

MIGUEL DE SAAVEDRA

THE HISTORY OF DON
QUIXOTE, VOLUME 2,
PART 19

Мигель де Сервантес Сааведра

**The History of Don
Quixote, Volume 2, Part 19**

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Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

The History of Don Quixote, Volume 2, Part 19

DEDICATION OF VOLUME II

TO THE COUNT OF LEMOS:

These days past, when sending Your Excellency my plays, that had appeared in print before being shown on the stage, I said, if I remember well, that Don Quixote was putting on his spurs to go and render homage to Your Excellency. Now I say that "with his spurs, he is on his way." Should he reach destination methinks I shall have rendered some service to Your Excellency, as from many parts I am urged to send him off, so as to dispel the loathing and disgust caused by another Don Quixote who, under the name of Second Part, has run masquerading through the whole world. And he who has shown the greatest longing for him has been the great Emperor of China, who wrote me a letter in Chinese a month ago and sent it by a special courier. He asked me, or to be truthful, he begged me to send him Don Quixote, for he intended to found a college where the Spanish tongue would be taught, and it was his wish that the book to be read should be the History of Don Quixote. He also added that I should go and be the rector of this college. I asked the bearer if His Majesty had afforded a sum in aid of my travel expenses. He answered, "No, not even in thought."

"Then, brother," I replied, "you can return to your China, post haste or at whatever haste you are bound to go, as I am not fit for so long a travel and, besides being ill, I am very much without money, while Emperor for Emperor and Monarch for Monarch, I have at Naples the great Count of Lemos, who, without so many petty titles of colleges and rectorships, sustains me, protects me and does me more favour than I can wish for."

Thus I gave him his leave and I beg mine from you, offering Your Excellency the "Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda," a book I shall finish within four months, Deo volente, and which will be either the worst or the best that has been composed in our language, I mean of those intended for entertainment; at which I repent of having called it the worst, for, in the opinion of friends, it is bound to attain the summit of possible quality. May Your Excellency return in such health that is wished you; Persiles will be ready to kiss your hand and I your feet, being as I am, Your Excellency's most humble servant.

From Madrid, this last day of October of the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen.

At the service of Your Excellency:

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

God bless me, gentle (or it may be plebeian) reader, how eagerly must thou be looking forward to this preface, expecting to find there retaliation, scolding, and abuse against the author of the second Don Quixote – I mean him who was, they say, begotten at Tordesillas and born at Tarragona! Well then, the truth is, I am not going to give thee that satisfaction; for, though injuries stir up anger in humbler breasts, in mine the rule must admit of an exception. Thou wouldst have me call him ass, fool, and malapert, but I have no such intention; let his offence be his punishment, with his bread let him eat it, and there's an end of it. What I cannot help taking amiss is that he charges me with being old and one-handed, as if it had been in my power to keep time from passing over me, or as if the loss of my hand had been brought about in some tavern, and not on the grandest occasion the past or present has seen, or the future can hope to see. If my wounds have no beauty to the beholder's eye, they are, at least, honourable in the estimation of those who know where they were received; for the soldier shows to greater advantage dead in battle than alive in flight; and so strongly is this my feeling, that if now it were proposed to perform an impossibility for me, I would rather have had my share in that mighty action, than be free from my wounds this minute without having been present at it. Those the soldier shows on his face and breast are stars that direct others to the heaven of honour and ambition of merited praise; and moreover it is to be observed that it is not with grey hairs that one writes, but with the understanding, and that commonly improves with years. I take it amiss, too, that he calls me envious, and explains to me, as if I were ignorant, what envy is; for really and truly, of the two kinds there are, I only know that which is holy, noble, and high-minded; and if that be so, as it is, I am not likely to attack a priest, above all if, in addition, he holds the rank of familiar of the Holy Office. And if he said what he did on account of him on whose behalf it seems he spoke, he is entirely mistaken; for I worship the genius of that person, and admire his works and his unceasing and strenuous industry. After all, I am grateful to this gentleman, the author, for saying that my novels are more satirical than exemplary, but that they are good; for they could not be that unless there was a little of everything in them.

