

Commentary

Quevedo, Don Francisco Gomez Quevedo Villegas, poet and man of affairs, having wandered about Spain for some months following his first arrest and imprisonment finds himself "in the country," much to his distaste, waiting for something to turn up; as much as such a man ever waits for anything.

Out of favor and poor, what is a fellow to do? Why, being a writer he can write. The short "novela" here presented, El perro y La Calentura, is a product of that period--one of the lesser products, a piece of pure literary invention, for the sheer zest of it. This constitutes both its charm and its value today, a day when unconventionality, not to say tangency in the arts must find its roots somewhere--unless it be wholly irrelevant. Quevedo asked no one where to head in. Nor do we.

The man is 45 years of age, at the top of his bent--though this work seems to have been tossed off quite casually -- if not without guile -- as an aside while more "serious" compositions were in the process of making or being prepared for the printer at Zaragossa. The date at the bottom of the dedicatory epistle is October 15, 1625: to Don Fernando de Sotomayor, the brother, by the way, of the Inquisitor-General; not a bad lead for a man out of favor at court!

My mother, Raquel Hélène Rose Hoheb de Williams, who knows some good Quevedo stories, confined to her bed, did most of the work of translation.

Quevedo was born an hidalgo of old Castillian stock, in the valley of Toranzo, near Burgos, the Sierra Morena, where his ancestors lived poor but dignified for several generations. But that this "terror and wonder of the age," this late heir of theirs, should have come down upon Madrid from the northern mountains, the cold, windy, mountains, seems altogether fitting.

The child lost his father almost at birth and his mother not long afterward--to the court, so it is said. One may well imagine that she was not intrigued at the thought of bringing up, with inadequate funds, this tadpole, as he must have appeared then, big in the head and weak in the nether extremity. Consequently he was shipped off to school at an early age where his record, first and last, was never less than brilliant.

In El Buscon, "The Life of the Great Rascal," one of the major works of his maturity, he records a scene from those penurious years: "God knows, how we were plagued with this old hag. She was too deaf to hear anything, though she understood signs in spite of being half blind. She used to pray incessantly until one day the string of beads broke over the stew as it was boiling. On that occasion she placed before us a sanctified meal. Some of the boys exclaimed, "Black peas? From Ethiopia?" Others cried, "What? Peas in mourning? Who can have passed away?" Our master happened to bite on one of them, and it pleased God to break one of his teeth. On Fridays the old jade would dish us up some eggs--so full of her revered grey hairs that they appeared no less venerable than herself. It was a common practice for her to dip the kitchen shovel instead of the ladle into the pot; and

to serve up porringers of broth containing coals, nits, chips of wood and the heads of flax she spun; all was thrown in to fill and swell our bellies."

This was at the peak of the Golden Age of Spanish letters: Lope de Vega, Gongora, Aleman, Mariana, Cervantes; the youth plumped for a career as a writer and took upon himself, from the start, the burdens and responsibilities of satire. It was a choice which well suited his nature.

"He read at meals, in the coach, and in bed, making a hobby (later) of collecting small, portable volumes for the pocket: and his library consisted of some 5000 books treating of every branch of human knowledge then available."

But he was anything but a bookworm. Popular at court as the years grew, you saw a figure striking and not unprepossessing in appearance considering the deformity which caused him to walk with a kind of shuffling limp. Of average height he was sturdily built; a few old scars from dueling encounters marked a clear though pale complexion which covered broad features; sparkling eyes regarded everything through a pair of Gargantuan horn-rimmed spectacles; a massive head crowned with luxuriant black hair, and his animated countenance was always in training for laughter."

One day at a gathering in the house of Count de Moranda, "Presidente" of Castille, Quevedo entered into an argument about some problem of swordsmanship with the celebrated master of the art, Don Luis Pacheco de Narvez, who was also the author of a handbook on the same subject. Pacheco knowing himself no match for the young scholar in point of wit, a trial by weapons was proposed by the overconfident swordsman. To the amazement and amusement of the bystanders the lame,

short-sighted poet very soon disarmed the professor of swordsmanship.

But in March, 1611, an incident occurred which was to change the whole aspect of Quevedo's affairs. At dusk on the last day of the month the poet was visiting the Church of San Martin of Madrid. His attention fixed upon a lady, seemingly of quality, devoutly praying, Quevedo was astounded to see a man approach and give her, for no apparent reason, a resounding slap in the face. Burning with indignation the poet rushed forward, seized the aggressor and dragged him outside the holy precincts. Swords were drawn; and in the fierce combat which ensued Quevedo's opponent fell bleeding; he died a few hours later.

