

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen  
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac  
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman  
Darwin Thoreau Twain  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte  
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse  
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# **Pepita Ximenez**

Juan Valera

# Imprint

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PEPITA XIMENEZ

FROM THE SPANISH OF

JUAN VALERA

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION*

BY THE AUTHOR

WRITTEN SPECIALLY FOR THIS EDITION

NEW YORK

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

*To the Messrs. Appleton.*

Gentlemen: It was my intention to write a preface for the purpose of authorizing the edition you are about to publish in English of "Pepita Ximenez"; but, on thinking the matter over, I was deterred by the recollection of an anecdote that I heard in my young days.

A certain gallant, wishing to be presented at the house of a rich man who was about to give a magnificent ball, availed himself for that purpose of the services of a friend, who boasted of his familiarity with the great man, and of the favor he enjoyed with him. They proceeded to the great man's house, and the gallant got his introduction; but the great man said to him who had introduced the other, "And you, who is to introduce you, for I am not acquainted with you?" As I entertain a profound respect and affection for this country, and have not, besides, the assurance that such an occasion would require, it would not do for me to say what the *introducer* of my story is said to have answered, "I need no one to introduce or to recommend me, for I am just now going away."

I infer from my story, as its evident moral, that I ought to refrain from addressing the public of the United States, to which I am entirely unknown as an author, notwithstanding the fact of my having maintained pleasant and friendly relations with its Government as the representative of my own.

The most judicious and prudent course I can adopt, then, is to limit myself to returning you earnest thanks for asking from me an authorization of which you did not stand in need, either by law or by treaty, for wishing to make known to your countrymen the least insipid of the products of my unfruitful genius, and for your generous purpose of conceding to me author's rights.

This, however, does not preclude the fact that, in thus expressing my thanks to you publicly, I incur a responsibility which I did not assume on any other occasion, either in Germany, Italy, or any other country where my works have been translated; for then, if they

failed to please the public, although the fact might pain me, I could still shrug my shoulders, and throw the blame of failure on the translator, or the publisher; but in this case I make myself your accomplice, and share, or rather receive, all the disgrace of failure, if failure there should be.

"Pepita Ximenez" has enjoyed a wide celebrity, not only in Spain, but in every other Spanish-speaking country. I am very far from thinking that we Spaniards of the present day are either more easily satisfied, less cultured than, or possessed of an inferior literary taste to, the inhabitants of any other region of the globe; but this does not suffice to dispel my misgivings that my novel may be received with indifference or with censure by a public somewhat prejudiced against Spain by fanciful and injurious preconceptions.

My novel, both in essence and form, is distinctively national and classic. Its merit—supposing it to have such—consists in the language and the style, and not in the incidents, which are of the most commonplace, or in the plot, which, if it can be said to have any, is of the simplest.

The characters are not wanting, as I think, in individuality, or in such truth to human nature as makes them seem like living beings; but, the action being so slight, this is brought out and made manifest by means of a subtle analysis, and by the language chosen to express the emotions, both which may in the translation be lost. There is, besides, in my novel a certain irony, good-humored and frank, and a certain humor, resembling rather the humor of the English than the *esprit* of the French, which qualities, although happily they do not depend upon puns, or a play upon words, but are in the subject itself, require, in order that they may appear in the translation, that this should be made with extreme care.

In conclusion, the chief cause of the extraordinary favor with which "Pepita Ximenez" was received in Spain is something that may fail to be noticed here by careless readers.

I am an advocate of art for art's sake. I think it in very bad taste, always impertinent, and often pedantic, to attempt to prove theses by writing stories. For such a purpose dissertations or books purely and severely didactic should be written. The object of a novel should be to charm, through a faithful representation of human

actions and human passions, and to create by this fidelity to nature a beautiful work. The object of art is the creation of the beautiful, and whoever applies it to any other end, of however great utility this end may be, debases it. But it may chance, through a conjunction of favorable circumstances, by a happy inspiration, because in a given moment everything is, disposed as by enchantment, or by supernatural influences, that an author's soul may become like a clear and magic mirror wherein are reflected all the ideas and all the sentiments that animate the eclectic spirit of his country, and in which these ideas and these sentiments lose their discordance, and group and combine themselves in pleasing agreement and harmony.

