

CHAPTER III

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN DON QUIXOTE AND THE
GOATHERDS

THE knight was very courteously received by the goat-herds; and as for Sancho, after he had set up Rozinante and his ass as well as he could, he presently repaired to the attractive smell of some pieces of kid's flesh which stood boiling in a kettle over the fire. The hungry squire would immediately have tried whether they were fit to be removed out of the kettle into the stomach, but was not put to that trouble; for the goat-herds took them off the fire and spread some sheep-skins on the ground, and soon got their rural feast ready; and cheerfully invited his master and him to partake of what they had. Next, with some coarse compliment, after the country way, they desired Don Quixote to sit down on a trough with the bottom upwards; and then six of them, who were all that belonged to that fold, squatted them down round the skins, while Sancho stood to wait upon his master, and gave him drink in a horn cup,

which the goat-herds used. But he seeing his man stand behind, said to him, "That thou mayest understand, Sancho, the benefits of knight-errantry, and how the meanest retainers to it have a fair prospect of being speedily esteemed and honoured by the world, it is my pleasure that thou sit thee down by me, in the company of these good people; and that there be no difference now observed between thee and me, thy natural lord and master; that thou eat in the same dish, and drink in the same cup; for it may be said of knight-errantry as of love, that it makes all things equal."—"I thank your worship," cried Sancho; "but yet I must needs own, had I but a good deal of meat before me, I'd eat it as well, or rather better, standing, and by myself, than if I sat by an emperor; and, to deal plainly and truly with you, I had rather munch a crust of brown bread and an onion in a corner, without any more ado or ceremony, than feed upon turkey at another man's table, where one is fain to sit mincing and chewing his meat an hour together, drink little, be always wiping his fingers and his chops, and never dare to cough nor sneeze, though he has never so much a mind to it, nor do a many things which a body may do freely by one's self: therefore, good sir, change those tokens of your

kindness which I have a right to by being your worship's squire, into something that may do me more good. As for these same honours, I heartily thank you as much as if I had accepted them, but yet I give up my right to them from this time to the world's end."—"Talk no more," replied Don Quixote, "but sit thee down, for the humble shall be exalted;" and so pulling him by the arms, he forced him to sit by him.

All this while the goat-herds, who did not understand this jargon of knights-errant, chivalry, and squires, fed heartily, and said nothing, but stared upon their guests; who very fairly swallowed whole luncheons as big as their fists with a mighty appetite. The first course being over, they brought in the second, consisting of dried acorns, and half a cheese as hard as a brick; nor was the horn idle all the while, but went merrily round up and down so many times, sometimes full, and sometimes empty, like the two buckets of a well, that they made shift at last to drink off one of the two skins of wine which they had there. And now Don Quixote having satisfied his appetite, he took a handful of acorns, and looking earnestly upon them, "O happy age,"¹ cried he, "which our

¹ See Appendix, Note 1, Book II., Chapter III.

first parents called the age of gold! not because gold, so much adored in this iron-age, was then easily purchased, but because those two fatal words, mine and thine, were distinctions unknown to the people of those fortunate times; for all things were in common in that holy age: men, for their sustenance, needed only to lift their hands, and take it from the sturdy oak, whose spreading arms liberally invited them to gather the wholesome savoury fruit; while the clear springs, and silver rivulets, with luxuriant plenty, offered them their pure refreshing water. In hollow trees, and in the clefts of rocks, the labouring and industrious bees erected their little commonwealths, that men might reap with pleasure and with ease the sweet and fertile harvest of their toils. The tough and strenuous cork-trees did of themselves, and without other art than their native liberality, dismiss and impart their broad light bark, which served to cover those lowly huts, propped up with rough hewn stakes, that were first built as a shelter against the inclemencies of the air: all then was union, all peace, all love and friendship in the world: as yet no rude ploughshare presumed with violence to pry into the pious bowels of our mother Earth, for she without compulsion kindly yielded from every part

of her fruitful and spacious bosom, whatever might at once satisfy, sustain, and indulge, her frugal children. Then was the time when innocent beautiful young shepherdesses went tripping over the hills and vales: their lovely hair sometimes plaited, sometimes loose and flowing, clad in no other vestment but what was necessary to cover decently what modesty would always have concealed: the Tyrian die, and the rich glossy hue of silk, martyred and dissembled into every colour, which are now esteemed so fine and magnificent, were unknown to the innocent plainness of that age; yet bedecked with more becoming leaves and flowers, they may be said to outshine the proudest of the vain-dressing ladies of our age, arrayed in the most magnificent garbs and all the most sumptuous adornings which idleness and luxury have taught succeeding pride: lovers then expressed the passion of their souls in the unaffected language of the heart, with the native plainness and sincerity in which they were conceived, and divested of all that artificial contexture, which enervates what it labours to enforce: imposture, deceit, and malice, had not yet crept in, and imposed themselves unbribed upon mankind in the disguise of truth and simplicity; justice, unbiassed either by favour or