This proved to be a turning point in the author's career, for the victim was a personage of some note. Before the threatened vengeance of friends and relatives of the deceased man, the poet retreated and found shelter in the palace of his friend Don Pedro Tellez Giron, Duke of Osuna, Viceroy to Sicily, who, having embraced the refugee gave him a place as secretary on his staff.

From that time to the death of Phillip III (1621), and the subsequent disgrace and fall of Osuna, Quevedo served his country and his Church in Italy with the same distinction he had displayed in all his life's undertakings. But at home enmities had been piling up. Such men as the disappointed teacher of swordsmanship and many another, whom the vicious digs of the satiric poet had galled to the point of fury were merely biding their time to destroy him.

Satire, direct satire seems a lost art today, more's the pity: television will not affect this. But with the will for it and

the proper disguises, it might well and still serve for getting said salutorily that which would put us in jail were we to speak outright.

And there is pleasure in this novela past the knowledge of details.

Quevedo seems to have invented a style here and elsewhere in his writing fully as intriguing and trenchant as Joyce or Stein have performed in our day. It is the Cuenta de Cuentas, "Story of Stories," a use of proverbs, in the raw, cant phrases (often, alas, untranslatable) etc. -- to tell more than can be told, (though much can be surmised), a sparkle of shrewd perceptions--which has made me persist in wanting to have this book presented.

It is a game, as what literary device is not? A game set to entice in order to reveal more than can be told; it is a device to entangle the senses, as such, for the sheer sense of the words as anything else: Quevedo was a master of words, of double entendre and bravura--of which, though little, something can still be brought over from the old Spanish for our minds as well as our eyes.

I give you truths in chemises

(said he)

Not far from naked.

It is a device that might well be more used by us with our language as it is, largely in flux, rich in slang and cant terms, the language of a multiple witted population--but I mean a barbed, not an infantile weapon, not adenoid-witted journalese; a language pointed to the heart of the matter not the ureters of a piddling Hollywood hyperprostatism, a meeting place for true belly laughter at the

idiocies of the day.

As Quevedo used it--you should read how Quevedo used it! in The Hour of All Men, it goes often back to "the people." Toward the end of the present work especially, as the pace quickens, he says--descending to the dregs of speech--"This way you must never write!" and from there on leaps to the attack; at the very end, an orgy of jazz counterpoint: unfortunately lost to precise sense but, still, wonderfully generative of excitement as the words pile up, zippe zappe, and we glimpse a scene in a garden, a walled garden. There we see an old man with a dyed beard, a church dignitary, near to the court, and his kept woman, a girl of barely fifteen years.

Also, of course, a young man. Outside the garden wall it is time of fiesta. It is peaceful in the garden where the young "wife" is idling under the watchful eye of her "keeper."

The old boy must have lost sight of her for a moment. Is it night? It must be night. The lights and music of the fiesta reach to the girl. Has the old man fallen asleep? Of course.

Suddenly he wakes and senses the event. He gropes through the paths of the garden, calls out and gets no answer. The noise of the carneval. Distracted, going about in the dark all at once--pardicas!--he steps upon the back of something live in his way and falls.

Chinfarrada. Percox. A wild chase ensues through trees whose low branches catch his beard.

Over the wall! Moor or Christian. He takes his child-wife to task, drags her indoors. She smoozles him in the most brazen style. Seduces him skillfully . . . but what will the event prove nine months hence?

Or do I go too fast? What, for Quevedo?

I confess both Mother and I were stumped by the four or five last pages, though they intrigued us immeasurably. I sent them to Professor Salinas at Johns Hopkins asking him if he would not help me out. But he returned the script untouched, saying, "This is written in early 17th Century slang, no one knows what it means now. Furthermore, the text is impure, the printers of those days made many mistakes. Some words, such for instance as "tabloa" are certainly not Spanish."

Perhaps, thought I, it should read "tablada," tabled, laid in short. It would be in the spirit of Quevedo. The poet must have indulged in many a vicious grin when he was scribbling this passage, at top speed in all probability. He'd been all around the country killing time, waiting to get back into Madrid--which he'd been forbidden to approach nearer than a distance of ten leagues. Going about on his "sturdy legs" he must have picked up more than one low-life phrase or word for his list.

