

fell fainting and exhausted amid the cries of victory. Speaking afterwards of this great day he would say: "I lost my left hand for the glory of the right." The Battle of Lepanto was followed for him by six years' hospital service in Italy. Here he made the acquaintance of many famous Italian writers, among them Dante and Tasso, and here he conceived the idea of writing his greatest play. But his six years' service ended in his being captured by the Moors and taken prisoner to Algiers where he spent nearly five years amid the horrors of the galleys. This was a dark time for the brave soldier who had fought so well for his king, for that gloomy and ungrateful monarch had forgotten him and paid no attention to the petitions presented to him on behalf of the captive. Cervantes' family was too poor to pay the ransom demanded and two attempts to escape ended in failure, and so he had to bear the yoke and possess his soul in patience. But dark though it seemed, there was a bright side even to this heavy cloud. The Moors, fascinated by the unmistakable charms of their prisoner, treated him with much kindness, and he in turn entertained those lovers of plays and pleasures with many exhibitions of his dramatic skill; thus the time was not lost for it helped him to discover his real dramatic ability and did more besides.

The day of freedom came at last won by the sacrifice of his mother and sister. It is interesting to note that the ransom was finally paid by the needle-work of those devoted relatives and the kindness of their old parish priest. When Cervantes returned ransomed to Spain he was still a young man and more ambitious than ever. But in spite of his wonderful energy his health was delicate and his experience at the battle of Lepanto had left him partly disabled yet his hopes were high and he came back thinking of the great things he would do for his beloved country. While in Algiers he had seen and learned many things and had employed what time he could in preparing a memorial to the king who had ignored him, which he presented on his return. "With the characteristic imbecillity of kings" it was promptly consigned to the Limbo of the Archives where it lay in oblivion until long after the death of the gallant soldier who wrote it when it was at last given to the public. And thus, forgotten once again by those who owed him the most, he was obliged to begin a hard struggle for life, and he began it cheerily. Where a weaker or less noble spirit would have given up in despair, he simply set to work to make literature for the world and win the admiration of all times.