
The History of
Don Quixote de la Mancha

By Miguel de Cervantes

Translated by John Ormsby



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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES, 1547-1616

CERVANTES was born in the ancient university town of Alcalá de Henares, where he was baptized, October 9, 1547, in the church of Santa María la Mayor. His father was a travelling physician, and it is doubtful whether the family was ever long enough in one place for Cervantes to receive any formal education. According to his own testimony he enjoyed reading from childhood and took especial delight in the dramatic productions of the famous actor-manager, Lope de Rueda. At the age of twenty he made his first appearance as an author, contributing several poems to a volume commemorating the death of Isabel de Valois, the third wife of Philip II.

Shortly after his debut as a writer, Cervantes was in Rome as a member of the retinue of Cardinal Acquaviva. He soon left the Cardinal to enlist as a private in the army which was being mustered to fight against the Turks. He was assigned to the "Marquesa," part of the armada under Don John of Austria. When the fleet came into action at Lepanto, Cervantes lay below, ill with fever. Despite the remonstrances of his comrades, he insisted that he would "rather die for his God and his King" than stay under cover. He received three gunshot wounds, two in the chest and one which maimed his left hand for life; to Cervantes the wounds were "stars lighting one to heaven and to fame," and the left hand was crippled "for the greater glory of the right." After convalescing at Messina, he returned to the army, served three more years in active service, and then was granted leave to return to Spain. He received letters of recommendation from Don John and the Duke de Sessa, viceroy of Sicily, in which he was described as "a soldier, as deserving as he was unfortunate."

The small galley carrying Cervantes back to Spain was attacked by Barbary corsairs near Les Trois Maries, and he, his brother, and the other Spaniards were taken as prisoners to Algiers. Cervantes became the slave of a Greek renegade named Dali Mami, and, since the letters found on him suggested that he was a man of some im-

portance, his ransom was posted at an unusually high figure. He found the life of a captive "enough to sadden the merriest heart on earth" and made many ingenious attempts to escape. Upon the failure of one of them he was brought before the Dey of Algiers, Hassan Pasha, and "threatened with torture and instant death"; but the Dey, struck "by his peculiar grace in all things," remitted the punishment and bought Cervantes for himself. In 1577 he addressed a versified letter to the Spanish Secretary of State, suggesting an expedition to seize Algiers; the project, although practicable, was not attempted. In 1579, after another thwarted escape, Hassan Pasha again spared his life, declaring: "So long as I have the maimed Spaniard in my keeping, my Christians, my ships—aye, and the whole city—are safe." The Dey, however, was willing to release him for money, and Cervantes finally obtained his freedom by the payment of the ransom; his parents sent 250 ducats through the Trinitarian monks, and, when this was insufficient, the Christian traders of Algiers contributed the balance.

After his release Cervantes returned to Spain, where he tried to support himself by writing, particularly for the stage. Of the great volume of plays he wrote, he later singled out only one for praise, *La Confusa*, "which, with all respect to as many sword-and-cloak plays as have been staged up to the present, may take a prominent place as being good among the best." His most serious effort at this time was the prose-pastoral *Galatea* (1585), and, although it always remained his favorite work, he later remarked that it "proposes something and concludes nothing." The *Galatea* won him a small measure of repute but brought him no financial return.

The death of his father and his own marriage made it necessary for him to "put aside the pen." His wife's dowry brought him nothing more valuable than five vines, an orchard, some household furniture, four bee-hives, forty-five hens and chickens, one cock, and a crucible. He went to Seville as commissary to provide oil and wheat for the Armada and, after its defeat, continued

to act as commissary to the galleys. Although he showed considerable zeal in the work, he soon became convinced that there was no prospect of advancement. He appealed to the king for a vacant post in the American colonies but was refused and given the advice to "look for something nearer home." In an effort to supplement his income, he turned again to writing, and, in 1592, signed a contract to write six plays at fifty ducats each, on the condition that no payment was to be made unless each was "one of the best ever produced in Spain." No opportunity to test the contract arose, since Cervantes was thrown into jail. Although the reason for this imprisonment is not known, it was probably due to disorderliness in his accounts, for shortly after his release, he was in difficulty again with his superiors. When he proved unable to submit receipts for all official moneys he had collected, though no charge of dishonesty was proved, he was again committed to jail. Subsequently he was released in disgrace and dismissed from public service.

Don Quixote appeared during the years of extreme poverty that succeeded his dismissal. From the remark in the prologue that "you may suppose it engendered in some dismal prison," it has been assumed that its conception, if not some of its actual writing, took place during one of

his terms in jail. The license for its publication was obtained in 1604, while Cervantes was living in Valladolid in a tiny apartment with his wife and four or five female relatives. A few months after its publication the following year, *Don Quixote* and *Sancho Panza* had become proverbial types in Valladolid; and they were soon known throughout Europe. The appearance in 1614 of a spurious second part, issued under the name of Alonso Fernandez de Avellanada, goaded Cervantes to lay aside his other writing and complete his master work, which he accomplished by the end of 1615. During the decade between the two parts of *Quixote*, Cervantes wrote his *Exemplary Novels*, the *Journey to Parnassus*, and several comedies and intermezzos for the theatre.

Although Cervantes was known and celebrated throughout Europe, his fame never brought him wealth, or even comfort. The members of the special French embassy visiting Madrid in 1615 were amazed to learn that Cervantes was "old, a soldier, a gentleman, and poor." He died in Madrid on the same day as William Shakespeare, April 23, 1616. He was borne from his house with "his face uncovered," according to the rule of the Tertiaries of St. Francis, and buried in the church attached to the convent of the Trinitarian nuns.