In 1621, Phillip III died. With the fall from power of Osuna and the death of the monarch, who had always shown himself kindly disposed toward the poet, the enemies of Quevedo had their opportunity.

It was no more than a year or two since, upon the successful completion of an important mission from Sicily, Phillip, delighted with the skill and daring of his servant, had offered Quevedo, so it is said, the position of Secretary of State. This, tactfully, the poet declined.

His ability had been outstanding. Twice as secretary to Osuna, Viceroy for Spain in Sicily, Quevedo had been entrusted to carry large

sums amounting to many thousands of ducats to the impoverished monarch in Madrid. Both times, in spite of evident dangers, he had succeeded--once by ship from Marseilles and once overland--in completing his task.

Furthermore, at his trial, Osuna freely testified that had he followed his secretary's advice he might not have come to the disgraceful end he was then being called upon to face. To Quevedo's credit, it was said, that he had devised a method of collecting the sums necessary for government without impoverishing the people.

Nevertheless, this time, his monarch dead, on his return to Spain he was arrested as a "Libeller" and placed in confinement. At first he was thrown into a vile prison but after a short time falling ill they removed him, still in custody, to more congenial surroundings at Villaneuva and very soon after he was liberated--but forbidden to approach near than ten leagues of Madrid.

This brings us to about the point where we began: the courtier lost in the country, distressed, seeking to get back at least to some kind of a living--for except when he was Secretary to Osuna, Quevedo was broke his life long.

On September 25, 1624, the Duke of Osuna died. This was perhaps the worst blow Quevedo hitherto had experienced. From that day he devoted himself almost exclusively to studious and literary pursuits.

"The Dog and the Fever" is a covert attack upon those then in power--scurrilous but veiled. Quevedo was unsuppressable, come what may, his laughter must break out. It is in a lighter vein than some of his weightier themes employing all his knowledge of the language. Gypsy dialect, which he knew well how to use with telling effect, seems to

have played a large part in it. His songs in the Gypsy dialect are famous.

We do not know the person or persons attacked, but, to appear later, it is possible to make a few shrewd guesses. And now Osuna gone, he had to find, if possible, a new patron. Who better than Fernando de Sotomayor.

The prefatory letter to Sotomayor is not subtle in its flattery. But flattery was the game of the hour. In fact, they were too subtle to require that flattery pretend to be subtle. Let it go, broad and full. There's^a dangerous charm in it like present day diplomacy. He made the book for Sotomayor, the brother of the Inquisitor-General, Don Antonio--and it may have stood him in good stead later, after the final vicious attack made upon him by his enemies, the famous Tribuna de la Justa Venganza. For Antonio, considering the works of the great satirist in general, at that time, pronounced them meritorious in the Expurgatorio of 1640. More of that later. One had to scheme far in advance in those days to save one's neck.

There were some skirmishes with the poet Lois de Gongora . the twists and turns of Gongora's lines became the subject of many scathing remarks by Quevedo; and the ridiculed poet replied with characteristic vigor. (See passage in the present text). In this manner the ex-diplomat and fiscal adviser entertained himself.

To return to the Cuento de Cuentos, after the style of which this novella is designed: it is a kind of essay written mostly in the bare proverbs and pithy sayings in which Spanish is unequalled. It is a style that must be given a high place in ingenious literature, and has a charm which is not to be found in other works of the author--or, in

fact, elsewhere.

There is a modern quality about it that is rather startling when the realization first strikes the eye, very much a literary "collage," to tell directly a hidden story, if you will, without other explanation; almost a contemporary plastique of words, proverbs and phrases piled up, often with very little reference to syntax. This is what makes it baffling while revealing an astonishing assurance on Quevedo's part. This verbalism which Quevedo, as well as Gongora often delighted in--and for which they were excoriated, in fact, for for which they sometimes scalded each other, is a very modern touch at its best.

Apart from a sort of atomic bombardment of words as words, each carrying its own unrelated particle contributory to the meaning (while remaining themselves uninflected--a nice point) they practice speed. And it is speed that characterized our contemporary scene--and Quevedo. He didn't waste time, and speed also is the reason for Gongora's style at its best. It is a literary, a professional solution of the artist's eternal problem: presentation.

