

**THE SPIRIT OF CERVANTES; OR, DON
QUIXOTE ABRIDGED. BEING A
SELECTION OF THE EPISODES
AND INCIDENTS, WITH A SUMMARY
SKETCH OF THE STORY OF THAT
POPULAR ROMANCE. IN TWO PARTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649710539

The Spirit of Cervantes; Or, Don Quixote Abridged. Being a Selection of the Episodes and Incidents, with a Summary Sketch of the Story of That Popular Romance. In Two Parts by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA

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PREFACE.

IN a book containing but a very moderate number of pages, and professing only to bring forward the more prominent parts of a work that exhibits the most brilliant proofs of genius, many words of preface may be dispensed with, and are the less called for, after the elaborate discussions that have ushered in the late publications with respect to Cervantes' writings.

It may therefore suffice to say, that the present production arose from early impressions, made by the perusal of translations of a former date: and that this predilection led to the study of the original work.

In the same view as Shakspeare's writings have, in the present day, been rendered

properly accessible to our domestic circles, so it is hoped this outline of Cervantes' delineation of Spanish manners and sentiments, may with equal propriety, be received in the same good company.

And in extenuation of the liberty with which the original text and arrangement have been handled, Cervantes' own expressions in the course of his work, impress the idea, that he was himself sensible, the enthusiastic ardour of his genius had, in the first outset, carried him beyond even the level of his own countrymen's sanguine temper; so that it seemed expedient to soften and change many passages, in order to meet the object assigned for the undertaking.

SKETCH
OF THE
FEW PARTICULARS
RECORDED OF THE
LIFE OF CERVANTES,
WITH THE CHARACTER OF HIS ROMANCE OF DON QUIXOTE.

THE place of Cervantes' birth not being known, it can only be gathered from his writings, that he was born in the year 1549 :—and from the same source, that his education could not have been neglected, from the stock of acquired knowledge that presents itself throughout his compositions ; which, together with his natural genius, enabled him with so much skill to draw his characteristic pictures of human nature.

The Author's life in the following abridgment affords an example, that superiority of genius is not always beneficial to its possessor ; and that even

the *utile dulce*, the agreeable combined with the instructive, may fail of its reward: for although this work of Cervantes is described as making such an impression, that the very children handled it, boys read it, men understood it, the old applauded it; and that it was not overlooked even by the Sovereign, who, it is reported, observing from the balcony of his palace, a student sitting with a book on the banks of the river Manzanares, and frequently falling backwards convulsed with laughter, pronounced that it could be no other than Don Quixote that he was reading; and dispatched one of his attendants to the spot, who verified the fact: yet amidst this blaze of fame, Cervantes passed a life of hardship and privation, and is said to have expired in the greatest poverty.

It appears that at one period of his life, he was a soldier, and was in the famous sea-fight against the Turks at Lepanto, where so many Christians were rescued from their chains; and that in this engagement he was made a prisoner, and carried to Algiers, experiencing some similarity of adventure to what he has recorded in the romance of Don Quixote, as happening in the story of the Spanish Captive.

Retiring from these active scenes, he engaged in the paths of literature, writing many plays and novels previous to his grand work of Don Quixote, in which he satirizes the folly of suffering the imagination to be possessed with legendary tales that have little foundation in nature or fact.

The author's merit, however, in this as in his other works, though generally admired, obtained so little notice from the superior classes in the kingdom, that he is said to have died in distress in the year 1617.

In the character of Don Quixote, Cervantes exhibits a good understanding perverted by reading romantic stories to such a pass of frenzy, as to mistake and confound the most familiar occurrences with the fantastic illusions these stories had impressed on his imagination; and the ridicule thus exhibited, was felt to be so striking, that the readers of those books awoke as from a dream, and reflected with amazement on their former infatuation.— Nevertheless it must be confessed that this dream, however mixed with absurdity, was the offspring of no debased turn of ideas; which, when dispersed,

did but confirm the Duke of Alva's deep observation, that Cervantes by destroying the spirit of chivalry, had given a death blow to the best energies of Spain.

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