interest, which now so fatally pervert it, was equally and impartially dispensed; nor was the judge's fancy law, for then there were neither judges, nor causes to be judged; the modest maid might walk wherever she pleased alone, free from the attacks of lewd lascivious importuners. But in this degenerate age, fraud and a legion of ills infecting the world, no virtue can be safe, no honour be secure; while wanton desires, diffused in the hearts of men, corrupt the strictest watches, and the closest retreats; which, though as intricate and unknown as the labyrinth of Crete, are no security for chastity. Thus that primitive innocence being vanished, and oppression daily prevailing, there was a necessity to oppose the torrent of violence: for which reason the order of knighthood-errant was instituted, to defend the honour of virgins, protect widows, relieve orphans, and assist all the distressed in general. Now I myself am one of this order, honest friends; and though all people are obliged by the law of nature to be kind to persons of my order; yet since you, without knowing any thing of this obligation, have so generously entertained me, I ought to pay you my utmost acknowledgment; and, accordingly, return you my most hearty thanks for the same."

All this long oration, which might very well have been spared, was owing to the acorns that recalled the golden age to our knight's remembrance, and made him thus hold forth to the goat-herds, who devoutly listened, but edified little, the discourse not being suited to their capacities. Sancho, as well as they, was silent all the while, eating acorns, and frequently visiting the second skin of wine, which for coolness sake was hung upon a neighbouring cork-tree. As for Don Quixote, he was longer, and more intent upon his speech than upon supper. When he had done, one of the goat-herds addressing himself to him, "Sir Knight," said he, "that you may be sure you are heartily welcome, we will get one of our fellows to give us a song; he is just a-coming: a good notable young lad he is, I will say that for him, and up to the ears in love. He is a scholar, and can read and write; and plays so rarely upon the rebeck* that it is a charm but to hear him." No sooner were the words out of the goat-herd's mouth, but they heard the sound of the instrument he spoke of, and presently appeared a good comely young man of about two-and-twenty years of age. The goat-herds asked him if he had supped? and he having told

* A fiddle, with only three strings, used by shepherds.

them he had, "Then, dear Antonio," says the first speaker, "pray thee sing us a song, to let this gentleman, our guest, see that we have those among us who know somewhat of music, for all we live amidst woods and mountains. We have told him of thee already; therefore, pray thee make our words good, and sing us the ditty thy uncle the prebendary made of thy love, that was so liked in our town."—"With all my heart," replied Antonio; and so without any further entreaty, sitting down on the stump of an oak, he tuned his fiddle, and very handsomely sung the following song:

ANTONIO'S AMOROUS COMPLAINT

THOUGH love ne'er prattles at your eyes,
 (The eyes those silent tongues of love)
 Yet sure, Olalia, you're my prize:
 For truth, with zeal, even heaven can move.
 I think, my love, you only try,
 Even while I fear you've sealed my doom:
 So, though involved in doubts I lie,
 Hope sometimes glimmers through the gloom
 A flame so fierce, so bright, so pure,
 No scorn can quench, or art improve:
 Thus like a martyr I endure;
 For there's a heaven to crown my love.
 In dress and dancing I have strove
 My proudest rivals to outvy;
 In serenades I've breathed my love,
 When all things slept but love and I.
 I need not add, I speak your praise,
 Till every nymph's disdain I move;

Though thus a thousand foes I raise,
 'Tis sweet to praise the fair I love.
 Teresa once your charms debased,
 But I her rudeness soon reprov'd:
 In vain her friend my anger faced;
 For then I fought for her I lov'd.
 Dear cruel fair, why then so coy?
 How can you so much love withstand?
 Alas! I crave no lawless joy,
 But with my heart would give my hand.
 Soft, easy, strong is Hymen's tye:
 Oh! then no more the bliss refuse.
 Oh! wed me, or I swear to die,
 Or linger wretched and recluse.

Here Antonio ended his song; Don Quixote entreated him to sing another, but Sancho Pança, who had more mind to sleep than to hear the finest singing in the world, told his master, there is enough. "Good sir," quoth he, "your worship had better go and lie down where you are to take your rest this night; besides, these good people are tired with their day's labour, and rather want to go to sleep, than to sit up all night to hear ballads."—"I understand thee, Sancho," cried Don Quixote; "and indeed I thought thy frequent visiting the bottle would make thee fonder of sleep than of music."—"Make us thankful," cried Sancho, "we all liked the wine well enough." "I do not deny it," replied Don Quixote; "but go thou and lay thee down where thou pleasest; as for me, it better becomes a man of my pro-

fession to wake than to sleep: yet stay and dress my ear before thou goest, for it pains me extremely." Thereupon one of the goatherds beholding the wound, as Sancho offered to dress it, desired the knight not to trouble himself, for he had a remedy that would quickly cure him; and then fetching a few rosemary leaves, which grew in great plenty thereabout, he bruised them, and mixed a little salt among them, and having applied the medicine to the ear, he bound it up, assuring him, he needed no other remedy; which in a little time proved very true.