PREFACE

IDLE READER: thou mayest believe me without any oath that I would this book, as it is the child of my brain, were the fairest, gayest, and cleverest that could be imagined. But I could not counteract Nature's law that everything shall beget its like; and what, then, could this sterile, ill-titled wit of mine beget but the story of a dry, shrivelled, whimsical offspring, full of thoughts of all sorts and such as never came into any other imagination—just what might be begotten in a prison, where every misery is lodged and every doleful sound makes its dwelling? Tranquillity, a cheerful retreat, pleasant fields, bright skies, murmuring brooks, peace of mind, these are the things that go far to make even the most barren muses fertile, and bring into the world births that fill it with wonder and delight. Sometimes when a father has an ugly, loutish son, the love he bears him so blindfolds his eyes that he does not see his defects, or, rather, takes them for gifts and charms of mind and body, and talks of them to his friends as wit and grace. I, however—for though I pass for the father, I am but the stepfather to “Don Quixote”—have no desire to go with the current of custom, or to implore thee, dearest reader, almost with tears in my eyes, as others do, to pardon or excuse the defects thou wilt perceive in this child of mine. Thou art neither its kinsman nor its friend, thy soul is thine own and thy will as free as any man's, whate'er he be, thou art in thine own house and master of it as much as the king is of his taxes—and thou knowest the common saying, “Under my cloak I kill the king”; all which exempts and frees thee from every consideration and obligation, and thou canst say what thou wilt of the story without fear of being abused for any ill or rewarded for any good thou mayest say of it.

My wish would be simply to present it to thee plain and unadorned, without any embellishment of preface or uncountable muster of customary sonnets, epigrams, and eulogies, such as are commonly put at the beginning of books. For I can tell thee, though composing it cost me some labor, I found none greater than the making of this Preface thou art now reading. Many times did I take up my pen to write

it, and many did I lay it down again, not knowing what to write. One of these times, as I was pondering with the paper before me, a pen in my ear, my elbow on the desk, and my cheek in my hand, thinking of what I should say, there came in unexpectedly a certain lively, clever friend of mine, who, seeing me so deep in thought, asked the reason; to which I, making no mystery of it, answered that I was thinking of the preface I had to make for the story of “Don Quixote,” which so troubled me that I had a mind not to make any at all, nor even publish the achievements of so noble a knight.

“For, how could you expect me not to feel uneasy about what that ancient lawgiver they call the Public will say when it sees me, after slumbering so many years in the silence of oblivion, coming out now with all my years upon my back, and with a book as dry as a rush, devoid of invention, meagre in style, poor in thoughts, wholly wanting in learning and wisdom, without quotations in the margin or annotations at the end, after the fashion of other books I see, which, though all fables and profanity, are so full of maxims from Aristotle, and Plato, and the whole herd of philosophers, that they fill the readers with amazement and convince them that the authors are men of learning, erudition, and eloquence. And then, when they quote the Holy Scriptures!—anyone would say they are St. Thomases or other doctors of the Church, observing as they do a decorum so ingenious that in one sentence they describe a distracted lover and in the next deliver a devout little sermon that it is a pleasure and a treat to hear and read. Of all this there will be nothing in my book, for I have nothing to quote in the margin or to note at the end, and still less do I know what authors I follow in it, to place them at the beginning, as all do, under the letters A, B, C, beginning with Aristotle and ending with Xenophon, or Zoilus, or Zeuxis, though one was a slanderer and the other a painter. Also my book must do without sonnets at the beginning, at least sonnets whose authors are dukes, marquises, counts, bishops, ladies, or famous poets. Though if I were to ask two or three obliging friends, I know they would give me them, and

such as the productions of those that have the highest reputation in our Spain could not equal.

"In short, my friend," I continued, "I am determined that Señor Don Quixote shall remain buried in the archives of his own La Mancha until Heaven provide some one to garnish him with all those things he stands in need of; because I find myself, through my shallowness and want of learning, unequal to supplying them, and because I am by nature shy and careless about hunting for authors to say what I myself can say without them. Hence the cogitation and abstraction you found me in, and reason enough, what you have heard from me."

Hearing this, my friend, giving himself a slap on the forehead and breaking into a hearty laugh, exclaimed, "Before God, Brother, now am I disabused of an error in which I have been living all this long time I have known you, all through which I have taken you to be shrewd and sensible in all you do; but now I see you are as far from that as the heaven is from the earth. How? Is it possible that things of so little moment and so easy to set right can occupy and perplex a ripe wit like yours, fit to break through and crush far greater obstacles? By my faith, this comes, not of any want of ability, but of too much indolence and too little knowledge of life. Do you want to know if I am telling the truth? Well, then, attend to me, and you will see how, in the opening and shutting of an eye, I sweep away all your difficulties, and supply all those deficiencies which you say check and discourage you from bringing before the world the story of your famous Don Quixote, the light and mirror of all knight-errantry."

"Say on," said I, listening to his talk; "how do you propose to make up for my diffidence, and reduce to order this chaos of perplexity I am in?"

To which he made answer, "Your first difficulty about the sonnets, epigrams, or complimentary verses which you want for the beginning, and which ought to be by persons of importance and rank, can be removed if you yourself take a little trouble to make them; you can afterwards baptize them, and put any name you like to them, fathering them on Prester John of the Indies or the Emperor of Trebizond, who, to my knowledge, were said to have been famous poets: and even if they were not, and any pedants or bachelors should attack you and question the fact, never care two maravedis for that, for even if they prove a lie against you they cannot cut off the hand you wrote it with.

