

been made. With that we found ourselves at the bridge of Toledo, by which we entered the city; and the student took leave of us, having to go round by the bridge of Segovia." This is the only notice we have of the nature of Cervantes' malady. It proceeded so rapidly, that a very few days after (on the 18th April), it was thought proper for him to receive extreme unction, which he did with all the devotion of a true Catholic. The day following he dictated the dedication of *Persiles* to the Conde de Lemos, one of the most graceful pieces of writing he ever produced; and wasting gradually away, expired on the 23d of the same month. He had made his will a day or two before, in which he appointed his wife and his friend, the licentiate Francisco Numez, his executors; and desired that he might be buried in the Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Madrid. Some time before his death, he had, after a fashion not unfrequent in these times, enrolled himself in the third class of the Franciscans. He was, therefore, carried forth in the sanctified dress, and interred with all the simplicity prescribed by the statutes of this order. It has not been thought unworthy of notice, that the mortal career of CERVANTES terminated on the same day with that of SHAKESPEARE.

Cervantes was a man of ordinary stature, and of a complexion unusually fair in his country; for his eyes were of bright blue, and his hair auburn. His countenance was, in his youth, handsome and spirited, and his frame capable of undergoing every spe-

cies of fatigue. His manners were light and cheerful; and there seems to be not the least reason for doubting that, in every relation of life, he exhibited all the virtues of an amiable, upright, and manly character. Loyalty, bravery, and religion were in those days supposed to be inherent in the breast of every Castilian gentleman; and Cervantes was in these, as in all other particulars, an honour and an ornament to the generous race from which he sprung.

In regard to the literary character and merits of Cervantes, the first thing which must strike every one acquainted with Spanish literature is, that the genius, whose appearance forms an epoch so very remarkable in the general history of European intellect, can scarcely be said to have formed any epoch in the literature of his own country. In Spain, the age in which *Don Quixote* was written was not the age of Cervantes, but the age of Lope de Vega. Out of Spain, the writings of Lope de Vega have scarcely been known, and certainly have never been popular; while the masterpiece of Cervantes, under all the disadvantages of translation, has taken and preserved in every country of Europe, a place hardly inferior to the most admired productions of native talent. Had Cervantes written nothing but his plays, there could have been nothing to excite wonder in the superior Spanish popularity of Lope de Vega; for, in spite of greater correctness of execution, and perhaps even of greater felicity in delineating human character, it is not to be questioned, that Cervantes, as a dramatist, is quite inferior to his

contemporary. But when *Don Quixote* is thrown into the scale, the result must indeed appear as difficult to be accounted for, as it is incapable of being denied. The stage, no doubt, was in those days the delight and the study of the Spanish public throughout all its classes; but even the universal predilection, or rather passion, for a particular form of composition, will scarcely be sufficient to explain the comparative neglect of genius at least equal, exerted with infinitely more perfect skill, in a form which possessed at that period, in addition to all its essential merits, the great merit of originality and charm of novelty.

Even had Cervantes died without writing *Don Quixote*, his plays (above all his *Interludes* and his *Numancia*); his *Galatea*, the beautiful drama of his youth; his *Persiles*, the last effort of his chastened and purified taste; and his fine poem of the *Voyage of Parnassus*, must have given him at least the second place in the most productive age of Spanish genius. In regard to all the grace of Castilian composition, even these must have left him without a rival either in that or in any other age of the literature of his country. For while all the other great Spanish authors of the brilliant CENTURY of Spain (from 1560 to 1656), either deformed their writings by utter carelessness or weakened them by a too studious imitation of foreign models, Cervantes alone seized the happy medium, and was almost from the beginning of his career Spanish without rudeness, and graceful without stiffness or affectation.

As a master of Spanish style, he is *now*, both in and out of Spain, acknowledged to be the first without a second; but this, which might have secured immortality and satisfied the ambition of any man, is, after all, scarcely worthy of being mentioned in regard to the great creator of the only species of writing which can be considered as the peculiar property of modern genius. In that spacious field, of which Cervantes must be honoured as the first discoverer, the finest spirits of his own and of every other European country have since been happily and successfully employed. The whole body of modern romance and novel writers must be considered as his followers and imitators; but among them all, so varied and so splendid soever as have been their merits, it is perhaps not going too far to say that, as yet, Cervantes has found but one *rival*.

