmatise on the rules of translation, but to indicate those I have followed, or at least tried to the best of my ability to follow, in the present instance. One which, it seems to me, cannot be too rigidly followed in translating "Don Quixote," is to avoid everything that savours of affectation. The book itself is, indeed, in one sense a protest against it, and no man abhorred it more than Cervantes. For this reason, I think, any temptation to use antiquated or obsolete language should be resisted. It is after all an affectation, and one for which there is no warrant or excuse. Spanish has probably undergone less change since the seventeenth century than any language in Europe, and by far the greater and certainly the best part of "Don Quixote" differs but little in language from the colloquial Spanish of the present day. Except in the tales and Don Quixote's speeches, the translator who uses the simplest and plainest everyday language will almost always be the one who approaches nearest to the original.

Seeing that the story of "Don Quixote" and all its characters and incidents have now been for more than two centuries and a half familiar as household words in English mouths, it seems to me that the old familiar names and phrases should not be changed without good

reason. Of course a translator who holds that "Don Quixote" should receive the treatment a great classic deserves, will feel himself bound by the injunction laid upon the Morisco in Chap. IX not to omit or add anything.

II: ABOUT CERVANTES AND DON QUIXOTE

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

This, however, has been done by the last-named biographer to such good purpose that he has superseded all predecessors. Thoroughness is the chief characteristic of Navarrete's work. Besides sifting, testing, and methodising with rare patience and judgment what had been previously brought to light, he left, as the saying is, no stone unturned under which anything to illustrate his subject might possibly be found. Navarrete has done all that industry and acumen could do, and it is no fault of his if he has not given us what we want. What Hallam says of Shakespeare may be applied to the almost parallel

case of Cervantes: "It is not the register of his baptism, or the draft of his will, or the orthography of his name that we seek; no letter of his writing, no record of his conversation, no character of him drawn ... by a contemporary has been produced."

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

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

The origin of the name Cervantes is curious. Nuno Alfonso was almost as distinguished in the struggle against the Moors in the reign of Alfonso VII as the Cid had been half a century before in that of Alfonso VI, and was rewarded by divers grants of land in the

neighbourhood of Toledo. On one of his acquisitions, about two leagues from the city, he built himself a castle which he called Cervatos, because "he was lord of the solar of Cervatos in the Montana," as the mountain region extending from the Basque Provinces to Leon was always called. At his death in battle in 1143, the castle passed by his will to his son Alfonso Munio, who, as territorial or local surnames were then coming into vogue in place of the simple patronymic, took the additional name of Cervatos. His eldest son Pedro succeeded him in the possession of the castle, and followed his example in adopting the name, an assumption at which the younger son, Gonzalo, seems to have taken umbrage.

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

surname the name of the castle on the bank of the Tagus, in the building of which, according to a family tradition, his great-grandfather had a share.

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

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

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

He was born at Alcala de Henares and baptised in the church of Santa Maria Mayor on the 9th of October, 1547. Of his boyhood and youth we know nothing, unless it be from the glimpse he gives us in the preface to his "Comedies" of himself as a boy looking on with delight while Lope de Rueda and his company set up their rude plank stage in the

plaza and acted the rustic farces which he himself afterwards took as the model of his interludes. This first glimpse, however, is a significant one, for it shows the early development of that love of the drama which exercised such an influence on his life and seems to have grown stronger as he grew older, and of which this very preface, written only a few months before his death, is such a striking proof. He gives us to understand, too, that he was a great reader in his youth; but of this no assurance was needed, for the First Part of "Don Quixote" alone proves a vast amount of miscellaneous reading, romances of chivalry, ballads, popular poetry, chronicles, for which he had no time or opportunity except in the first twenty years of his life; and his misquotations and mistakes in matters of detail are always, it may be noticed, those of a man recalling the reading of his boyhood.

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

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

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

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

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

such reflections as these may have been the true genesis of "Don Quixote."

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

That he was a student neither at Salamanca nor at Alcala is best proved by his own works. No man drew more largely upon experience than he did, and he has nowhere left a single reminiscence of student life—for the "Tia Fingida," if it be his, is not one—nothing, not even "a college joke," to show that he remembered days that most men remember best. All that we know positively about his education is that Juan Lopez de Hoyos, a professor of humanities and belles-lettres of some eminence, calls him his "dear and beloved pupil." This was in a little collection of verses by different hands on the death of Isabel de Valois, second queen of Philip II, published by the professor in 1569, to which Cervantes contributed four pieces, including an elegy, and an epitaph in the form of a sonnet. It is only by a rare chance that a "Lycidas" finds its way into a volume of this sort, and Cervantes was no Milton. His verses are no worse than such things usually are; so much, at least, may be said for them.

By the time the book appeared he had left Spain, and, as fate ordered it, for twelve years, the most eventful ones of his life. Giulio, afterwards Cardinal, Acquaviva had been sent at the end of 1568 to Philip II by the Pope on a mission, partly of condolence,

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

How severely Cervantes was wounded may be inferred from the fact, that with youth, a vigorous frame, and as cheerful and buoyant a temperament as ever invalid had, he was seven months in hospital at Messina before he was discharged. He came out with his left hand permanently disabled; he had lost the use of it, as Mercury told him

in the "Viaje del Parnaso" for the greater glory of the right. This, however, did not absolutely unfit him for service, and in April 1572 he joined Manuel Ponce de Leon's company of Lope de Figueroa's regiment, in which, it seems probable, his brother Rodrigo was serving, and shared in the operations of the next three years, including the capture of the Goletta and Tunis. Taking advantage of the lull which followed the recapture of these places by the Turks, he obtained leave to return to Spain, and sailed from Naples in September 1575 on board the Sun galley, in company with his brother Rodrigo, Pedro Carrillo de Quesada, late Governor of the Goletta, and some others, and furnished with letters from Don John of Austria and the Duke of Sesá, the Viceroy of Sicily, recommending him to the King for the command of a company, on account of his services; a *disastro* as events proved. On the 26th they fell in with a squadron of Algerine galleys, and after a stout resistance were overpowered and carried into Algiers.

By means of a ransomed fellow-captive the brothers contrived to inform their family of their condition, and the poor people at Alcalá at once strove to raise the ransom money, the father disposing of all he possessed, and the two sisters giving up their marriage portions. But Dali Mami had found on Cervantes the letters addressed to the King by Don John and the Duke of Sesá, and, concluding that his prize must be a person of great consequence, when the money came he refused it scornfully as being altogether insufficient. The owner of Rodrigo, however, was more easily satisfied; ransom was accepted in his case, and it was arranged between the brothers that he should return to Spain and procure a vessel in which he was to come back to Algiers and take off Miguel and as many of their comrades as possible. This was not the first attempt to escape that Cervantes had made. Soon after the commencement of his captivity he induced several of his companions to join him in trying to reach Oran, then a Spanish post, on foot; but after the first day's journey, the Moor who had agreed to act as their guide