Present, present! At once and fast! The blank page, the empty square of the canvas, is staring you in the face. That is the way the poem, as a poem, began to break away from prose. Speed discovered the measure: speed's contempt for lughead's and laggards. That is the origin of the lyric . . . as the writing here, is lyrical, succinct, packed (to the point of complete disrelatedness sometimes, it must be said) and in vulgar garb, as modern art must be: gutty, smut--the thing--unvarnished. To be unvarnished is the essence of the greatest art: to wilfully prick

the over delicate word, the too fine, the fake niceness, is so often a nastiness.

At one period of his disgrace, as my mother tells it, Quevedo was in his chambers when he heard a slight noise at the door. He got up, listened and having assured himself that there was someone there, flung the door open. Squatting before him at the sill he saw the court jester with his pants down poised to defecate.

Quevedo, sensing at once what was up, said to the fellow whom he knew well, "By whose order do you do this?"

"By the King's order," said the jester.

"Very well. Do it," said Quevedo, "pero si mias te matta," --but if you piss I'll kill you.--That settled it, the doorstep was left clean.

In spite of my failure to discover certainly the butt of this satire, it is, obviously, someone well known, other-wise the thing would be pointless; a cleric, by internal evidence, of considerable importance, who is being viciously attacked.

His was no craven attack, it was against men in power because they were corrupt. "Los Suenos" (The Visions), were his sermons to all classes of corrupt officials, effete judges, dishonest lawyers, ignorant doctors, and a host of others who, one way or another, had strayed from the paths of virtue, decent behavior and good morals.

For if he was not the Prince of Virtue he was surely His willing servant--a man, to boot, in the full sense.

From The Visions, the 5th Vision, the Visit in Jest, as translated by Sir Robert l'Estrange in 1667, we get a view of Quevedo's style--so different from that of the 13th Century Florentine who treated a similar thesis:

"I began to take thought, what might be the meaning of this oglio of people of several conditions and humors met together; but I was quickly diverted from that consideration by the apparition of a creature which looked as though it were of the feminine gender. It was a person of a thin and slender make, laden with crowns, garlands, sceptres, scythes, sheep-hooks, pattens, hobnailed shoes, tiaras, straw hats, mitres, caps, embroideries, skins, silk, wool, gold, lead, diamonds, shells, pearls, and pebbles. She was dressed up in all the colors of the rainbow; she had one eye shut, the other open; young on one side, and old on the other. I thought at first, she had been a great way off, when indeed she was very near me, and when I took her to be at my chamber door, she was at my bed's head. How to unriddle this mystery I knew not; nor was it possible for me to make out the meaning of an equipage so extravagant, and so fantastically put together. It gave me no affright, however, but on the contrary I could not forbear laughing, for it came just into my mind that I had formerly seen in Italy a farce, where the mimic, pretending to come from the other world, was just thus accoutred, and never was anything more nonsensically pleasant. I held as long as I could, and at last, I asked what she was. She answered me, 'I am Death.' Death! the very word brought my heart into my mouth. 'And I beseech you, Madam,' quoth I with great humility and respect, 'whither is your honor going?' 'No further,' said she."

She had come to take him, not as a corpse, but living to the other world.

"'Get up then and come along; and never hang an arse for the matter; for what you will not do willingly you shall do in spite of your teeth.' This put me in a cold sweat; but without more delay up I started, and desired leave only to put on my breeches. 'No, no,' said she, 'no matter for clothes, nobody wears them upon this road; wherefore come away, naked as you are, and you'll travel better.'"

Mother tells another story about him: Leaning from a balcony one day three girls watched as he approached along the street below them. As he neared, one of them dropped a rose at his feet. Up he looked. "That's not the only thing you drop," said he and continued on his way.

He was married at 54 to a certain Esperanza. She was gone a year later. He never mentioned her in his writing more than to say, once casually:

"No esperaba hallar otra Esperanza."

In satire the quality of the laughter is the test of all. It seems to me, in that speech to Death in the passage quoted above, Quevedo, though he is always ready to burst into laughter, (in fact he almost laugh~~ed~~ed in Death's face), shows his humility in the same breath.

His "Yes, M'am," when the realization of who it was that he was talking to first hit him, is very moving. He never felt superior to other than fools and blackguards, those who betray God and man either out of ignorance or villany.

