

CHAPTER VI

OF A WONDERFUL ADVENTURE ACHIEVED BY THE VALOROUS DON QUIXOTE DE LA MANCHA; THE LIKE NEVER COMPASSED WITH LESS DANGER BY ANY OF THE MOST FAMOUS KNIGHTS IN THE WORLD

“THE grass is so fresh,” quoth Sancho, half choked with thirst, “that I dare lay my life we shall light of some spring or stream hereabout; therefore, sir, let us look, I beseech you, that we may quench this confounded drought, that plagues our throats ten times worse than hunger did our guts.” Thereupon Don Quixote, leading Rozinante by the bridle, and Sancho his ass by the halter, after he had laid up the reversion of their meal, they went feeling about, only guided by their guess; for it was so dark they scarce could see their hands. They had not gone above two hundred paces before they heard the noise of a great waterfall; which was to them the most welcome sound in the world: but then listening with great attention to know on which side the

grateful murmur came, they on a sudden heard another kind of noise that strangely allayed the pleasure of the first, especially in Sancho, who was naturally fearful, and pusillanimous. They heard a terrible din of obstreperous blows, struck regularly, and a more dreadful rattling of chains and irons, which, together with the roaring of the waters, might have filled any other heart but Don Quixote’s with terror and amazement. Add to this the horrors of a dark night and solitude, in an unknown place, the loud rustling of the leaves of some lofty trees under which fortune brought them at the same unlucky moment, the whistling of the wind, which concurred with the other dismaying sounds; the fall of the waters, the thundering thumps, and the clanking of chains aforesaid. The worst too was, that the blows were redoubled without ceasing, the wind blowed on, and day-light was far distant. But then it was, Don Quixote, secured by his intrepidity (his inseparable companion,) mounted his Rozinante, braced his shield, brandished his lance, and showed a soul unknowing fear, and superior to danger and fortune.

“Know, Sancho,” cried he, “I was born in this iron age, to restore the age of gold, or the golden age, as some choose to call it. I am the

man for whom fate has reserved the most dangerous and formidable attempts, the most stupendous and glorious adventures, and the most valorous feats of arms. I am the man who must revive the order of the Round Table, the twelve peers of France, and the nine worthies, and efface the memory of your Platyr, your Tablantes, your Olivantes, and your Tirantes. Now must your Knights of the Sun, your Belianises, and all the numerous throng of famous heroes, and knights-errant of former ages, see the glory of all their most dazzling actions eclipsed and darkened by more illustrious exploits. Do but observe, O thou my faithful squire, what a multifarious assemblage of terrors surrounds us! A horrid darkness, a doleful solitude, a confused rustling of leaves, a dismal rattling of chains, a howling of the winds, an astonishing noise of cataracts, that seem to fall with a boisterous rapidity from the steep mountains of the moon, a terrible sound of redoubled blows, still wounding our ears like furious thunderclaps, and a dead and universal silence of those things that might buoy up the sinking courage of frail mortality. In this extremity of danger, Mars himself might tremble with the affright: yet I, in the midst of all these unutterable alarms, still remain un-

daunted and unshaken. These are but incentives to my valour, and but animate my heart the more; it grows too big and mighty for my breast, and leaps at the approach of this threatening adventure as formidable as it is like to prove. Come, girt Rozinante straighter, and then providence protect thee: thou mayest stay for me here; but if I do not return in three days, go back to our village; and from thence, for my sake, to Toboso, where thou shalt say to my incomparable Lady Dulcinea, that her faithful knight fell a sacrifice to love and honour, while he attempted things that might have made him worthy to be called her adorer."

When Sancho heard his master talk thus, he fell a weeping in the most pitiful manner in the world. "Pray, sir," cried he, "why will you thus run yourself into mischief? Why need you go about this rueful misventure? it is main dark, and there is never a living soul sees us; we have nothing to do but to sheer off, and get out of harm's way, though we were not to drink a drop these three days. Who is there to take notice of our flinching? I have heard our parson, whom you very well know, say in his pulpit, that he who seeks danger perishes therein: and therefore we should not tempt