I suspect thou wilt say that I am taking a very humble line, and keeping myself too much within the bounds of my moderation, from a feeling that additional suffering should not be inflicted upon a sufferer, and that what this gentleman has to endure must doubtless be very great, as he does not dare to come out into the open field and broad daylight, but hides his name and disguises his country as if he had been guilty of some lese majesty. If perchance thou shouldst come to know him, tell him from me that I do not hold myself aggrieved; for I know well what the temptations of the devil are, and that one of the greatest is putting it into a man's head that he can write and print a book by which he will get as much fame as money, and as much money as fame; and to prove it I will beg of you, in your own sprightly, pleasant way, to tell him this story.

There was a madman in Seville who took to one of the drollest absurdities and vagaries that ever madman in the world gave way to. It was this: he made a tube of reed sharp at one end, and catching a dog in the street, or wherever it might be, he with his foot held one of its legs fast, and with his hand lifted up the other, and as best he could fixed the tube where, by blowing, he made the dog as round as a ball; then holding it in this position, he gave it a couple of slaps on the belly, and let it go, saying to the bystanders (and there were always plenty of them): "Do your worships think, now, that it is an easy thing to blow up a dog?" – Does your worship think now, that it is an easy thing to write a book?

And if this story does not suit him, you may, dear reader, tell him this one, which is likewise of a madman and a dog.

In Cordova there was another madman, whose way it was to carry a piece of marble slab or a stone, not of the lightest, on his head, and when he came upon any unwary dog he used to draw

close to him and let the weight fall right on top of him; on which the dog in a rage, barking and howling, would run three streets without stopping. It so happened, however, that one of the dogs he discharged his load upon was a cap-maker's dog, of which his master was very fond. The stone came down hitting it on the head, the dog raised a yell at the blow, the master saw the affair and was wroth, and snatching up a measuring-yard rushed out at the madman and did not leave a sound bone in his body, and at every stroke he gave him he said, "You dog, you thief! my lurcher! Don't you see, you brute, that my dog is a lurcher?" and so, repeating the word "lurcher" again and again, he sent the madman away beaten to a jelly. The madman took the lesson to heart, and vanished, and for more than a month never once showed himself in public; but after that he came out again with his old trick and a heavier load than ever. He came up to where there was a dog, and examining it very carefully without venturing to let the stone fall, he said: "This is a lurcher; ware!" In short, all the dogs he came across, be they mastiffs or terriers, he said were lurchers; and he discharged no more stones. Maybe it will be the same with this historian; that he will not venture another time to discharge the weight of his wit in books, which, being bad, are harder than stones. Tell him, too, that I do not care a farthing for the threat he holds out to me of depriving me of my profit by means of his book; for, to borrow from the famous interlude of "The Perendenga," I say in answer to him, "Long life to my lord the Veintiquatro, and Christ be with us all." Long life to the great Conde de Lemos, whose Christian charity and well-known generosity support me against all the strokes of my curst fortune; and long life to the supreme benevolence of His Eminence of Toledo, Don Bernardo de Sandoval y Rojas; and what matter if there be no printing-presses in the world, or if they print more books against me than there are letters in the verses of Mingo Revulgo! These two princes, unsought by any adulation or flattery of mine, of their own goodness alone, have taken it upon them to show me kindness and protect me, and in this I consider myself happier and richer than if Fortune had raised me to her greatest height in the ordinary way. The poor man may retain honour, but not the vicious; poverty may cast a cloud over nobility, but cannot hide it altogether; and as virtue of itself sheds a certain light, even though it be through the straits and chinks of penury, it wins the esteem of lofty and noble spirits, and in consequence their protection. Thou needst say no more to him, nor will I say anything more to thee, save to tell thee to bear in mind that this Second Part of "Don Quixote" which I offer thee is cut by the same craftsman and from the same cloth as the First, and that in it I present thee Don Quixote continued, and at length dead and buried, so that no one may dare to bring forward any further evidence against him, for that already produced is sufficient; and suffice it, too, that some reputable person should have given an account of all these shrewd lunacies of his without going into the matter again; for abundance, even of good things, prevents them from being valued; and scarcity, even in the case of what is bad, confers a certain value. I was forgetting to tell thee that thou mayest expect the "Persiles," which I am now finishing, and also the Second Part of "Galatea."