Herein is the explanation of the interest of "Pepita Ximenez." It was written when Spain was agitated to its center, and everything was thrown out of its regular course by a radical revolution that at the same time shook to their foundations the throne and religions unity. It was written when everything in fusion, like molten metal, might readily amalgamate, and be molded into new forms. It was written when the strife raged fiercest between ancient and modern ideals; and, finally, it was written in all the plenitude of my powers, when my soul was sanest and most joyful in the possession of an enviable optimism and an all-embracing love and sympathy for humanity that, to my misfortune, can never again find place within my breast.

If I had endeavored by dialectics and by reasoning to conciliate opinions and beliefs, the disapprobation would have been general; but, as the conciliating and syncretic spirit manifested itself naturally in a diverting story, every one accepted and approved it, each one drawing from my book the conclusions that best suited himself. Thus it was that, from the most orthodox Jesuit father down to the most rabid revolutionist, and from the ultra-Catholic who cherishes the dream of restoring the Inquisition, to the rationalist who is the irreconcilable enemy of every religion, all were pleased with "Pepita Ximenez."

It would be curious, and not inopportune, to explain here how it came about that I succeeded in pleasing every one without intending it, without knowing it, and, as it were, by chance.

There was in Spain, some years ago, a conservative minister who had sent a godson of his to study philosophy in Germany. By rare good fortune this godson, who was called Julián Sanz del Río, was a man of clear and profound intelligence, of unwearied application, and endowed with all the qualities necessary to make of him a sort of apostle. He studied, he formulated his system, he obtained the chair of metaphysics in the University of Madrid, and he founded a school, from which has since issued a brilliant pleiad of philosophers and statesmen, and of men illustrious for their learning, their eloquence, and their virtues. Chief among them are Nicolás Salmerón, Francisco Giner, Gumersindo Azcárate, Federico de Castro, and Urbano González Serrano.

The clerical party soon began to stir up strife against the master, the scholars, and the doctrines taught by them. They accused them of mystical pantheism.

I, who had ridiculed, at times, the confused terms, the pomp of words, and the method which the new philosophers made use of, regarded these philosophers, nevertheless, with admiration, and took up their defense—an almost solitary champion—in periodicals and reviews.

I had already maintained, before this, that our great dogmatic theologians, and especially the celebrated Domingo de Soto, were more liberal than the liberal rationalists of the present day, affirming, as they do, the sovereignty of the people by divine right; for if, as St. Paul declares, all authority proceeds from God, it does so through the medium of the people whom God inspires to found it; and because the only authority that proceeds directly from God is that of the Church.

I then set myself to demonstrate that, if Sanz del Río and his followers were pantheists, our mystical theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were pantheists also; and that, if the former had for predecessors Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Krause, St. Theresa, St. John de la Cruz, and the inspired and ecstatic Father Miguel de la Fuente followed, as their model, Tauler and others of the Germans. In saying this, however, it was not my intention to deny the claims of any of these mystical writers as founders of their

school in Spain, but only to recognize, in this unbroken transmission of doctrine, the progressive continuity of European civilization.

For the purpose of carrying forward my undertaking, I read and studied with ardor every Spanish book on devotion, asceticism, and mysticism that fell into my hands, growing every day more charmed with the richness of our literature in such works; with the treasures of poetry contained in them; with the boldness and independence of their authors; with the profound and delicate observation, in which they excel the Scotch school, that they display in examining the faculties of the soul; and with their power of entering into themselves, of penetrating to the very center of the mind, in order there to behold God, and to unite themselves with God, not therefore losing their own personality, or their capacity for an active life, but issuing from the ecstasies and ravishments of divine love more apt than before for every work that can benefit the human species, as the steel is more finely tempered, polished, and bright after it has burned in the fires of the forge.