heaven by going about a thing that we cannot compass but by a miracle. Is it not enough, think you, that it has preserved you from being tossed in a blanket, as I was, and made you come off safe and sound from among so many goblins that went with the dead man? If all this won't work upon that hard heart of yours, do but think of me, and rest yourself assured, that when once you have left your poor Sancho, he will be ready to give up the ghost for very fear, to the next that will come for it: I left my house and home, my wife, children, and all to follow you, hoping to be better for it, and not the worse; but as covetousness breaks the sack, so has it broke me and my hopes; for while I thought myself cocksure of that unlucky and accursed island, which you so often promised me, in lieu thereof you drop me here in a strange place. Dear master, don't be so hard-hearted; and if you won't be persuaded not to meddle with this ungracious adventure, do but put it off till day-break, to which, according to the little skill I learned when a shepherd, it cannot be above three hours; for the muzzle of the lesser bear is just over our heads, and makes midnight in the line of the left arm."—"How! canst thou see the muzzle of the bear?" asked Don Quixote; "there's not

a star to be seen in the sky."—"That's true," quoth Sancho; "but fear is sharp-sighted, and can see things under ground, and much more in the skies."—"Let day come, or not come, it is all one to me," cried the champion; "it shall never be recorded of Don Quixote, that either tears or entreaties could make him neglect the duty of a knight. Then, Sancho, say no more; for heaven, that has inspired me with a resolution of attempting this dreadful adventure, will certainly take care of me and thee: come quickly, girt my steed, and stay here for me; for you will shortly hear of me again, either alive or dead."

Sancho, finding his master obstinate, and neither to be moved with tears nor good advice, resolved to try a trick of policy to keep him there till daylight: and accordingly, while he pretended to fasten the girths, he slyly tied Rozinante's hinder-legs with his ass's halter, without being so much as suspected: so that when Don Quixote thought to have moved forwards, he found his horse would not go a step without leaping, though he spurred him on smartly. Sancho, perceiving his plot took, "Look you, sir," quoth he, "heaven's on my side, and won't let Rozinante budge a foot forwards; and now if you will still be spurring

him, I dare pawn my life, it will be but striving against the stream; or, as the saying is, but kicking against the pricks." Don Quixote fretted, and chafed, and raved, and was in a desperate fury, to find his horse so stubborn; but at last, observing that the more he spurred and galled his sides, the more restive he proved, he resolved, though very unwillingly, to have patience until it was light. "Well," said he, "since Rozinante will not leave this place, I must tarry in it until the dawn, though its slowness will cost me some sighs."—"You shall not need to sigh nor be melancholy," quoth Sancho, "for I will undertake to tell you stories until it be day; unless your worship had rather get off your horse, and take a nap upon the green grass, as knights-errant are wont, that you may be the fresher, and the better able in the morning to go through that monstrous adventure that waits for you."—"What dost thou mean by thus alighting and sleeping?" replied Don Quixote; "thinkest thou I am one of those carpet-knights, that abandon themselves to sleep and lazy ease, when danger is at hand? no, sleep thou, thou art born to sleep; or do what thou wilt. As for myself, I know what I have to do."—"Good sir," quoth Sancho, "do not put yourself into a passion; I meant

no such thing, not I." Saying this, he clapped one of his hands upon the pommel of Rozinante's saddle, and the other upon the crupper, and thus he stood embracing his master's left thigh, not daring to budge an inch, for fear of the blows that dinned continually in his ears. Don Quixote then thought fit to claim his promise, and desired him to tell some of his stories to help to pass away the time.

"Sir," quoth Sancho, "I am wofully frightened, and have no heart to tell stories; however, I will do my best; and, now I think on it, there is one come into my head, which if I can but hit on it right, and nothing happens to put me out, is the best story you ever heard in your life; therefore listen, for I am going to begin.—In the days of yore, when it was as it was, good betide us all, and evil to him that evil seeks. And here, sir, you are to take notice that they of old did not begin their tales in an ordinary way; for it was a saying of a wise man whom they called Cato the Roman Tonsor,* that said, Evil to him that evil seeks, which is as pat for your purpose as a ring for the finger, that you may neither meddle nor make, nor seek evil and mischief for the nonce, but rather get out of harm's way, for nobody forces us to

* A mistake for Cato, the Roman Censor.