CHAPTER I. OF THE INTERVIEW THE CURATE AND THE BARBER HAD WITH DON QUIXOTE ABOUT HIS MALADY

Cide Hamete Benengeli, in the Second Part of this history, and third sally of Don Quixote, says that the curate and the barber remained nearly a month without seeing him, lest they should recall or bring back to his recollection what had taken place. They did not, however, omit to visit his niece and housekeeper, and charge them to be careful to treat him with attention, and give him comforting things to eat, and such as were good for the heart and the brain, whence, it was plain to see, all his misfortune proceeded. The niece and housekeeper replied that they did so, and meant to do so with all possible care and assiduity, for they could perceive that their master was now and then beginning to show signs of being in his right mind. This gave great satisfaction to the curate and the barber, for they concluded they had taken the right course in carrying him off enchanted on the ox-cart, as has been described in the First Part of this great as well as accurate history, in the last chapter thereof. So they resolved to pay him a visit and test the improvement in his condition, although they thought it almost impossible that there could be any; and they agreed not to touch upon any point connected with knight-errantry so as not to run the risk of reopening wounds which were still so tender.

They came to see him consequently, and found him sitting up in bed in a green baize waistcoat and a red Toledo cap, and so withered and dried up that he looked as if he had been turned into a mummy. They were very cordially received by him; they asked him after his health, and he talked to them about himself very naturally and in very well-chosen language. In the course of their conversation they fell to discussing what they call State-craft and systems of government, correcting this abuse and condemning that, reforming one practice and abolishing another, each of the three setting up for a new legislator, a modern Lycurgus, or a brand-new Solon; and so completely did they remodel the State, that they seemed to have thrust it into a furnace and taken out something quite different from what they had put in; and on all the subjects they dealt with, Don Quixote spoke with such good sense that the pair of examiners were fully convinced that he was quite recovered and in his full senses.

The niece and housekeeper were present at the conversation and could not find words enough to express their thanks to God at seeing their master so clear in his mind; the curate, however, changing his original plan, which was to avoid touching upon matters of chivalry, resolved to test Don Quixote's recovery thoroughly, and see whether it were genuine or not; and so, from one subject to another, he came at last to talk of the news that had come from the capital, and, among other things, he said it was considered certain that the Turk was coming down with a powerful fleet, and that no one knew what his purpose was, or when the great storm would burst; and that all Christendom was in apprehension of this, which almost every year calls us to arms, and that his Majesty had made provision for the security of the coasts of Naples and Sicily and the island of Malta.

To this Don Quixote replied, "His Majesty has acted like a prudent warrior in providing for the safety of his realms in time, so that the enemy may not find him unprepared; but if my advice were taken I would recommend him to adopt a measure which at present, no doubt, his Majesty is very far from thinking of."

The moment the curate heard this he said to himself, "God keep thee in his hand, poor Don Quixote, for it seems to me thou art precipitating thyself from the height of thy madness into the profound abyss of thy simplicity."

But the barber, who had the same suspicion as the curate, asked Don Quixote what would be his advice as to the measures that he said ought to be adopted; for perhaps it might prove to be one

that would have to be added to the list of the many impertinent suggestions that people were in the habit of offering to princes.

"Mine, master shaver," said Don Quixote, "will not be impertinent, but, on the contrary, pertinent."

"I don't mean that," said the barber, "but that experience has shown that all or most of the expedients which are proposed to his Majesty are either impossible, or absurd, or injurious to the King and to the kingdom."

"Mine, however," replied Don Quixote, "is neither impossible nor absurd, but the easiest, the most reasonable, the readiest and most expeditious that could suggest itself to any projector's mind."

"You take a long time to tell it, Senor Don Quixote," said the curate.

"I don't choose to tell it here, now," said Don Quixote, "and have it reach the ears of the lords of the council to-morrow morning, and some other carry off the thanks and rewards of my trouble."

"For my part," said the barber, "I give my word here and before God that I will not repeat what your worship says, to King, Rook or earthly man – an oath I learned from the ballad of the curate, who, in the prelude, told the king of the thief who had robbed him of the hundred gold crowns and his pacing mule."

"I am not versed in stories," said Don Quixote; "but I know the oath is a good one, because I know the barber to be an honest fellow."

"Even if he were not," said the curate, "I will go bail and answer for him that in this matter he will be as silent as a dummy, under pain of paying any penalty that may be pronounced."

"And who will be security for you, senor curate?" said Don Quixote.

"My profession," replied the curate, "which is to keep secrets."