"As to references in the margin to the books and authors from whom you take the aphorisms and sayings you put into your story, it is only contriving to fit in nicely any sentences or scraps of Latin you may happen to have by heart, or at any rate that will not give you much trouble to look up; so as, when you speak of freedom and captivity, to insert

Non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro;

and then refer in the margin to Horace, or whoever said it; or, if you allude to the power of death, to come in with—

*Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,
Regumque tures.*

If it be friendship and the love God bids us bear to our enemy, go at once to the Holy Scriptures, which you can do with a very small amount of research, and quote no less than the words of God himself: *Ego autem dico vobis: diligite inimicos vestros*. If you speak of evil thoughts, turn to the Gospel: *De corde exeunt cogitationes malæ*. If of the fickleness of friends, there is Cato, who will give you his distich:

*Donec eris felix multos numerabis amicos,
Tempora si fuerint nubila, solus eris.*

With these and such like bits of Latin they will take you for a grammarian at all events, and that nowadays is no small honor and profit.

"With regard to adding annotations at the end of the book, you may safely do it in this way. If you mention any giant in your book contrive that it shall be the giant Goliath, and with this alone, which will cost you almost nothing, you have a grand note, for you can put—*The giant Goliath or Goliath was a Philistine whom the shepherd David slew by a mighty stone-cast in the Terebinth valley, as is related in the Book of Kings—in the chapter where you find it written.*

"Next, to prove yourself a man of erudition in polite literature and cosmography, manage that the river Tagus shall be named in your story, and there you are at once with another famous annotation, setting forth—*The river Tagus was so called after a King of Spain: it has its source in such and such a place and falls into the ocean, kissing the walls of the famous city of Lisbon, and it is a common belief that it has golden sands, etc.* If you should have anything to do with robbers, I will give you the story of Cacus, for I have it by heart; if with loose women, there is the Bishop of Mondoñedo, who will give you the loan of Lamia, Laida,

and Flora, any reference to whom will bring you great credit; if with hard-hearted ones, Ovid will furnish you with Medea; if with witches or enchantresses, Homer has Calypso, and Virgil Circe; if with valiant captains, Julius Cæsar himself will lend you himself in his own *Commentaries*, and Plutarch will give you a thousand Alexanders. If you should deal with love, with two ounces you may know of Tuscan you can go to Leon the Hebrew, who will supply you to your heart's content; or if you should not care to go to foreign countries you have at home Fonseca's *Of the Love of God*, in which is condensed all that you or the most imaginative mind can want on the subject. In short, all you have to do is to manage to quote these names, or refer to these stories I have mentioned, in your own, and leave it to me to insert the annotations and quotations, and I swear by all that's good to fill your margins and use up four sheets at the end of the book.

"Now let us come to those references to authors which other books have, and you want for yours. The remedy for this is very simple: You have only to look out for some book that quotes them all, from A to Z as you say yourself, and then insert the very same alphabet in your book, and though the imposition may be plain to see, because you have so little need to borrow from them, that is no matter; there will probably be some simple enough to believe that you have made use of them all in this plain, artless story of yours. At any rate, if it answers no other purpose, this long catalogue of authors will serve to give a surprising look of authority to your book. Besides, no one will trouble himself to verify whether you have followed them or whether you have not, being no way concerned in it; especially as, if I mistake not, this book of yours has no need of any one of those things you say it wants, for it is, from beginning to end, an attack upon the books of chivalry, of which Aristotle never dreamt, nor St. Basil said a word, nor Cicero had any knowledge; nor do the niceties of truth nor the observations of astrology come within the range of its fanciful vagaries; nor have geometrical measurements or refutations of the arguments used in rhetoric anything to do with it; nor does it mean to preach to anybody, mixing up things human and divine, a sort of motley in which no Chris-

tian understanding should dress itself. It has only to avail itself of truth to nature in its composition, and the more perfect the imitation the better the work will be. And as this piece of yours aims at nothing more than to destroy the authority and influence which books of chivalry have in the world and with the public, there is no need for you to go a-begging for aphorisms from philosophers, precepts from Holy Scripture, fables from poets, speeches from orators, or miracles from saints; but merely to take care that your style and diction run musically, pleasantly, and plainly, with clear, proper, and well-placed words, setting forth your purpose to the best of your power and as well as possible, and putting your ideas intelligibly, without confusion or obscurity. Strive, too, that in reading your story the melancholy may be moved to laughter, and the merry made merrier still; that the simple shall not be wearied, that the judicious shall admire the invention, that the grave shall not despise it, nor the wise fail to praise it. Finally, keep your aim fixed on the destruction of that ill-founded edifice of the books of chivalry, hated by some and praised by many more; for if you succeed in this you will have achieved no small success."

In profound silence I listened to what my friend said, and his observations made such an impression on me that, without attempting to question them, I admitted their soundness, and out of them I determined to make this Preface; wherein, gentle reader, thou wilt perceive my friend's good sense, my good fortune in finding such an adviser in such a time of need, and what thou hast gained in receiving, without addition or alteration, the story of the famous Don Quixote of La Mancha, who is held by all the inhabitants of the district of the Campo de Montiel to have been the chastest lover and the bravest knight that has for many years been seen in that neighborhood. I have no desire to magnify the service I render thee in making thee acquainted with so renowned and honored a knight, but I do desire thy thanks for the acquaintance thou wilt make with the famous Sancho Panza, his squire, in whom, to my thinking, I have given thee condensed all the squirely drolleries that are scattered through the swarm of the vain books of chivalry. And so—may God give thee health, and not forget me. *Vale*.

COMMENDATORY VERSES

URGANDA THE UNKNOWN¹

TO THE BOOK OF DON QUIXOTE OF LA MANCHA

If to be welcomed by the good,
O Book! thou make thy steady aim,
No empty chatterer will dare
To question or dispute thy claim.
But if perchance thou hast a mind
To win of idiots approbation,
Lost labor will be thy reward,
Though they'll pretend appreciation.

They say a goodly shade he finds
Who shelters 'neath a goodly tree;
And such a one thy kindly star
In Béjar hath provided thee:
A royal tree whose spreading boughs
A show of princely fruit display;
A tree that bears a noble Duke,
The Alexander of his day.