The learned editor of the Spanish Academy's edition of 1781 has thought fit to occupy the space of a very considerable volume with an inquiry into the particular merits of *Don Quixote*. I refer to his laborious dissertation all those who are unwilling to admire anything without knowing why they admire it, or, rather, why an erudite doctor of Madrid deemed it worthy of his admiration.\* In our own country, almost everything that any sensible man would wish

\* As a specimen of the style of his criticisms, take this: he approves of the introduction of a *Roque Guinart* in *Don Quixote*, because in the *Odyssey* there is a *Polyphemus*, and in the *Æneid* there is a *Cacus*. And yet this man must have at least read Cervantes' own preface to his work, in which that pedantic species of criticism is so powerfully ridiculed—"If thou namest any giant in the book, forget not Goliath of Gath," &c.

to hear said about *Don Quixote* has been said over and over again by writers whose sentiments I should be sorry to repeat without their words, and whose words I should scarcely be pardoned for repeating.

Mr. Spence, the author of a late ingenious tour in Spain, seems to believe, what I should have supposed was entirely exploded, that Cervantes wrote his books for the purpose of ridiculing knight-errantry; and that, unfortunately for his country, his satire put out of fashion not merely the absurd misdirection of the spirit of heroism, but that sacred spirit itself. But the practice of knight-errantry, if ever there was such a thing, had, it is well known, been out of date long before the age in which *Don Quixote* appeared; and as for the spirit of heroism, I think few will sympathise with the critic who deems it possible that an individual, to say nothing of a nation, should have imbibed any contempt, either for that or any other elevating principle of our nature, from the manly page of Cervantes. One of the greatest triumphs of his skill is the success with which he continually prevents us from confounding the absurdities of the knight-errant with the generous aspirations of the cavalier. For the last, even in the midst of madness, we respect *Don Quixote* himself. We pity the delusion, we laugh at the situation, but we revere, in spite of every ludicrous accompaniment and of every insane exertion, the noble spirit of the Castilian gentleman; and we feel in every page that we are perusing the work, not of a heartless scoffer, a cold-blooded satirist, but of a

calm and enlightened mind, in which true wisdom had grown up by the side of true experience,—of one whose genius moved in a sphere too lofty for mere derision—of one who knew human nature too well not to respect it—of one, finally, who, beneath a mask of apparent levity, aspired to commune with the noblest principles of humanity; and, above all, to give form and expression to the noblest feelings of the national character of Spain. The idea of giving a ludicrous picture of an imaginary personage, conceiving himself to be called upon, in the midst of modern manners and institutions, to exercise the perilous vocation of an *Amadis* or a *Belianis*, might perhaps have occurred to a hundred men as easily as to Cervantes. The same general idea has been at the root of many subsequent works, written in derision of real or imaginary follies; but Cervantes is distinguished from the authors of all these works, not merely by the originality of his general conception and plan, but as strongly, and far more admirably, by the nature of the superstructure he has reared upon the basis of his initiatory fiction.

Others have been content with the display of wit, satire, eloquence—and some of them have displayed all these with the most admirable skill and power; but he who rises from the perusal of *Don Quixote* thinks of the wit, the satire, the eloquence of Cervantes, but as the accessories and lesser ornaments of a picture of national life and manners, by far the most perfect and glowing that was ever embodied in one piece of composition—a picture the possession of which alone

will be sufficient to preserve in freshness and honour the Spanish name and character, even after the last traces of that once noble character may have been obliterated, and perhaps that name itself forgotten among the fantastic innovations of a degenerated people. *Don Quixote* is thus the peculiar property, as well as the peculiar pride, of the Spaniards. In another, and in a yet larger point of view, it is the property and pride of the cultivated world; for *Don Quixote* is not merely to be regarded as a Spanish cavalier filled with a Spanish madness, and exhibiting that madness in the eyes of Spaniards of every condition and rank of life, from the peasant to the grandee; he is also the type of a more universal madness; he is the symbol of Imagination, continually struggling and contrasted with Reality—he represents the eternal warfare between Enthusiasm and Necessity—the eternal discrepancy between the aspirations and the occupations of man—the omnipotence and the vanity of human dreams. And thus, perhaps, it is not too much to say that *Don Quixote*, the wittiest and the most laughable of all books—a book which has made many a one, besides the young student on the banks of the Manzanares, look as if he were *out of himself*—is a book, upon the whole, calculated to produce something very different from a merely mirthful impression.