Of all this, on its most poetic and easily understood side, I wished to give a specimen to the Spanish public of to-day, who had forgotten it; but, as I was a man of my epoch, a layman, not very exemplary as regards penitential practices, and had the reputation of a free-thinker, I did not venture to undertake doing this in my own name, and I created a theological student who should do it in his. I then fancied that I could paint with more vividness the ideas and the feelings of this student by contrasting them with an earthly love; and this was the origin of "Pepita Ximenez." Thus, when it was farthest from my thoughts, did I become a novelist. My novel had, therefore, the freshness and the spontaneity of the unpremeditated.

The novels I wrote afterward, with premeditation, are inferior to this one.

"Pepita Ximenez" pleased the public also, as I have said, by its transcendentalism.

The rationalists supposed that I had rejected the old ideals, as my hero casts off the clerical garb. And the believers, with greater unanimity and truth, compared me to the false prophet who went forth to curse the people of Israel, and without intending it exalted and blessed them. What is certain is that, if it be allowable to draw any

conclusion from a story, the inference that may be deduced from mine is, that faith in an all-seeing and personal God, and in the lore of this God, who is present in the depths of the soul, even when we refuse to follow the higher vocation to which he would persuade and solicit us—even were we carried away by the violence of mundane passions to commit, like Don Luis, almost all the capital sins in a single day—elevates the soul, purifies the other emotions, sustains human dignity, and lends poetry, nobility, and holiness to the commonest state, condition, and manner of life.

Such is, in my opinion, the novel you are now about to present to the American public; for I repeat that I have not the right to make the presentation.

Perhaps, independent of its transcendentalism, my novel may serve to interest and amuse your public for a couple of hours, and may obtain some favor with it; for it is a public that reads a great deal, that is indulgent, and that differs from the English public—which is eminently exclusive in its tastes—by its generous and cosmopolitan spirit.

I have always regarded as a delusion of national vanity the belief that there is, or the hope that there ever will be, anything that, with legitimate and candid independence, may be called American literature. Greece diffused herself throughout the world in nourishing colonies, and, after the conquests of Alexander, founded powerful states in Egypt, in Syria, and even in Bactriana, among peoples who, unlike the American Indians, possessed a high civilization of their own. But, notwithstanding this dispersion, and this political severance from the mother-country, the literature of Syracuse, of Antioch, and of Alexandria was as much Greek literature as was the literature of Athens. In my opinion, then, and for the same reason, the literature of New York and Boston will continue to be as much English literature as the literature of London and Edinburgh; the literature of Mexico and Buenos Ayres will continue to be as much Spanish literature as the literature of Madrid; the literature of Rio Janeiro will be as much Portuguese literature as the literature of Lisbon. Political union may be severed, but, between peoples of the same tongue and the same race, the ties of spiritual fraternity are indissoluble, so long as their common civilization lasts. There are

immortal kings or emperors who reign and rule in America by true divine right, and against whom no Washington or Bolivar shall prevail—no Franklin succeed in plucking from them their scepter. These tyrants are called Miguel de Cervantes, William Shakespeare, and Luiz de Camoëns.

All this does not prevent the new nation from bringing to the common fund, and *pro indiviso*, of the culture of their race, rich elements, fine traits of character, and perhaps even higher qualities. Thus it is that I observe, in this American literature, of English origin and language, a certain largeness of views, a certain cosmopolitanism and affectionate comprehension of what is foreign, broad as the continent itself which the Americans inhabit, and which forms a contrast to the narrow exclusivism of the insular English. It is because of these qualities that I venture to hope now for a favorable reception of my little book; and it is in these qualities that I found my hope that the fruits of Spanish genius in general will, in future, be better known and more highly esteemed here than in Great Britain.

Already, to some extent, Irving, Prescott, Ticknor, Longfellow, Howells, and others have contributed, with judgment and discretion, translating, criticising, and eulogizing our authors, to the realization of this hope.

Forgive my wearying you with this long letter, and believe me to be sincerely yours,

Juan Valera.