Of a Manchegan gentleman
Thy purpose is to tell the story,
Relating how he lost his wits
O'er idle tales of love and glory,
Of "ladies, arms, and cavaliers":²
A new Orlando Furioso—
Innamorato, rather—who
Won Dulcinea del Toboso.

Put no vain emblems on thy shield;
All figures—that is bragging play.
A modest dedication make,
And give no scoffer room to say,
"What! Álvaro de Luna here?
Or is it Hannibal again?
Or does King Francis at Madrid
Once more of destiny complain?"

¹ A personage in *Amadis of Gaul* somewhat akin to Morgan la Fay in the Arthur legend, though the part she plays is more like that of Merlin. She derived her title from the faculty which, like Merlin, she possessed of changing her form and appearance at will.

² "Le donne, i cavalieri, l'arme, gli amori"—*Orlando Furioso*, i. 1.

Since Heaven it hath not pleased on thee
Deep erudition to bestow,
Or black Latino's gift of tongues,³
No Latin let thy pages show.
Ape not philosophy or wit,
Lest one who can not comprehend,
Make a wry face at thee and ask,
"Why offer flowers to me, my friend?"

Be not a meddler; no affair
Of thine the life thy neighbors lead:
Be prudent; oft the random jest
Recoils upon the jester's head.
Thy constant labor let it be
To earn thyself an honest name,
For fooleries preserved in print
Are perpetuity of shame.

A further counsel bear in mind:
If that thy roof be made of glass,
It shows small wit to pick up stones
To pelt the people as they pass.
Win the attention of the wise,
And give the thinker food for thought;
Whoso indites frivolities,
Will but by simpletons be sought.

AMADIS OF GAUL

TO DON QUIXOTE OF LA MANCHA

Sonnet

Thou that didst imitate that life of mine,
When I in lonely sadness on the great
Rock Peña Pobre sat disconsolate,
In self-imposed penance there to pine;
Thou, whose sole beverage was the bitter
brine
Of thine own tears, and who withouten plate
Of silver, copper, tin, in lowly state
Off the bare earth and on earth's fruits didst
dine;

³ Juan Latino, a self-educated Negro slave in the household of the Duke of Sesa, who gave him his freedom. He was for sixty years professor of rhetoric and Latin at Granada.

Live thou, of thine eternal glory sure.
 So long as on the round of the fourth sphere
 The bright Apollo shall his coursers steer,
 In thy renown thou shalt remain secure,
 Thy country's name in story shall endure,
 And thy sage author stand without a peer.

DON BELIANIS OF GREECE
 TO DON QUIXOTE OF LA MANCHA

Sonnet

In slashing, hewing, cleaving, word and deed,
 I was the foremost knight of chivalry,
 Stout, bold, expert, as e'er the world did see;
 Thousands from the oppressor's wrong I freed;
 Great were my feats, eternal fame their meed;
 In love I proved my truth and loyalty;
 The hugest giant was a dwarf for me;
 Ever to knighthood's laws gave I good heed.
 My mastery the Fickle Goddess owned,
 And even Chance, submitting to control,
 Grasped by the forelock, yielded to my
 will.
 Yet—though above yon hornèd moon enthroned
 My fortune seems to sit—great Quixote,
 still
 Envy of thy achievements fills my soul.

THE LADY ORIANA¹
 TO DULCINEA DEL TOBOSO

Sonnet

Oh, fairest Dulcinea, could it be!
 It were a pleasant fancy to suppose so—
 Could Miraflores change to El Toboso,
 And London's town to that which shelters
 thee!
 Oh, could mine but acquire that livery
 Of countless charms thy mind and body show
 so!
 Or him, now famous grown—thou mad'st
 him grow so—
 Thy knight, in some dread combat could I
 see!
 Oh, could I be released from Amadis
 By exercise of such coy chastity
 As led thee gentle Quixote to dismiss!
 Then would my heavy sorrow turn to joy;
 None would I envy, all would envy me,
 And happiness be mine without alloy.

¹ The heroine of *Amadis of Gaul*.

GANDALIN, SQUIRE OF AMADIS OF GAUL
 TO SANCHE PANZA, SQUIRE OF DON QUIXOTE

Sonnet

All hail, illustrious man! Fortune, when she
 Bound thee apprentice to the esquire trade,
 Her care and tenderness of thee displayed,
 Shaping thy course from misadventure free.
 No longer now doth proud knight-errantry
 Regard with scorn the sickle and the
 spade;
 Of towering arrogance less count is made
 Than of plain esquire-like simplicity.
 I envy thee thy Dapple, and thy name,
 And those *alforjas* thou wast wont to stuff
 With comforts that thy providence pro-
 claim,
 Excellent Sancho! hail to thee again!
 To thee alone the Ovid of our Spain
 Does homage with the rustic kiss and cuff.

FROM EL DONOSO, THE MOTLEY POET
 ON SANCHE PANZA AND ROCINANTE

On Sancho

I am the esquire Sancho Pan—
 Who served Don Quixote of La Man—;
 But from his service I retreat—,
 Resolved to pass my life discreet—;
 For Villadiego, called the Si—,
 Maintained that only in reti—
 Was found the secret of well-be—,
 According to the *Celesti*—: ²
 A book divine, except for sin—
 By speech too plain in my opin—.

On Rocinante

I am that Rocinante fa—,
 Great-grandson of great Babie—,³
 Who, all for being lean and bon—,
 Had one Don Quixote for an own—;
 But if I matched him well in weak—,
 I never took short commons meek—,
 But kept myself in corn by steal—,
 A trick I learned from Lazaril—,
 When with a piece of straw so neat—
 The blind man of his wine he cheat—.⁴

² *Celestina*, or *Tragicomedy of Calisto and Melibæa* (1499).