run into the mouth of all the devils in hell that wait for us yonder.”—“Go on with the story, Sancho,” cried Don Quixote, “and leave the rest to my discretion.”—“I say then,” quoth Sancho, “that in a country town in Estremadura, there lived a certain shepherd, goat-herd I should have said; which goat-herd, as the story has it, was called Lope Ruyz; and this Lope Ruyz was in love with a shepherdess, whose name was Toralva; the which shepherdess, whose name was Toralva, was the daughter of a wealthy grazier; and this wealthy grazier”——“If thou goest on at this rate,” cried Don Quixote, “and makest so many needless repetitions, thou wilt not have told thy story these two days. Pray thee tell it concisely, and like a man of sense, or let it alone.”—“I tell it you,” quoth Sancho, “as all stories are told in our country, and I cannot for the blood of me tell it in any other way, nor is it fit I should alter the custom.”—“Why then tell it how thou wilt,” replied Don Quixote, “since my ill fortune forces me to stay and hear thee.”

“Well then, dear sir,” quoth Sancho, “as I was saying, this same shepherd—goat-herd I should have said—was woundily in love with that same shepherdess Toralva, who was a well-trussed, round, crummy, strapping wench, coy

and foppish and somewhat like a man, for she had a kind of beard on her upper lip; methinks I see her now standing before me.”—“Then I suppose thou knewest her,” said Don Quixote. —“Not I,” answered Sancho, “I never set eyes on her in my life; but he that told me the story said this was so true, that I might vouch it for a real truth, and even swear I had seen it all myself. Well,—but, as you know, days go and come, and time and straw makes medlars ripe; so it happened, that after several days coming and going, the devil, who seldom lies dead in a ditch, but will have a finger in every pye, so brought it about, that the shepherd set out with his sweetheart, insomuch that the love he bore her turned into dudgeon and ill will; and the cause was, by report of some mischievous tale-carriers that bore no good will to either party, for that the shepherd thought her no better than she should be, a little loose in the hilts, and free of her hips.* Thereupon being grievous in the dumps about it, and now bitterly hating her, he even resolved to leave that country to get out of her sight: for now, as every dog has his day, the wench perceiving

* In the original it runs, She gave him a certain quantity of little jealousies, above measure, and within the prohibited degrees: Alluding to certain measures not to be exceeded (in Spain) on pain of forfeiture and corporal punishment, as swords above such a standard, &c.

he came no longer a suitoring to her, but rather tossed his nose at her, and shunned her, she began to love him and doat upon him like any thing."—"That is the nature of women," cried Don Quixote, "not to love when we love them, and to love when we love them not. But go on."

"The shepherd then gave her the slip," continued Sancho, "and driving his goats before him, went trudging through Estremadura, in his way to Portugal. But Toralva, having a long nose, soon smelt his design, and then what does she do, think ye, but comes after him bare-foot and bare-legged, with a pilgrim's staff in her hand, and a wallet at her back, wherein they say she carried a piece of looking-glass, half a comb, a broken pot with paint, and I don't know what other trinkum trankums to prink herself up. But let her carry what she would, it is no bread and butter of mine; the short and the long is, that they say the shepherd with his goods got at last to the river Guadiana,¹ which happened to be overflowed at that time, and what was worse than ill luck, there was neither boat nor bark to ferry him over; which vexed him the more because he perceived Toralva at his heels, and

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

he feared to be teased and plagued with her weeping and wailing. At last he spied a fisherman, in a little boat, but so little it was, that it would carry but one man and one goat at a time. Well, for all that, he called to the fisherman, and agreed with him to carry him and his three hundred goats over the water. The bargain being struck, the fisherman came with his boat, and carried over one goat; then he rowed back and fetched another goat, and after that another goat. Pray sir," quoth Sancho, "be sure you keep a good account how many goats the fisherman ferries over; for if you happen but to miss one, my tale is at an end, and the devil a word I have more to say.—Well then, whereabouts was I?—Ho! I ha't—Now the landing place on the other side was very muddy and slippery, which made the fisherman be a long while in going and coming; yet for all that, he took heart of grace, and made shift to carry over one goat, then another, and then another."—"Come," said Don Quixote, "we will suppose he has landed them all on the other side of the river; for as thou goest on, one by one, we shall not have done these twelve months."—"Pray, let me go on in my own way," quoth Sancho. "How many goats are got over already?"—"Nay, how the devil can