His laughter was not the scorn of a cynic but of a believer, a fierce, unquestioning believer, not one of those clod-witted hidalgos who were the downfall of Spain, but of one who did not feel superior to his surroundings merely by being born to a lofty position in the national hierarchy. His was the ready-to-laugh spirit of a grandee of the blood, but one shocked by the dullness and

and censurable behavior of those others about him who shared his blood but, not to waste his words, were little better than cheats and liars. He was of the same blood as the great Cervantes who with all his gentle mockery of the romantic school of his day was yet kindly to those about him, above and below, who waited as all must upon such a gentle understanding for their salvation.

During these years, following Osuna's fall and the death of Phillip the III, the satirist's enemies never entirely abandoned their scheming to destroy him. His old friend Don Luis Pacheco de Narvez, the fencing master; Montalban, the popular writer; Fray Diego Niseno, the Jesuit Provincial of San Basilio (could this have been HE?), and four others calling themselves "men of learning" collaborated in framing an indictment of the life and works of Quevedo, whom they designated "master of errors, doctor in shamelessness, licentiate in buffoneries, batchelor of filth, professor of vice, and devil's protopype amongst men." This attack was published in 1636 at Valencia with the approval of two distinguished pedants, Professor Jaime Esquierdo and Fray Vicente Lanuza..(I wonder).

Upon this attack Quevedo predicted that Montalban would die a raving lunatic, and he repeated the prediction to a friend. The sinister prophesy was fulfilled sooner than expected; and Father Niseno (whom Quevedo called Ni se no) preaching from the pulpit on the occasion of Montalban's funeral took the opportunity to deliver further polemics against the author of the "Visions." Quevedo ignored it at the time, but later wrote:

"Many speak ill of me
 And I of many a one.
 My speech is the braver
 They are many, I'm alone."

Brought to the attention of the Inquisitor-General who examined the works, Quevedo's writings were found meritorious and he was acquitted--the only proviso being that only the official Madrid editions were to be accepted.

But that didn't end the matter. Corrupt as they were, those who were out to do the poet in, they did not quite dare to appear to oppose themselves to the most distinguished lay theologian of that epoch; an ardent, active supporter of the Faith, of the King, and of the cause of National morals. His moral zeal was expressed in such mordant terms that many of the leaders of the day at court squirmed under his lash--but they did not give up.

On the contrary, when the enemies of the satirist realized that their indictment was a failure, they had recourse to other methods that were not so honorable. His audacious piece, "The Hour of all Men and Fortune in her Wits," was written in the year 1635 and no doubt some knowledge of its contents reached the ear of that sinister personage, the Conde Duane de Olivares, now the King's favorite. In 1637, the "Island of Monopantos," which was later embodied in "The Hour of All Men," was launched to attack the financial tricks of the favorite and his friends.

One day in 1639, Phillip IV, on sitting down to table, found some verses wrapped in a serviette. The lines were libellous and had a Quevedoesqu sting. (It was later proved that he did not write them).

On the night of the 7th of December, two court officials came to arrest him at his lodgings; he was searched, stripped, the keys of his estate taken, etc. This proved to be the end. After six years of imprisonment and lingering agony, filth, disease and final collapse, the poet died in 1645.

Let me, since the text is difficult, attempt to sum up briefly for the reader who may be interested, the story of El Perro y La Calenture:

Quevedo himself called it a Novela Peregrina (from the same root as peregrination: he was wandering about Spain at the time, in virtual exile). It appears to have been written during the summer of 1625--twenty years after El Quixote and shows a continuation of the dawning sense of reality which, among the best minds, was regnant in Spain of that day.

Quevedo begins by stating where he is, in the country, perhaps at Torre de Juan Abad, looking toward the court. In secret, listening for interlopers who might even there spy upon him, he begins to whisper his story, he the Dog, into the ear of the Fever, a woman-- who listens and later replies. What is the whole story: gossip-- with a sting--couched very much, generally, in the terms of the people.

He, the Dog, is so fed up with what he knows that he wants to shove in his fingers and disgorge the mess that is eating his heart out-- but he wishes, on a deeper level, to amuse, to amuse his patron and his patron's lady who is his lectress: to bark, but not to bite!

He goes on, using the imagery of his surroundings, the country mill, the sayings of the people, "Old Spain," in a sort of admiring

contempt for them, facing what, of their own level, the corrupt court can laugh at, pitifully.

The creatures of his fancy come from every corner, every peasant's hutch: the cat and the chestnuts--"Cat" by the way, is the cant term of the moment for rascal. So he begins:

Gradually we find, as we read and the words begin to fly off apparently as unrelatedly as chips from a log being chopped--that a story is forming itself.