³ Babieca, the charger of the Cid.

⁴ An allusion to the novel of Lazarillo de Tormes.

ORLANDO FURIOSO

TO DON QUIXOTE OF LA MANCHA

Sonnet

If thou art not a Peer, peer thou hast none;
 Among a thousand Peers thou art a peer;
 Nor is there room for one when thou art
 near,
 Unvanquished victor, great unconquered one!
 Orlando, by Angelica undone,
 Am I; o'er distant seas condemned to steer,
 And to Fame's altars as an offering bear
 Valor respected by oblivion.
 I cannot be thy rival, for thy fame
 And prowess rise above all rivalry,
 Albeit both bereft of wits we go.
 But, though the Scythian or the Moor to tame
 Was not thy lot, still thou dost rival me:
 Love binds us in a fellowship of woe.

THE KNIGHT OF PHŒBUS¹

TO DON QUIXOTE OF LA MANCHA

My sword was not to be compared with thine,
 Phœbus of Spain, marvel of courtesy,
 Nor with thy famous arm this hand of mine
 That smote from east to west as lightnings fly,
 I scorned all empire, and that monarchy
 The rosy east held out did I resign
 For one glance of Claridiana's eye,
 The bright Aurora for whose love I pine.
 A miracle of constancy my love;
 And banished by her ruthless cruelty,
 This arm had might the rage of Hell to
 tame.
 But, Gothic Quixote, happier thou dost prove,
 For thou dost live in Dulcinea's name,
 And famous, honored, wise, she lives in thee.

FROM SOLISDAN

TO DON QUIXOTE OF LA MANCHA

Sonnet

Your fantasies, Sir Quixote, it is true,
 That crazy brain of yours have quite upset,

¹ The *Knights of Phœbus*, a romance by Diego Ortuñez de Calahorra and Marcos Martínez.

But aught of base or mean hath never
 yet
 Been charged by any in reproach to you.
 Your deeds are open proof in all men's
 view;
 For you went forth injustice to abate,
 And for your pains sore drubbings did you
 get
 From many a rascally and ruffian crew.
 If the fair Dulcinea, your heart's queen,
 Be unrelenting in her cruelty,
 If still your woe be powerless to move
 her,
 In such hard case your comfort let it be
 That Sancho was a sorry go-between:
 A booby he, hard-hearted she, and you no
 lover.

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN BABIECA AND ROCINANTE

Sonnet

B. How comes it, Rocinante, you're so lean?
 R. I'm underfed, with overwork I'm worn.
 B. But what becomes of all the hay and
 corn?
 R. My master gives me none; he's much too
 mean.
 B. Come, come, you show ill-breeding, sir, I
 ween;
 'Tis like an ass your master thus to scorn.
 R. He is an ass, will die an ass, an ass was
 born;
 Why, he's in love; what's plainer to be
 seen?
 B. To be in love is folly?— R. No great
 sense.
 B. You're metaphysical.— R. From want of
 food.
 B. Rail at the squire, then.— R. Why, what's
 the good?
 I might indeed complain of him, I grant
 ye,
 But, squire or master, where's the differ-
 ence?
 They're both as sorry hacks as Rocinante.

CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE, v

THE FIRST PART

PREFACE

xi

COMMENDATORY VERSES

xiv

1. Which treats of the character and pursuits of the famous gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha 1
2. Which treats of the first sally the ingenious Don Quixote made from home 3
3. Wherein is related the droll way in which Don Quixote had himself dubbed a knight 6
4. Of what happened to our knight when he left the inn 8
5. In which the narrative of our knight's mishap is continued 11
6. Of the diverting and important scrutiny which the Curate and the Barber made in the library of our ingenious gentleman 13
7. Of the second sally of our worthy knight Don Quixote of La Mancha 16
8. Of the good fortune which the valiant Don Quixote had in the terrible and undreamt-of adventure of the windmills, with other occurrences worthy to be fitly recorded 18
9. In which is concluded and finished the terrific battle between the gallant Biscayan and the valiant Manchegan 22
10. Of the pleasant discourse that passed between Don Quixote and his squire Sancho Panza 24
11. Of what befell Don Quixote with certain goatherds 26
12. Of what a goatherd related to those with Don Quixote 29
13. In which is ended the story of the shepherdess Marcela, with other incidents 32
14. Wherein are inserted the despairing verses of the dead shepherd, together with other incidents not looked for 36
15. In which is related the unfortunate adventure that Don Quixote fell in with when he fell out with certain heartless Yanguesans 39
16. Of what happened to the ingenious gentleman in the inn which he took to be a castle 42
17. In which are contained the innumerable troubles which the brave Don Quixote and his good squire Sancho Panza endured in the inn, which to his misfortune he took to be a castle 45
18. In which is related the discourse Sancho Panza held with his master, Don Quixote, together with other adventures worth relating 49
19. Of the shrewd discourse which Sancho held with his master, and of the adventure that befell him with a dead body, together with other notable occurrences 54
20. Of the unexampled and unheard-of adventure which was achieved by the valiant Don Quixote of La Mancha with less peril than any ever achieved by any famous knight in the world 57
21. Which treats of the exalted adventure and rich prize of Mambrino's helmet, together with other things that happened to our invincible knight 63
22. Of the freedom Don Quixote conferred on several unfortunates who against their will were being carried where they had no wish to go 68
23. Of what befell Don Quixote in the Sierra Morena, which was one of the rarest adventures related in this veracious history 73
24. In which is continued the adventure of the Sierra Morena 77
25. Which treats of the strange things that happened to the stout knight of La Mancha in the Sierra Morena, and of his imitation of the penance of Beltenebros 81
26. In which are continued the refinements wherewith Don Quixote played the part of a lover in the Sierra Morena 88
27. Of how the Curate and the Barber proceeded with their scheme; together with other matters worthy of record in this great history 91
28. Which treats of the strange and delightful adventure that befell the Curate and the Barber in the same Sierra 98
29. Which treats of the droll device and method adopted to extricate our love-stricken knight from the severe penance he had imposed upon himself 103
30. Which treats of the address displayed by the fair Dorothea, with other matters pleasant and amusing 109
31. Of the delectable discussion between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, his squire, together with other incidents 113
32. Which treats of what befell all Don Quixote's party at the inn 117
33. In which is related The Novel of the Ill-advised Curiosity 120
34. In which is continued The Novel of the Ill-advised Curiosity 127
35. Which treats of the heroic and prodigious battle Don Quixote had with certain skins of red wine, and brings The Novel of the Ill-advised Curiosity to a close 134
36. Which treats of more curious incidents that occurred at the inn 137
37. In which is continued the story of the famous

