

**Miguel de Cervantes**



*Dialogue  
Between Scipio  
and Berganze*

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# **Dialogue Between Scipio and Berganze**

**Dogs of the Hospital of the Resurrection in the City of Valladolid**



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[goodpress@okpublishing.info](mailto:goodpress@okpublishing.info)

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**DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIPIO AND BERGANZA,**

**DOGS OF THE HOSPITAL OF THE  
RESURRECTION IN THE CITY OF  
VALLADOLID, COMMONLY CALLED THE  
DOGS OF MAHUDES.THE DECEITFUL  
MARRIAGE**

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*Scip.* Berganza, my friend, let us leave our watch over the hospital to-night, and retire to this lonely place and these mats, where, without being noticed, we may enjoy that unexampled favour which heaven has bestowed on us both at the same moment.

*Berg.* Brother Scipio, I hear you speak, and know that I am speaking to you; yet cannot I believe, so much does it seem to me to pass the bounds of nature.

*Scip.* That is true, Berganza; and what makes the miracle greater is, that we not only speak but hold intelligent discourse, as though we had souls capable of reason; whereas we are so far from having it, that the difference between brutes and man consists in this, that man is a rational animal and the brute is irrational.

*Berg.* I hear all you say, Scipio; and that you say it, and that I hear it, causes me fresh admiration and wonder. It is very true that in the course of my life I have many a time heard tell of our great endowments, insomuch that some, it appears, have been disposed to think that we possess a natural instinct, so vivid and acute in many things that it

gives signs and tokens little short of demonstrating that we have a certain sort of understanding capable of reason.

*Scip.* What I have heard highly extolled is our strong memory, our gratitude, and great fidelity; so that it is usual to depict us as symbols of friendship. Thus you will have seen (if it has ever come under your notice) that, on the alabaster tombs, on which are represented the figures of those interred in them, when they are husband and wife, a figure of a dog is placed between the pair at their feet, in token that in life their affection and fidelity to each other was inviolable,

*Berg.* I know that there have been grateful dogs who have cast themselves into the same grave with the bodies of their deceased masters; others have stood over the graves in which their lords were buried without quitting them or taking food till they died. I know, likewise, that next to the elephant the dog holds the first place in the way of appearing to possess understanding, then the horse, and last the ape.

*Scip.* True; but you will surely confess that you never saw or heard tell of any elephant, dog, horse, or monkey having talked: hence I infer, that this fact of our coming by the gift of speech so unexpectedly falls within the list of those things which are called portents, the appearance of which indicates, as experience testifies, that some great calamity threatens the nations.

*Berg.* That being so I can readily enough set down as a portentous token what I heard a student say the other day as I passed through Alcala de Henares.

*Scip.* What was that?

*Berg.* That of five thousand students this year attending the university—two thousand are studying medicine.

*Scip.* And what do you infer from that?

*Berg.* I infer either that those two thousand doctors will have patients to treat, and that would be a woful thing, or that they must die of hunger.

*Scip.* Be that as it may, let us talk, portent or no portent; for what heaven has ordained to happen, no human diligence or wit can prevent. Nor is it needful that we should fall to disputing as to the how or the why we talk. Better will it be to make the best of this good clay or good night at home; and since we enjoy it so much on these mats, and know not how long this good fortune of ours may last, let us take advantage of it and talk all night, without suffering sleep to deprive us of a pleasure which I, for my part, have so long desired.

*Berg.* And I, too; for ever since I had strength enough to gnaw a bone I have longed for the power of speech, that I might utter a multitude of things I had laid up in my memory, and which lay there so long that they were growing musty or almost forgotten. Now, however, that I see myself so unexpectedly enriched with this divine gift of speech, I intend to enjoy it and avail myself of it as much as I can, taking pains to say everything I can recollect, though it be confusedly and helter-skelter, not knowing when this blessing, which I regard as a loan, shall be reclaimed from me.

*Scip.* Let us proceed in this manner, friend Berganza: to-night you shall relate the history of your life to me, and the perils through which you have passed to the present hour;

and to-morrow night, if we still have speech, I will recount mine to you; for it will be better to spend the time in narrating our own lives than in trying to know those of others.

*Berg.* I have ever looked upon you, Scipio, as a discreet dog and a friend, and now I do so more than ever, since, as a friend, you desire to tell me your adventures and know mine; and, as a discreet dog, you apportion the time in which we may narrate them. But first observe whether any one overhears us.

*Scip.* No one, I believe; since hereabouts there is a soldier going through a sweating-course; but at this time of night he will be more disposed to sleep than to listen to anything.

*Berg.* Since then we can speak so securely, hearken; and if I tire you with what I say, either check me or bid me hold my tongue.

*Scip.* Talk till dawn, or till we are heard, and I will listen to you with very great pleasure, without interrupting you, unless I see it to be necessary.

*Berg.* It appears to me that the first time I saw the sun was in Seville, in its slaughter-houses, which were outside the Puerta do la Carne; wence I should imagine (were it not for what I shall afterwards tell you) that my progenitors were some of those mastiff's which are bred by those ministers of confusion who are called butchers. The first I knew for a master, was one Nicholas the Pug-nosed, a stout, thick-set, passionate fellow, as all butchers are. This Nicholas taught me and other whelps to run at bulls in company with old