

to love too late. In studying Cervantes we find that his place is with Homer, Dante and Shakespeare, the world's highest authorities outside the Scriptures, the indirectly inspired writers for all times and countries. These are the four names the world can never forget; all the rest might well be lost while these remain. Yet, remarkable as was Cervantes' genius, he has a still deeper charm for us and a stronger claim on our love and admiration as a man and a hero who lived out his own tragic life and made no fuss about it, called no attention to it, never blamed himself or others, and preserved through all the saving grace of being able to laugh at his mistakes. In those days of too much pessimism and cynicism, it is refreshing to think of this ignored but illustrious scholar whose hard fate failed to embitter or make censorious, who ever looked on life with wistful yet tolerant eyes, forgetting how to whine or sneer? who, in his own words "was content with little though desiring more."

Don Miguel Cervantes was born in Alcala, near Madrid, in the year 1547, a few years after the close of that magnificent era of Ferdinand and Isabella during which Spain had become emancipated from the Moorish yoke. His parents were poor and little is known of his early life. He says himself that he always loved poetry for its own sake and his career as a writer was really opened by eulogy written on Queen Isabella, that noble woman to whom not only Spain but our own America owes such a debt of gratitude. But Cervantes had other ambitions outside the literary line; those were fighting times and he longed to be a soldier. His opportunity came in the reign of Phillip II. when a League was formed against the Saracens, the Christian's ancient enemy. Our young writer joined the League and prepared with great ardor to take part in the battle of Lepanto (1571). When the grand day came it found him alas, condemned to bed, ill with fever! But when the signal for battle was given his spirit triumphed over physical weakness, and rising he rushed on deck exclaiming: "I would rather die fighting for God than think of my own safety and remain under cover." The story of that famous victory, one of the most decisive in the world's history, is too well known to need repeating; it was the last great battle between Turk and Christian and when the day was done the sea-power of the Saracen was broken for ever. Cervantes took a noble part in the struggle, so bravely and desperately did he fight that although wounded in the breast and with his left hand crushed, he still fought on unconscious of pain, till at last he