

## CHAPTER VII

OF THE HIGH ADVENTURE AND CONQUEST OF MAMBRINO'S HELMET, WITH OTHER EVENTS RELATING TO OUR INVINCIBLE KNIGHT

AT the same time it began to rain, and Sancho would fain have taken shelter in the fulling-mills; but Don Quixote had conceived such an antipathy against them for the shame they had put upon him, that he would by no means be prevailed with to go in; and turning to the right hand he struck into a highway, where they had not gone far before he discovered a horseman, who wore upon his head something that glittered like gold. The knight had no sooner spied him, but, turning to his squire, "Sancho," cried he, "I believe there is no proverb but what is true; they are all so many sentences and maxims drawn from experience, the universal mother of sciences; for instance, that saying, That where one door shuts, another opens: thus fortune, that last night deceived us with the false prospect of an adventure, this morning offers us a real one

to make us amends; and such an adventure, Sancho, that if I do not gloriously succeed in it, I shall have now no pretence to an excuse, no darkness, no unknown sounds to impute my disappointment to: in short, in all probability yonder comes the man who wears on his head Mambrino's helmet,\* and thou knowest the vow I have made."—"Good sir," quoth Sancho, "mind what you say, and take heed what you do; for I would willingly keep my carcase and the case of my understanding from being pounded, mashed, and crushed with fulling-hammers."—"Hell take the blockhead!" cried Don Quixote; "is there no difference between a helmet and a fulling-mill?"—"I don't know," saith Sancho, "but I am sure, were I suffered to speak my mind now as I was wont, mayhap I would give you such main reasons, that yourself should see you are wide of the matter."—"How can I be mistaken, thou eternal misbeliever!" cried Don Quixote; "dost thou not see that knight that comes riding up directly towards us upon a dapple-grey steed, with a helmet of gold on his head?"—"I see what I see," replied Sancho, "and the devil of anything I can spy but a fellow on such another grey ass as mine is, with somethings that glisters

\* See "Orlando Furioso," Canto I.



o'top of his head."—"I tell thee, that is Mambrino's helmet," replied Don Quixote: "do thou stand at a distance, and leave me to deal with him; thou shalt see, that without trifling away so much as a moment in needless talk, I will finish this adventure, and possess myself of the desired helmet."—"I shall stand at a distance, you may be sure," quoth Sancho; "but I wish this may not prove another blue bout, and a worse job than the fulling-mills."—"I have warned you already, fellow," said Don Quixote, "not so much as to name the fulling-mills; dare but once more to do it, nay, but to think on it, and I vow to—I say no more, but I'll full and pound your dogship into jelly."—These threats were more than sufficient to padlock Sancho's lips, for he had no mind to have his master's vow fulfilled at the expense of his bones.

Now the truth of the story was this: there were in that part of the country two villages, one of which was so little that it had not so much as a shop in it, nor any barber; so that the barber of the greater village served also the smaller. And thus a person happening to have occasion to be let blood, and another to be shaved, the barber was going thither with his brass basin, which he had clapped upon his

head to keep his hat, that chanced to be a new one, from being spoiled by the rain; and as the basin was new scoured, it made a glittering show a great way off. As Sancho had well observed, he rode upon a grey ass, which Don Quixote as easily took for a dapple-grey steed, as he took the barber for a knight, and his brass basin for a golden helmet; his distracted brain easily applying every object to his romantic ideas. Therefore, when he saw the poor imaginary knight draw near, he fixed his lance, or javelin, to his thigh, and without staying to hold a parley with his thoughtless adversary, flew at him as fiercely as Rozinante would gallop, resolved to pierce him through and through; crying out in the midst of his career, "Caitiff, wretch, defend thyself, or immediately surrender that which is so justly my due."—The barber, who, as he peaceably went along, saw that terrible apparition come thundering upon him at unawares, had no other way to avoid being run through with his lance, but to throw himself off from his ass to the ground; and then as hastily getting up, he took to his heels, and ran over the fields swifter than the wind, leaving his ass and his basin behind him. Don Quixote finding himself thus master of the field, and of the basin, "The



miscreant," cried he, "who has left his helmet, has shewn himself as prudent as the beaver, who, finding himself hotly pursued by the hunters, to save his life, tears and cuts off with his teeth that for which his natural instinct tells him he was followed."—Then he ordered Sancho to take up the helmet.—"On my word," quoth Sancho, having taken it up, "it is a special basin, and as well worth a piece of eight as a thief is worth a halter."