I tell?" replied Don Quixote. "There it is!" quoth Sancho; "did not I bid you keep count? on my word the tale is at an end, and now you may go whistle for the rest."—"Ridiculous," cried Don Quixote: "pray thee, is there no going on with the story unless I know exactly how many goats are wafted over?"—"No, marry is there not," quoth Sancho, "for as soon as you answered, that you could not tell, the rest of the story quite and clean slipped out of my head; and in troth it is a thousand pities, for it was a special one."—"So then," cried Don Quixote, "the story's ended?"—"Ay, marry is it," quoth Sancho, "it is no more to be fetched to life than my dead mother."—"Upon my honour," cried Don Quixote, "a most extraordinary story, and told and concluded in as extraordinary a manner! it is a non-such, I assure ye; though truly I expected no less from a man of such uncommon parts. Alas! poor Sancho, I am afraid this dreadful noise has turned thy brain."—"That may well be," quoth Sancho; "but as for my story I am sure there is nothing more to be said, for where you lose the account of the goats, there it ends."—"Let it be so," replied Don Quixote; "but now let us try whether Rozinante be in humour to march."

With that he gave Rozinante two spurs, and the high-mettled jade answered with one bound, and then stood stock still, not having the command of his hind legs.

Much about this time, whether it were the coolness of the night, or that Sancho had eaten some loosening food at supper, or, which seems more probable, that nature, by a regular impulse, gave him notice of her desire to perform a certain function that follows the third concoction; it seems, honest Sancho found himself urged to do that which nobody could do for him: but such were his fears that he durst not for his life stir the breadth of a straw from his master; yet to think of bearing the intolerable load that pressed him so, was to him as great an impossibility. In this perplexing exigency (with leave be it spoken), he could find no other expedient but to take his right hand from the crupper of the saddle, and softly untying his breeches, let them drop down to his heels; having done this, he as silently took up his shirt, and exposed his posteriors, which were none of the least, to the open air: but the main point was how to ease himself of this terrible burthen without making a noise; to which purpose he clutched his teeth close, screwed up his face, shrunk up his shoulders,

and held in his breath as much as possible: yet see what misfortunes attend the best projected undertakings! when he had almost compassed his design, he could not hinder an obstreperous sound, very different from those that caused his fear, from unluckily bursting out. "Hark!" cried Don Quixote, who heard it, "what noise is that, Sancho?"—"Some new adventures, I will warrant you," quoth Sancho, "for ill luck, you know, seldom comes alone." Having passed off the thing thus, he even ventured on another strain, and did it so cleverly, that without the least rumour or noise, his business was done effectually, to the unspeakable ease of his body and mind.

But Don Quixote having the sense of smelling as perfect as that of hearing, and Sancho standing so very near, or rather tacked to him, certain fumes, that ascended perpendicularly, began to regale his nostrils with a smell not so grateful as amber. No sooner the unwelcome steams disturbed him, but having recourse to the common remedy, he stopped his nose, and then, with a snuffling voice, "Sancho," said he, "thou art certainly in great bodily fear."—"So I am," quoth Sancho; "but what makes your worship perceive it now more than you did before?"—"Because," replied Don Quixote,

"thou smellest now more unsavourily than thou didst before."—"Hoh! that may be," quoth Sancho: "but whose fault is that? you may e'en thank yourself for it. Why do you lead me a wild-goose chase, and bring me at such unseasonable hours to such dangerous places? you know I am not used to it."—"Pray thee," said Don Quixote, still holding his nose, "get thee three or four steps from me; and for the future take more care, and know your distance; for I find my familiarity with thee has bred contempt."—"I warrant," quoth Sancho, "you think I have been doing something I should not have done."—"Come, say no more," cried Don Quixote; "the more thou stir it the worse it will be."

This discourse, such as it was, served them to pass away the night; and now Sancho, seeing the morning arise, thought it time to untie Rozinante's feet, and do up his breeches; and he did both with so much caution, that his master suspected nothing. As for Rozinante, he no sooner felt himself at liberty, but he seemed to express his joy by pawing the ground; for, with his leave be it spoken, he was a stranger to curvetting and prancing. Don Quixote also took it as a good omen, that his steed was now ready to move, and believed that