- Princess Micomicona, with other droll adventures 142
38. Which treats of the curious discourse Don Quixote delivered on arms and letters 146
 39. Wherein the captive relates his life and adventures 148
 40. In which the story of the captive is continued 151
 41. In which the captive still continues his adventures 155
 42. Which treats of what further took place in the inn, and of several other things worth knowing 162
 43. Wherein is related the pleasant story of the muleteer, together with other strange things that came to pass in the inn 166
 44. In which are continued the unheard-of adventures of the inn 170
 45. In which the doubtful question of Mambrino's helmet and the pack-saddle is finally settled, with other adventures that occurred in truth and earnest 174
 46. Of the end of the notable adventure of the officers of the Holy Brotherhood; and of the great ferocity of our worthy Knight, Don Quixote 177
 47. Of the strange manner in which Don Quixote of La Mancha was carried away enchanted, together with other remarkable incidents 181
 48. In which the Canon pursues the subject of the books of chivalry, with other matters worthy of his wit 185
 49. Which treats of the shewd conversation which Sancho Panza held with his master, Don Quixote 188
 50. Of the shrewd controversy which Don Quixote and the Canon held, together with other incidents 191
 51. Which deals with what the goatherd told those who were carrying off Don Quixote 194
 52. Of the quarrel that Don Quixote had with the goatherd, together with the rare adventure of the penitents, which with an expenditure of sweat he brought to a happy conclusion 196

THE SECOND PART

PREFACE

203

1. Of the interview the Curate and the Barber had with Don Quixote about his malady 205
2. Which treats of the notable altercation which Sancho Panza had with Don Quixote's niece and housekeeper, together with other droll matters 210
3. Of the laughable conversation that passed between Don Quixote, Sancho Panza, and the Bachelor Samson Carrasco 212
4. In which Sancho Panza gives a satisfactory reply to the doubts and questions of the Bachelor Samson Carrasco, together with other matters worth knowing and mentioning 215
5. Of the shrewd and droll conversation that passed between Sancho Panza and his wife Teresa Panza, and other matters worthy of being duly recorded 217
6. Of what took place between Don Quixote and his niece and housekeeper; one of the most important chapters in the whole history 220
7. Of what passed between Don Quixote and his squire, together with other very notable incidents 222
8. Wherein is related what befell Don Quixote on his way to see his lady Dulcinea del Toboso 225
9. Wherein is related what will be seen there 229
10. Wherein is related the crafty device Sancho adopted to enchant the Lady Dulcinea and other incidents as ludicrous as they are true 230
11. Of the strange adventure which the valiant Don Quixote had with the car or cart of The Cortes of Death 234
12. Of the strange adventure which befell the valiant Don Quixote with the bold Knight of the Mirrors 237
13. In which is continued the adventure of the Knight of the Grove, together with the sensible, original, and tranquil colloquy that passed between the two squires 240
14. Wherein is continued the adventure of the Knight of the Grove 242
15. Wherein it is told and made known who the Knight of the Mirrors and his squire were 247
16. Of what befell Don Quixote with a discreet gentleman of La Mancha 248
17. Wherein is shown the furthest and highest point which the unexampled courage of Don Quixote reached or could reach; together with the happily achieved adventure of the lions 252
18. Of what happened to Don Quixote in the castle or house of the Knight of the Green Gaban, together with other matters out of the common 257
19. In which is related the adventure of the enamoured shepherd, together with other truly droll incidents 260
20. Wherein an account is given of the wedding of Camacho the rich, together with the incident of Basilio the poor 263
21. In which Camacho's wedding is continued, with other delightful incidents 267
22. Wherein is related the grand adventure of the cave of Montesinos in the heart of La Mancha, which the valiant Don Quixote brought to a happy termination 270
23. Of the wonderful things the incomparable Don Quixote said he saw in the profound cave of Montesinos, the impossibility and magnitude of which cause this adventure to be deemed apocryphal 273