The serious style of *Don Quixote*, in the original language, preserves the most perfect harmony with this seriousness of purpose. The solemn, eloquent, impassioned Don Quixote, the shrewd, earth-seeking,

yet affectionate Sancho, do not fill us with mirth, because they seem to be mirthful themselves. From the beginning of the book to the end, they are both intensely serious characters—the one never loses sight of the high destinies to which he has devoted himself; the other wanders among sierras and moonlight forests, and glides on the beautiful stream of the Ebro, without forgetting for a moment the hope of pelf that has drawn him from his village, the *insula*\* which has been promised by his master to him, and which he does not think of the less, because he does not know what it is, and because he does not know that it has been promised by a madman. The contrasts perpetually afforded by the characters of Quixote and Sancho—the contrasts not less remarkable between the secondary objects and individuals introduced, as these are in reality, and as they appear to the hero—all the contrasts in a work where, more successfully than in any other, the art of contrast has been exhibited, would be comparatively feeble and ineffectual but for the never-failing contrast between the *idea* of the book and the *style* in which it is written. Never was the fleeting essence of wit so richly embalmed for eternity.

In our time it is certain almost all readers must be contented to lose a great part of the delight with which *Don Quixote* was read on its first appearance. The class of works, to parody and ridicule which it was Cervantes' first and most evident purpose, has long since passed into almost total oblivion; and

\* See Notes, vol. ii., p. 3.

therefore a thousand traits of felicitous satire must needs escape the notice even of those best able to seize the general scope and appreciate the general merits of the history of The Ingenious Hidalgo. Mr. Southey's admirable editions of *Amadis de Gaul*, and *Palmerin of England*, have indeed revived among us something of the once universal taste for the old and stately prose romance of chivalry; but it must be had in mind that Cervantes wrote his book for the purpose not of satirising these works—which are among the most interesting relics of the rich, fanciful, and lofty genius of the middle ages—but of extirpating the race of slavish imitators, who, in his day, were deluging all Europe, and more particularly Spain, with eternal caricatures of the venerable old romance. Of the *Amadis* (the plan and outline of which he for the most part parodied merely because it was the best known work of its order), Cervantes has been especially careful to record his own high admiration; and if the Canon of Toledo be introduced, as is generally supposed, to express the opinions of Cervantes himself, the author of *Don Quixote* had certainly, at one period of his life, entertained some thoughts of writing, not a humorous parody, but a serious imitation of the *Amadis*.

I shall conclude what I have to say of the author of *Don Quixote* with one remark—namely, that Cervantes was an old man when he wrote his masterpiece of comic romance; that nobody has ever written successful novels when young but Smollett, and that *Humphrey Clinker*, written in the last year of Smol-

lett's life, is, in every particular of conception, execution, and purpose, as much superior to *Roderick Random* as *Don Quixote* is to the *Galatea*.

It remains to say a few words concerning this edition of the first of modern romances. The translation is that of Motteux; and this has been preferred, simply because, in spite of many defects and inaccuracies, it is by far the most spirited. Shelton, the oldest of all our translators, is the only one entitled to be compared with Motteux. Perhaps he is even more successful in imitating the "serious air" of Cervantes; but it is much to be doubted whether the English reader of our time would not be more wearied with the obsolete turns of his phraseology than delighted with its occasional felicities.

In the Notes appended to these volumes, an attempt has been made to furnish a complete explanation of the numerous historical allusions in *Don Quixote*, as well as of the particular traits in romantic writing which it was Cervantes' purpose to ridicule in the person of his hero. Without having access to such information as has now been thrown together, it may be doubted whether any English reader has ever been able thoroughly to seize and command the meaning of Cervantes throughout his inimitable fiction. From the Spanish editions of Bowle, Pellicer, and the Academy, the greater part of the materials has been extracted; but a very considerable portion, and perhaps not the least interesting, has been sought for in the old histories and

chronicles with which the Spaniards of the sixteenth century were familiar. Of the many old Spanish ballads quoted or alluded to by Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, metrical translations have uniformly been inserted in the Notes; and as by far the greater part of these compositions are altogether new to the English public, it is hoped this part of the work may afford some pleasure to those who delight in comparing the early literatures of the different nations of Christendom.

## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

TO

THE READER

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You may depend upon my bare word, reader, without any further security, that I could wish this offspring of my brain were as ingenious, sprightly, and accomplished, as yourself could desire; but the mischief on't is, nature will have its course. Every production must resemble its author, and my barren and unpolished understanding can produce nothing but what is very dull, very impertinent, and extravagant beyond imagination. You may suppose it the child of disturbance, engendered in some dismal prison,\* where wretchedness keeps its residence, and every dismal sound its habitation. Rest and ease, and convenient place, pleasant fields and groves, murmuring

\* The Author is said to have wrote this satirical romance in a prison.