With that he gave it to his master, who presently clapped it on his head, turning it every way to find out the beaver or vizor; and at last seeing it had none, "Doubtless," said he, "the pagan for whom this famous helmet was first made, had a head of a prodigious size; but the worst is, that there is at least one half of it wanting."—Sancho could not forbear smiling to hear his master call the barber's basin a helmet, and, had not his fear dashed his mirth, he had certainly laughed outright.—"What does the fool grin at now?" cried Don Quixote.—"I laugh," said he, "to think what a hugeous jolt-head he must needs have had who was the owner of this same helmet, that looks for all the world like a barber's basin."—"I fancy," said Don Quixote, "this enchanted helmet has fallen by some strange accident into

the hands of some person, who, not knowing the value of it, for the lucre of a little money, finding it to be of pure gold, melted one half, and of the other made this head-piece, which, as thou sayest, has some resemblance of a barber's basin: but to me, who know the worth of it, the metamorphosis signifies little; for as soon as ever I come to some town where there is an armourer, I will have it altered so much for the better, that then even the helmet which the God of Smiths made for the God of War shall not deserve to be compared with it. In the meantime I'll wear it as it is; it is better than nothing, and will serve at least to save part of my head from the violent encounter of a stone."—"Ay, that it will," quoth Sancho, "so it is not hurled out of a sling, as were those at the battle between the two armies, when they hit you that confounded dowse o' the chops, that saluted your worship's cheek-teeth, and broke the pot about your ears in which you kept that blessed drench that made me bring up my guts."—"True," cried Don Quixote, "there I lost my precious balsam indeed; but I do not much repine at it, for thou knowest I have the receipt in my memory."—"So have I too," quoth Sancho, "and shall have while I have breath to draw; but if ever



I make any of that stuff, or taste it again, may I give up the ghost with it! Besides, I don't intend ever to do any thing that may give occasion for the use of it: for, my fixed resolution is, with all my five senses, to preserve myself from hurting, and from being hurt by, any body. As to being tossed in a blanket again, I have nothing to say to that, for there is no remedy for accidents but patience it seems: so if it ever be my lot to be served so again, I'll even shrink up my shoulders, hold my breath, and shut my eyes, and then happy be lucky, let the blanket and fortune even toss on to the end of the chapter."

"Truly," said Don Quixote, "I am afraid thou art no good Christian, Sancho, thou never forgettest injuries. Let me tell thee, it is the part of noble and generous spirits to pass by trifles. Where art thou lame? which of thy ribs is broken, or what part of thy skull is bruised, that thou can'st never think on that jest without malice? for, after all, it was nothing but a jest, a harmless piece of pastime: had I looked upon it otherwise, I had returned to that place before this time, and had made more noble mischief in revenge of the abuse, than ever the incensed Grecians did at Troy, for the detention of their Helen, that famed

beauty of the ancient world; who, however, had she lived in our age, or had my Dulcinea adorned hers, would have found her charms outrivalled by my mistress's perfections:" and saying this, he heaved up a deep sigh. "Well then," quoth Sancho, "I will not rip up old sores; let it go for a jest, since there is no revenging it in earnest.—But what shall we do with this dapple-grey steed, that is so like a grey ass? you see that same poor devil-errant has left it to shift for itself, poor thing, and by his haste to rub off, I don't think he means to come back for it, and, by my beard, the grey beast is a special one."—"It is not my custom," replied Don Quixote, "to plunder those whom I overcome; nor is it usual among us knights, for the victor to take the horse of his vanquished enemy and let him go afoot, unless his own steed is killed or disabled in the combat: therefore, Sancho, leave the horse, or the ass, whatever thou pleasest to call it; the owner will be sure to come for it as soon as he sees us gone."—"I have a huge mind to take him along with us," quoth Sancho, "or at least to exchange him for my own, which is not so good. What, are the laws of knight-errantry so strict, that a man must not exchange one ass for another? at least I hope they will give



me leave to swop one harness for another.”—  
 “Truly, Sancho,” replied Don Quixote, “I am not so very certain as to this last particular, and therefore, till I am better informed, I give thee leave to exchange the furniture, if thou hast absolutely occasion for it.”—“I have so much occasion for it,” quoth Sancho, “that though it were for my own very self I could not need it more.” So without any more ado, being authorized by his master’s leave, he made *mutatio caparum* (a change of caparisons), and made his own beast three parts in four better\* for his new furniture. This done, they breakfasted upon what they left at supper, and quenched their thirst at the stream that turned the fulling-mills, towards which they took care not to cast an eye, for they abominated the very thoughts of them. Thus their spleen being eased, their choleric and melancholic humours assuaged, up they got again, and never minding their way, were all guided by Rozinante’s discretion, the depository of his master’s will, and also of the ass’s, that kindly and sociably always followed his steps wherever he went. Their guide soon brought them again into the high road, where they kept on a slow pace, not caring which way they went.

\* Literally, leaving him better by a tierce and quint; alluding to the game of picquet.

As they jogged on thus, quoth Sancho to his master, “Pray, sir, will you give me leave to talk to you a little? for since you have laid that bitter command upon me, to hold my tongue, I have had four or five quaint conceits that have rotted in my gizzard, and now I have another at my tongue’s end that I would not for anything should miscarry.”—“Say it,” cried Don Quixote, “but be short, for no discourse can please when too long.”

“Well then,” quoth Sancho, “I have been thinking to myself of late how little is to be got by hunting up and down those barren woods and strange places, where, though you compass the hardest and most dangerous jobs of knight-errantry, yet no living soul sees or hears on’t, and so it is every bit as good as lost; and therefore methinks it were better (with submission to your worship’s better judgment be it spoken) that we e’en went to serve some emperor, or other great prince that is at war; for there you might shew how stout, and how wondrous strong and wise you be; which, being perceived by the lord we shall serve, he must needs reward each of us according to his deserts; and there you will not want a learned scholar to set down all your high deeds, that they may never be forgotten: as