New York, *April 18, 1886.*

## PEPITA XIMENEZ

*"Nescit labi virtus."*

The reverend Dean of the Cathedral of — — —, deceased a few years since, left among his papers a bundle of manuscript, tied together, which, passing from hand to hand, finally fell into mine, without, by some strange chance, having lost a single one of the documents contained in it. Inscribed on this manuscript were the Latin words I use above as a motto, but without the addition of the woman's name I now prefix to it as its title; and this inscription has probably contributed to the preservation of the papers, since, thinking them, no doubt, to be sermons, or other theological matter, no one before me had made any attempt to untie the string of the package, or to read a single page of it.

The manuscript is in three parts. The first is entitled "Letters from my Nephew"; the second, "Paralipomena"; and the third, "Epilogue — Letters from my Brother."

All three are in the same handwriting, which, it may be inferred, is that of the reverend dean; and, as taken together they form something like a novel, I at first thought that perhaps the reverend dean wished to exercise his genius in composing one in his leisure hours; but, looking at the matter more closely, and observing the natural simplicity of the style, I am inclined to think now that it is no novel at all, but that the letters are copies of genuine epistles which the reverend dean tore up, burned, or returned to their owners, and that the narrative part only, designated by the biblical title of "Paralipomena," is the work of the reverend dean, added for the purpose of completing the story with incidents not related in the letters.

However this may be, I confess that I did not find the reading of these papers tiresome; I found them, indeed, rather interesting than otherwise; and as nowadays everything is published, I have decided to publish them too, without further investigation, changing only the proper names, so that if those who bear them be still living they may not find themselves figuring in a book without desiring or consenting to it.

The letters contained in the first part seem to have been written by a very young man, with some theoretical but no practical knowledge of the world, whose life was passed in the house of the reverend dean, his uncle, and in the seminary, and who was imbued with an exalted religious fervor and an earnest desire to be a priest.

We shall call this young man Don Luis de Vargas.

The aforesaid manuscript, faithfully transferred to print, is as follows.

# I. LETTERS FROM MY NEPHEW.

*March 22d.*

Dear Uncle and Venerable Master:

Four days ago I arrived in safety at this my native village, where I found my father, the reverend vicar, our friends and relations all in good health. The happiness of seeing them and conversing with them has so completely occupied my time and thoughts, that I have not been able to write to you until now.

You will pardon me for this.

Having left this place a mere child, and coming back a man, the impression produced upon me by all those objects that I had treasured up in my memory is a singular one. Everything appears to me more diminutive, much more diminutive, but also more pleasing to the eye, than my recollection of it. My father's house, which in my imagination was immense, is, indeed, the large house of a rich husbandman, but still much smaller than the seminary. What I now understand and appreciate better than formerly is the country around here. The orchards, above all, are delightful. What charming paths there are through them! On one side, and sometimes on both, crystal waters flow with a pleasant murmur. The banks of these streams are covered with odorous herbs and flowers of a thousand different hues. In a few minutes one may gather a large bunch of violets. The paths are shaded by majestic trees, chiefly walnut and fig trees; and the hedges are formed of blackberry-bushes, roses, pomegranates, and honeysuckle.

The multitude of birds that enliven grove and field is marvelous.

I am enchanted with the orchards, and I spend a couple of hours walking in them every afternoon.

My father wishes to take me to see his olive-plantations, his vineyards, his farm-houses; but of all this we have as yet seen nothing. I have not been outside of the village and the charming orchards that surround it.

It is true, indeed, that the numerous visits I receive do not leave me a moment to myself.

Five different women have come to see me, all of whom were my nurses, and have embraced and kissed me.

Every one calls me Luisito, or Don Pedro's boy, although I have passed my twenty-second birthday; and every one inquires of my father for *the boy*, when I am not present.

I imagine I shall make but little use of the books I have brought with me to read, as I am not left alone for a single instant.

The dignity of squire, which I supposed to be a matter for jest, is, on the contrary, a serious matter. My father is the squire of the village.