24. *Wherein are related a thousand trifling matters, as trivial as they are necessary to the right understanding of this great history* 278
25. *Wherein is set down the braying adventure, and the droll one of the puppet-showman, together with the memorable divinations of the divining ape* 280
26. *Wherein is continued the droll adventure of the puppet-showman, together with other things in truth right good* 285
27. *Wherein it is shown who Master Pedro and his ape were, together with the mishap Don Quixote had in the braying adventure, which he did not conclude as he would have liked or as he had expected* 288
28. *Of matters that Benengeli says he who reads them will know, if he reads them with attention* 291
29. *Of the famous adventure of the enchanted bark* 293
30. *Of Don Quixote's adventure with a fair huntress* 296
31. *Which treats of many and great matters* 298
32. *Of the reply Don Quixote gave his censorer, with other incidents, grave and droll* 302
33. *Of the delectable discourse which the duchess and her damsels held with Sancho Panza, well worth reading and noting* 308
34. *Which relates how they learned the way in which they were to disenchant the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso, which is one of the rarest adventures in this book* 311
35. *Wherein is continued the instruction given to Don Quixote touching the disenchantment of Dulcinea, together with other marvellous incidents* 314
36. *Wherein is related the strange and undreamt-of adventure of the Distressed Duenna, alias the Countess Trifaldi, together with a letter which Sancho Panza wrote to his wife, Teresa Panza* 317
37. *Wherein is continued the notable adventure of the Distressed Duenna* 319
38. *Wherein is told the Distressed Duenna's tale of her misfortunes* 320
39. *In which the Trifaldi continues her marvellous and memorable story* 323
40. *Of matters relating and belonging to this adventure and to this memorable history* 324
41. *Of the arrival of Clavileño and the end of this protracted adventure* 326
42. *Of the counsels which Don Quixote gave Sancho Panza before he set out to govern the island, together with other well-considered matters* 331
43. *Of the second set of counsels Don Quixote gave Sancho Panza* 333
44. *How Sancho Panza was conducted to his government, and of the strange adventure that befell Don Quixote in the castle* 336
45. *Of how the great Sancho Panza took possession of his island, and of how he made a beginning in governing* 340
46. *Of the terrible bell and cat fright that Don Quixote got in the course of the enamoured Altisidora's wooing* 343
47. *Wherein is continued the account of how Sancho Panza conducted himself in his government* 345
48. *Of what befell Don Quixote with Doña Rodriguez, the duchess's Duenna, together with other occurrences worthy of record and eternal remembrance* 348
49. *Of what happened to Sancho Panza in making the round of his island* 352
50. *Wherein is set forth who the enchanters and executioners were who flogged the duenna and pinched Don Quixote, and also what befell the page who carried the letter to Teresa Panza, Sancho Panza's wife* 357
51. *Of the progress of Sancho's government, and other such entertaining matters* 360
52. *Wherein is related the adventure of the second distressed or afflicted duenna, otherwise called Doña Rodriguez* 364
53. *Of the troublous end and termination Sancho Panza's government came to* 366
54. *Which deals with matters relating to this history and no other* 369
55. *Of what befell Sancho on the road, and other things that cannot be surpassed* 372
56. *Of the prodigious and unparalleled battle that took place between Don Quixote of La Mancha and the lackey Tosilos in defence of the daughter of the duenna Doña Rodriguez* 375
57. *Which treats of how Don Quixote took leave of the duke, and of what followed with the wit-ty and impudent Altisidora, one of the duchess's damsels* 378
58. *Which tells how adventures came crowding on Don Quixote in such numbers that they gave one another no breathing-time* 379
59. *Wherein is related the strange thing, which may be regarded as an adventure, that happened to Don Quixote* 384
60. *Of what happened to Don Quixote on his way to Barcelona* 388
61. *Of what happened to Don Quixote on entering Barcelona, together with other matters that partake of the true rather than of the ingenious* 393
62. *Which deals with the adventure of the enchanted head, together with other trivial matters which cannot be left untold* 394
63. *Of the mishap that befell Sancho Panza through the visit to the galleys, and the strange adventure of the fair Morisco* 400
64. *Treating of the adventure which gave Don Quixote more unhappiness than all that had hitherto befallen him* 404
65. *Wherein is made known who the Knight of the White Moon was; likewise Don Gregorio's release, and other events* 406

66. Which treats of what he who reads will see, or what he who has it read to him will hear 408
67. Of the resolution which Don Quixote formed to turn shepherd and to take to a life in the fields while the year for which he had given his word was running its course; with other events truly delectable and happy 410
68. Of the bristly adventure that befell Don Quixote 412
69. Of the strangest and most extraordinary adventure that befell Don Quixote in the whole course of this great history 414
70. Which follows sixty-nine and deals with matters indispensable for the clear comprehension of this history 417
71. Of what passed between Don Quixote and his squire Sancho on the way to their village 420
72. Of how Don Quixote and Sancho reached their village 422
73. Of the omens Don Quixote had as he entered his own village, and other incidents that embellish and give a color to this great history 424
74. Of how Don Quixote fell sick, and of the will he made, and how he died 427

THE FIRST PART

Chapter I

Which treats of the character and pursuits of the famous gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha

IN a village of La Mancha, the name of which I have no desire to call to mind, there lived not long since one of those gentlemen that keep a lance in the lance-rack, an old buckler, a lean hack, and a greyhound for coursing. An olla of rather more beef than mutton, a salad on most nights, scraps on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays, and a pigeon or so extra on Sundays, made away with three-quarters of his income. The rest of it went in a doublet of fine cloth and velvet breeches and shoes to match for holidays, while on week-days he made a brave figure in his best homespun. He had in his house a housekeeper past forty, a niece under twenty, and a lad for the field and market-place, who used to saddle the hack as well as handle the bill-hook. The age of this gentleman of ours was bordering on fifty, he was of a hardy habit, spare, gaunt-featured, a very early riser and a great sportsman. They will have it his surname was Quixada or Quesada (for here there is some difference of opinion among the authors who write on the subject), although from reasonable conjectures it seems plain that he was called Quixana. This, however, is of but little importance to our tale; it will be enough not to stray a hair's breadth from the truth in the telling of it.