We catch glimpses of a theme--rushing toward some final humiliation: the cuckold priest, the common girl who has betrayed him--and we look surreptitiously to the last pages--to a Moor? Nothing could be "lower!" And gaiety is increased in the world, and stupidity lessened, lessened in repute at least.

That's where the vulgar sayings of the people come in. He piles them up with evident gusto, both to reveal and to betray--portray how low his protagonist, the old boy, has got himself, into the hands of--is it the Prioress? a duenna with pietistic ways. But one knowing how to cut the cake seven ways for all that.

. he is old, he is a greybeard, a beard dyed red--out of yearning for a youth long since lost. An old man who has been tricked into thinking he is still young--enough, and who keeps, injudiciously, a girl--whom he has got with child, "all milk and honey," especially the milk .

"Look, girl," cautions Quevedo. "You asked for it." And he goes on to tell what both must do and both must pay, out of mind and in fact--and there's to be no crying over it--piously as you may pretend otherwise.

We find at the start what passes for a crystal brook! But unhappily there are no crystal brooks in the world today. And "God deliver us from virtuous men, lodged in easy places, who do no more than drink and talk. They are without conscience, but like pigs who have gorged themselves, still continue to root and grunt."

The Bishop, simony, a pious cuckold, follow rapidly under the eye of the satirist. Money and women. But especially an old man on a colt.

"I speak of cabelleros;" that is, the gentry, "but what a penurious clutch they are. Pretentious, without equipage and besotten."

Ah, the girl is barely fifteen, poor, and urged on by her mother, or mother superior!! to take the old guy over. "Well, if you must," says Quevedo, "do it whole hog. Don't wear gloves if you have decided to go it naked."

"Very often by trusting the dog," etc: "Who could that be, the Duenna?" "The wolf sleeps in the straw." There is danger ahead. Gossips are already at work and Papa had better watch his step.

"Do I make myself clear?" The word is out, everybody knows what is going on and he's going to be taken and taken proper before he is through.

"That the cat be Don Gonzalo." "Pity on you wicked world, poorly muffled." "Who shall follow all your crazy zigzags?" But he will not be thrown off the scent by such manoeuvres.

The old man with a beard dyed three colors begins to act

kittenish, there are castagnettes and tambourines lively to his mood.

But Quevedo feeling that he is pressing malice too close, halts his ridicule. "After all, all truths are not to be spoken." And, "After all, you should not complain, you're lucky to have the privileges of a husband and had better say thank you and call it quits. It might be worse--and probably is. Don't boast about it. There are many things you should be grateful for."

Now follows a list of a fool's perquisites at which "he" should not be surprised--since they affect him so closely--if he only knew!

This is one of Quevedo's "lists," put down without comment other than the facts of which they speak. This in itself is a fascinating sort of composition, used several times in this work--almost contemporary in its literary method: no comment, nothing "about" the subject, a bare placing of the matter before the attention, as an object, that which with wit a man might see for himself--swiftly and to the point. The list is loaded with Quevedo's contempt. The ridiculousness of a "blacksmith in a damask apron."

Much else might be said but, addressing his reader, the "Dog" calls a halt in his indictment. Or does he? It is only a pause in which to get his breath before barking more loudly than ever. For he goes on lashing out with ridicule at "an infant" sixty years who already says "daddy." "Look, old man, wine is good--but . . . no more than four shots at the most." "Be warned and--take it easy. I tell you this out of the goodness of my heart!"

Then back comes Quevedo to his original figure of the reeds that surround the mill . "I mean no evil, really," he says, "I am a dog; to bark, not to bite." Ha! but, "God keep me from madness."

And "Suddenly I betook myself to the garden with my doggish speech, short as the luck of a greybeard--verse of a dirge or hair of goat. Pardon me, your Grace, that I think to cool the soup by barking; and thus coming back to my thema, or anathema, I would ask, Lady mine: For whom does the wife of the blind man shave?"

And there we are again.

And now comes the Mother Prioress--who must have been in the scheme: "But beware of silence, lest a belch of vanity should cause the most austere of hermits (Quevedo?) to burst into laughter."

And alas, alas and alas! We begin again one of the lists that make this writing of the Cuenta de Cuentas what it is: A literary device of charm and puzzlement--a definite invention for our amusement and a veiled instruction. And we are at page 10 of the script.