There is hardly any one here who can understand what they call my caprice of entering the priesthood, and these good people tell me, with rustic candor, that I ought to throw aside the clerical garb; that to be a priest is very well for a poor young man, but that I, who am to be a rich man's heir, should marry, and console the old age of my father by giving him half a dozen handsome and robust grandchildren.

In order to flatter my father and myself, both men and women declare that I am a splendid fellow, that I am of an angelic disposition, that I have a very roguish pair of eyes, and other stupid things of a like kind that annoy, disgust, and humiliate me, although I am not very modest, and am too well acquainted with the meanness and folly of the world to be shocked or frightened at anything.

The only defect they find in me is that I am too thin through over-study. In order to have me grow fat they propose not to allow me either to study or even to look at a book while I remain here; and, besides this, to make me eat of as many choice dishes of meats and confectionery as they know how to concoct in the village.

It is quite clear—I am to be stall-fed. There is not a single family of our acquaintance that has not sent me some token of regard. Now it is a sponge-cake, now a meat-salad, now a pyramid of sweet-meats, now a jug of sirup.

And these presents which they send to the house are not the only attentions they show me. I have also been invited to dinner by three or four of the principal persons of the village.

To-morrow I am to dine at the house of the famous Pepita Ximenez, of whom you have doubtless heard. No one here is ignorant of the fact that my father is paying her his addresses.

My father, notwithstanding his fifty-five years, is so well preserved that the finest young men of the village might feel envious of him. He possesses, besides, the powerful attraction, irresistible to some women, of his past conquests, of his celebrity, of having been a sort of Don Juan Tenorio.

I have not yet made the acquaintance of Pepita Ximenez. Every one says she is very beautiful. I suspect she will turn out to be a village beauty, and somewhat rustic. From what I have heard of her I can not quite decide whether, ethically speaking, she is good or bad; but I am quite certain that she is possessed of great natural intelligence. Pepita is about twenty years old and a widow; her married life lasted only three years. She was the daughter of Doña Francisca Galvez, the widow, as you know, of a retired captain

"Who left her at his death,  
As sole inheritance, his honorable sword,"

as the poet says. Until her sixteenth year Pepita lived with her mother in very straitened circumstances—bordering, indeed, upon absolute want.

She had an uncle called Don Gumersindo, the possessor of a small entailed estate, one of those petty estates that, in olden times, owed their foundation to a foolish vanity. Any ordinary person, with the income derived from this estate, would have lived in continual difficulties, burdened by debts, and altogether cut off from the display and ceremony proper to his rank. But Don Gumersindo was an extraordinary person—the very genius of economy. It could not be said of him that he created wealth himself, but he was endowed with a wonderful faculty of absorption with respect to the wealth of others; and, in regard to dispensing, it would be difficult

to find any one on the face of the globe with whose maintenance, preservation, and comfort, Mother Nature and human industry ever had less reason to trouble themselves. No one knows how he lived; but the fact is that he reached the age of eighty years, saving his entire income, and adding to his capital by lending money on unquestionable security. No one here speaks of him as a usurer; on the contrary, he is considered to have been of a charitable disposition, because, being moderate in all things, he was so even in usury; and would ask only ten per cent a year, while throughout the district they ask twenty and even thirty per cent, and still think it little.

In the practice of this species of industry and economy, and with thoughts dwelling constantly on increasing instead of diminishing his capital, indulging neither in the luxury of matrimony and of having a family, nor even of smoking, Don Gumersindo arrived at the age I have mentioned, the possessor of a fortune considerable anywhere, and here regarded as enormous, thanks to the poverty of these villagers, and to the habit of exaggeration natural to the Andalusians.

Don Gumersindo, always extremely neat and clean in his person, was an old man who did not inspire repugnance.

The articles of his modest wardrobe were somewhat worn, but carefully brushed, and without a stain; although from time immemorial he had always been seen with the same cloak, the same jacket, and the same trousers and waistcoat. People sometimes asked each other in vain if any one had ever seen, him wear a new garment.