"Ods body!" said Don Quixote at this, "what more has his Majesty to do but to command, by public proclamation, all the knights-errant that are scattered over Spain to assemble on a fixed day in the capital, for even if no more than half a dozen come, there may be one among them who alone will suffice to destroy the entire might of the Turk. Give me your attention and follow me. Is it, pray, any new thing for a single knight-errant to demolish an army of two hundred thousand men, as if they all had but one throat or were made of sugar paste? Nay, tell me, how many histories are there filled with these marvels? If only (in an evil hour for me: I don't speak for anyone else) the famous Don Belianis were alive now, or any one of the innumerable progeny of Amadis of Gaul! If any these were alive today, and were to come face to face with the Turk, by my faith, I would not give much for the Turk's chance. But God will have regard for his people, and will provide some one, who, if not so valiant as the knights-errant of yore, at least will not be inferior to them in spirit; but God knows what I mean, and I say no more."

"Alas!" exclaimed the niece at this, "may I die if my master does not want to turn knight-errant again;" to which Don Quixote replied, "A knight-errant I shall die, and let the Turk come down or go up when he likes, and in as strong force as he can, once more I say, God knows what I mean." But here the barber said, "I ask your worships to give me leave to tell a short story of something that happened in Seville, which comes so pat to the purpose just now that I should like greatly to tell it." Don Quixote gave him leave, and the rest prepared to listen, and he began thus:

"In the madhouse at Seville there was a man whom his relations had placed there as being out of his mind. He was a graduate of Osuna in canon law; but even if he had been of Salamanca, it was the opinion of most people that he would have been mad all the same. This graduate, after some years of confinement, took it into his head that he was sane and in his full senses, and under this impression wrote to the Archbishop, entreating him earnestly, and in very correct language, to have him released from the misery in which he was living; for by God's mercy he had now recovered his lost reason, though his relations, in order to enjoy his property, kept him there, and, in spite of the truth, would make him out to be mad until his dying day. The Archbishop, moved by repeated sensible, well-written letters, directed one of his chaplains to make inquiry of the madhouse as to

the truth of the licentiate's statements, and to have an interview with the madman himself, and, if it should appear that he was in his senses, to take him out and restore him to liberty. The chaplain did so, and the governor assured him that the man was still mad, and that though he often spoke like a highly intelligent person, he would in the end break out into nonsense that in quantity and quality counterbalanced all the sensible things he had said before, as might be easily tested by talking to him. The chaplain resolved to try the experiment, and obtaining access to the madman conversed with him for an hour or more, during the whole of which time he never uttered a word that was incoherent or absurd, but, on the contrary, spoke so rationally that the chaplain was compelled to believe him to be sane. Among other things, he said the governor was against him, not to lose the presents his relations made him for reporting him still mad but with lucid intervals; and that the worst foe he had in his misfortune was his large property; for in order to enjoy it his enemies disparaged and threw doubts upon the mercy our Lord had shown him in turning him from a brute beast into a man. In short, he spoke in such a way that he cast suspicion on the governor, and made his relations appear covetous and heartless, and himself so rational that the chaplain determined to take him away with him that the Archbishop might see him, and ascertain for himself the truth of the matter. Yielding to this conviction, the worthy chaplain begged the governor to have the clothes in which the licentiate had entered the house given to him. The governor again bade him beware of what he was doing, as the licentiate was beyond a doubt still mad; but all his cautions and warnings were unavailing to dissuade the chaplain from taking him away. The governor, seeing that it was the order of the Archbishop, obeyed, and they dressed the licentiate in his own clothes, which were new and decent. He, as soon as he saw himself clothed like one in his senses, and divested of the appearance of a madman, entreated the chaplain to permit him in charity to go and take leave of his comrades the madmen. The chaplain said he would go with him to see what madmen there were in the house; so they went upstairs, and with them some of those who were present. Approaching a cage in which there was a furious madman, though just at that moment calm and quiet, the licentiate said to him, 'Brother, think if you have any commands for me, for I am going home, as God has been pleased, in his infinite goodness and mercy, without any merit of mine, to restore me my reason. I am now cured and in my senses, for with God's power nothing is impossible. Have strong hope and trust in him, for as he has restored me to my original condition, so likewise he will restore you if you trust in him. I will take care to send you some good things to eat; and be sure you eat them; for I would have you know I am convinced, as one who has gone through it, that all this madness of ours comes of having the stomach empty and the brains full of wind. Take courage! take courage! for despondency in misfortune breaks down health and brings on death.'

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