

THE LIFE OF CERVANTES

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The Life of Cervantes by Robinson Smith

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ROBINSON SMITH

**THE LIFE
OF CERVANTES**

LIFE OF CERVANTES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR AND
PUBLISHERS

**THAT IMAGINATIVE GENTLEMAN,
DON QUIJOTE DE LA MANCHA.**

By MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA.

Translated into English by ROBINSON
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Photo

J. Lacoste, Madrid

HOUSE IN VALLADOLID WHERE CERVANTES
WROTE THE FIRST PART OF DON QUIJOTE

Frontispiece

THE LIFE OF CERVANTES

BY
ROBINSON SMITH

*This place of learning wherein we are taught
To mould from natural clay some noble form*



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1914

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE life of Cervantes presents the extraordinary case of a man that did not find himself until fifty-five. At that age he penned the opening sentence of *Don Quijote*, and at once the inner meaning of his life found its adequate outward expression. His mind mounted, the nobility of his nature asserted itself, his heart laughed and sang. This was in the year 1603. Then, with the first part of his great work finished, his being lapsed for another ten years. The first part of *Don Quijote* appeared in 1605, and though Cervantes suddenly found himself famous, he still found himself very poor, and what with petty affairs, with family troubles, with much reading, with writing a dozen short stories, the years went quickly by. Then, in 1614, he was driven, as by an accident, to write the second

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part of his immortal story. The old fire burned, his being was renewed, his pen ran swiftly, and within a year the book was finished. He was now approaching seventy, and in little more than a twelvemonth all that could die of him was dead. Omit the years 1603 and 1614 from Cervantes' life and there is left but a clever writer of short stories; include those years and we have the most imaginative prose-writer of all time.

The phenomenon would be less remarkable if the earlier years of his life had been years of preparation: if he had been consciously perfecting himself in his art in order that the masterpiece might in the end evolve. During his early manhood and prime he had written but occasional verses, a few forgotten plays, and a dull pastoral, the *Galatea*. Therein indeed he showed himself the master of a measured style, but there is almost no trace of that wealth of fancy, that power of characterisation, that irrepressible high spirit, which so distinguish the *Don Quijote*. Nor was it as if during those early years he had been reading toward an end, hoarding his riches for these two years of his bountiful giving, these two years of splendid achievement. He read