You must know, then, that the above-named gentleman whenever he was at leisure (which was mostly all the year round) gave himself up to reading books of chivalry with such ardor and avidity that he almost entirely neglected the pursuit of his field-sports, and even the management of his property; and to such a pitch did his eagerness and infatuation go that he sold many an acre of tillage-land to buy books of chivalry to read, and brought home as many of them as he could get. But of all there were none he liked so well as those of the famous Feliciano de Silva's

composition, for their lucidity of style and complicated conceits were as pearls in his sight, particularly when in his reading he came upon courtships and cartels, where he often found passages like "*the reason of the unreason with which my reason is afflicted so weakens my reason that with reason I murmur at your beauty*"; or again, "*the high heavens, that of your divinity divinely fortify you with the stars, render you deserving of the desert your greatness deserves.*" Over conceits of this sort the poor gentleman lost his wits, and used to lie awake striving to understand them and worm the meaning out of them; what Aristotle himself could not have made out or extracted had he come to life again for that special purpose. He was not at all easy about the wounds which Don Belianis gave and took, because it seemed to him that, great as were the surgeons who had cured him, he must have had his face and body covered all over with seams and scars. He commended, however, the author's way of ending his book with the promise of that interminable adventure, and many a time was he tempted to take up his pen and finish it properly as is there proposed, which no doubt he would have done, and made a successful piece of work of it too, had not greater and more absorbing thoughts prevented him.

Many an argument did he have with the curate of his village (a learned man, and a graduate of Sigüenza¹) as to which had been the better knight, Palmerin of England or Amadis of Gaul. Master Nicholas, the village barber, however, used to say that neither of them came up to the Knight of Phœbus, and that if there was any that could compare with *him* it was Don Galaor, the brother of Amadis of Gaul, because he had a spirit that was equal to every occasion, and was no finikin knight, nor lachrymose like his brother, while in the matter of valor he was not a whit behind him. In short,

¹ Sigüenza was one of the *Universidades menores*, the degrees of which were often laughed at by the Spanish humorists.

he became so absorbed in his books that he spent his nights from sunset to sunrise, and his days from dawn to dark, poring over them; and what with little sleep and much reading his brains got so dry that he lost his wits. His fancy grew full of what he used to read about in his books, enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, wooings, loves, agonies, and all sorts of impossible nonsense; and it so possessed his mind that the whole fabric of invention and fancy he read of was true, that to him no history in the world had more reality in it. He used to say the Cid Ruy Diaz was a very good knight, but that he was not to be compared with the Knight of the Burning Sword who with one back-stroke cut in half two fierce and monstrous giants. He thought more of Bernardo del Carpio because at Roncesvalles he slew Roland in spite of enchantments, availing himself of the artifice of Hercules when he strangled Antæus the son of Terra in his arms. He approved highly of the giant Morgante, because, although of the giant breed which is always arrogant and ill-conditioned, he alone was affable and well-bred. But above all he admired Reinaldos of Montalban, especially when he saw him sallying forth from his castle and robbing every one he met, and when beyond the seas he stole that image of Mahomet which, as his history says, was entirely of gold. And to have a bout of kicking at that traitor of a Ganelon he would have given his housekeeper, and his niece into the bargain.

In short, his wits being quite gone, he hit upon the strangest notion that ever madman in this world hit upon, and that was that he fancied it was right and requisite, as well for the support of his own honor as for the service of his country, that he should make a knight-errant of himself, roaming the world over in full armor and on horseback in quest of adventures, and putting in practice himself all that he had read of as being the usual practices of knights-errant; righting every kind of wrong, and exposing himself to peril and danger from which, in the issue, he was to reap eternal renown and fame. Already the poor man saw himself crowned by the might of his arm Emperor of Trebizond at least; and so, led away by the intense enjoyment he found in these pleasant fancies, he set himself forthwith to put his scheme into execution.

The first thing he did was to clean up some armor that had belonged to his great-grandfather, and had been for ages lying forgotten in a corner eaten with rust and covered with mildew. He scoured and polished it as best he could, but he perceived one great defect in it, that it had no

closed helmet, nothing but a simple morion. This deficiency, however, his ingenuity supplied, for he contrived a kind of half-helmet of pasteboard which, fitted on to the morion, looked like a whole one. It is true that, in order to see if it was strong and fit to stand a cut, he drew his sword and gave it a couple of slashes, the first of which undid in an instant what had taken him a week to do. The ease with which he had knocked it to pieces disconcerted him somewhat, and to guard against that danger he set to work again, fixing bars of iron on the inside until he was satisfied with its strength; and then, not caring to try any more experiments with it, he passed it and adopted it as a helmet of the most perfect construction.

He next proceeded to inspect his hack, which, with more quartos than a real ¹ and more blemishes than the steed of Gonela, that *tantum pelvis et ossa fuit*, surpassed in his eyes the Bucephalus of Alexander or the Babieca of the Cid. Four days were spent in thinking what name to give him, because (as he said to himself) it was not right that a horse belonging to a knight so famous, and one with such merits of his own, should be without some distinctive name, and he strove to adapt it so as to indicate what he had been before belonging to a knight-errant, and what he then was; for it was only reasonable that, his master taking a new character, he should take a new name, and that it should be a distinguished and full-sounding one, befitting the new order and calling he was about to follow. And so, after having composed, struck out, rejected, added to, unmade, and remade a multitude of names out of his memory and fancy, he decided upon calling him Rocinante, a name, to his thinking, lofty, sonorous, and significant of his condition as a hack before he became what he now was, the first and foremost of all the hacks in the world.

Having got a name for his horse so much to his taste, he was anxious to get one for himself, and he was eight days more pondering over this point, till at last he made up his mind to call himself Don Quixote, whence, as has been already said, the authors of this veracious history have inferred that his name must have been beyond a doubt Quixada, and not Quesada as others would have it. Recollecting, however, that the valiant Amadis was not content to call himself curtly Amadis and nothing more, but added

¹ An untranslatable pun on the word *quarto*, which means a sand crack in a horse's hoof, as well as the coin equal to one-eighth of the real. Gonela was a jester in the service of Borso, Duke of Ferrara.