"For what does the moon care that the dog bays her--nor a young wife for the praise of an old husband." "Alas that he who puts his foot in a brothel, puts another in the hospital." And so on for two more pages. Followed almost at once by a second catalog in the same vein upon the themes of "All" and "Every" and then, "Dont's," "Do not's," "Do nots" and "Believe." This is Quevedo in his ribbing mood, tongue in cheek the "writer" writing for the fun of it.

"Believe me, Christian people, that no cuckold is lost for lack of a bell-weather." And, "Don't believe in an old man red dyed, with the recipe of the flamingo, who making himself son of himself, and blotting out with logwood"--poor old bugger--"the brushstrokes of God, changes his marks like a donkey stolen by Gypsies . "

And "Grey haired fool, because you put your trust in a duenna etc. etc. etc." "Protect the girl." "Then to the girl, "Child, sell yourself dear, which is to say well loved."

He ridicules the fashion-mongers of his day who speak too prettily, "smoke of green gourds," and again, a catalog (p.18) and "God protect us from -- from evil." From this, from that, "From the searching eyes of neighbors etc. etc.," for a page and more. All manner of admonitions toward correct conduct: advice to policemen, druggists, Father Confessors, and many more.

On page 20, in a short verse, he admonishes us to "pay heed to these concepts, for under the load (the packsaddle) lie hid many secrets," for us to decipher--if we can.

At last, The Fever begins her story. Going back to the first scene, she says, "I came to drink, lying on my face, from these coursing crystals -- but, edified as I find myself to be at your discourse, I prefer brevity."

"I have travelled, I have seen this, I have seen that . . ." But before long the Dog resumes and on we go: proverbs: "Don't pull so hard that it breaks," "Measure yourself with your own rod," always directed to the game in question--for four pages: "Stains come out by rubbing," etc. etc. until we arrive at "the doctors." Sound and sage advice to whoever will profit by it, --that an old man keeping a young girl for his pleasure--might well profit by.

For now the Doctors come! Now Quevedo lets go. It is a favorite figure in Italian and earlier stories but the point is not dulled in Quevedo's telling. (p.26). "But inas-much as neither friends nor enemies are good witnesses, let us change the subject."

After another sheaf of proverbial advices, growing more and more stringent as the narrative goes one: "One should not put one's trust in bulky letters; in golden hair by word of a poet; red lips and blue eyes; in long lived prosperity;" we find among the rest, "Coward, I don't want money, to be any man's tool, but a man must have money." You can well imagine Quevedo himself speaking there. "A woman and a pane of glass, in a trice."

Quevedo, at this point, begins to talk generally and with considerable feeling. His advice is serious and reflects as much himself and his present state as the world. It begins to hurt--and he is more than half himself the butt of it as he goes on:

"But inasmuch as the file wastes itself in taking hold . . . Don't, don't, don't . . ." and then, his speech becoming more and more vulgar and more vague if weightier to the point in impact he begins his final passage with "Fop. Let's not beat about the bush."

Then comes the bang. A brawl. "Pell-mell" and we are in it. When for three and a half pages, to the end, we are taken up by something, something happening, tantalizing in its obscurity that gives us the dénouement of this inappropriate liason.

It is not a composition in obscurity, only, but in lowness--suitable to the occasion, as Quevedo would have us believe. Quevedo descends to the level--a pure literary device--of those he attacks. He has come to his climax, the point he would make, the climax of his scurrility as a gossip and an inspired clown.

He sails in. Only the lowest would be congruous here, the crass, if sparkling, language of the riff-raff of that day will serve now. And thus he lets you know what he thinks of such servants of

Church and State as those of whom he is speaking--who have found their despicable level--- beside hold-up men, pimps and snatch-purses.

Here the pure literary man indulges his muscles and peeled senses--indulges in a grand spree--"never write like this." Alas that we cannot follow him fully. So he takes leave of us and of his patron, who presumably knew (two brothers), fully and in detail what he was talking about.

I reverse the normal order and give the original Spanish in the notes for those who may be capable of reading them in the original--corrupt as the text may be.

When I looked up Captain Steven's "translation"--Captain John Stevens, 1697, at the New York Public Library, I found that he had skipped the difficult passages, omitting entirely the last pages.

So that this is the only complete rendering into English of this minor classic--as far as it has been possible for my mother and me to accomplish it.