With all these defects, which here and elsewhere many regard as virtues, though virtues in excess, Don Gumersindo possessed excellent qualities; he was affable, obliging, compassionate, and did his utmost to please and to be of service to everybody, no matter what trouble, anxiety, or fatigue it might cost him, provided only it did not cost him money. Of a cheerful disposition, and fond of fun and joking, he was to be found at every feast and merry-making around, that was not got up by contribution, which he enlivened by the amenity of his manners, and by his discreet although not very Attic conversation. He had never had any tender inclination for any one woman in particular, but, innocently and without malice, he loved

them all; and was the most given to complimenting the girls, and making them laugh, of any old man for ten leagues around.

I have already said that he was the uncle of Pepita. When he was nearing his eightieth year, she was about to complete her sixteenth. He was rich; she, poor and friendless.

Her mother was a vulgar woman of limited intelligence and coarse instincts. She worshiped her daughter, yet lamented continually and with bitterness the sacrifices she made for her, the privations she suffered, and the disconsolate old age and melancholy end that awaited her in the midst of her poverty. She had, besides, a son, older than Pepita, who had a well-deserved reputation in the village as a gambler and a quarrelsome fellow, and for whom, after many difficulties, she had succeeded in obtaining an insignificant employment in Havana; thus finding herself rid of him, and with the sea between them. After he had been a few years in Havana, however, he lost his situation on account of his bad conduct, and thereupon began to shower letters upon his mother, containing demands for money. The latter, who had scarcely enough for herself and for Pepita, grew desperate at this, broke out into abuse, cursed herself and her destiny with a perseverance but little resembling the evangelical virtue, and ended by fixing all her hopes upon settling her daughter well, as the only way of getting out of her difficulties.

In this distressing situation Don Gumersindo began to frequent the house of Pepita and her mother, and to pay attentions to the former with more ardor and persistence than he had shown in his attentions to other girls. Nevertheless, to suppose that a man who had passed his eightieth year without wishing to marry, should think of committing such a folly, with one foot already in the grave, was so wild and improbable a notion, that Pepita's mother, still less Pepita herself, never for a moment suspected the audacious intentions of Don Gumersindo. Thus it was that both were struck, one day, with amazement, when, after a good many compliments between jest and earnest, Don Gumersindo, with the greatest seriousness and without the least hesitation, proposed the following categorical question:

"Pepita, will you marry me?"

Although the question came at the end of a great deal of joking, and might itself be taken for a joke, Pepita, who, inexperienced though she was in worldly matters, yet knew by a certain instinct of divination that is in all women, and especially in young girls, no matter how innocent they may be, that this was said in earnest, grew as red as a cherry and said nothing. Her mother answered in her stead:

"Child, don't be ill-bred; answer your uncle as you should: 'With much pleasure, uncle; whenever you wish.'"

This "with much pleasure, uncle—whenever you wish," came then, it is said, and many times afterward, almost mechanically from the trembling lips of Pepita, in obedience to the admonitions, the sermons, the complaints, and even the imperious mandate of her mother.

I see, however, that I am enlarging too much on this matter of Pepita Ximenez and her history; but she interests me, as I suppose she should interest you too, since, if what they affirm here be true, she is to be your sister-in-law and my step-mother. I shall endeavor, notwithstanding, to avoid dwelling on details, and to relate briefly what perhaps you already know, though you have been away from here so long.

Pepita Ximenez was married to Don Gumersindo. The tongue of slander was let loose against her, both in the days preceding the wedding and for some months afterward.

In point of fact, ethically considered, this marriage was a matter that will admit of discussion; but, so far as the girl herself is concerned, if we remember her mother's prayers, her complaints, and even her commands—if we take into consideration the fact that Pepita thought by this means to procure for her mother a comfortable old age, and to save her brother from dishonor and infamy, constituting herself his guardian angel and his earthly providence, we must confess that our condemnation will admit of some abatement. Besides, who shall penetrate into the recesses of the heart, into the hidden secrets of the immature mind of a young girl brought up, probably, in the most absolute seclusion and ignorance of the world, in order to know what idea she might have formed to herself of marriage? Perhaps she thought that to marry this old man