

CHAPTER VIII

HOW DON QUIXOTE SET FREE MANY MISERABLE CREATURES, WHO WERE CARRYING, MUCH AGAINST THEIR WILLS, TO A PLACE THEY DID NOT LIKE

CID HAMET BENENGELL, an Arabian and Manchegan author, relates in this most grave, high-sounding, minute, soft and humorous history, that after this discourse between the renowned Don Quixote and his squire Sancho Pança, which we have laid down at the end of the seventh chapter, the knight lifting up his eyes, saw about twelve men a-foot, trudging in the road, all in a row, one behind another, like beads upon a string, being linked together by the neck to a huge iron chain, and manacled besides. They were guarded by two horsemen, armed with carabines, and two men a-foot, with swords and javelins. As soon as Sancho spied them, "Look ye, sir," cried he, "here is a gang of wretches hurried away by main force to serve the king in the gallies."—"How," replied Don Quixote, "is it possible the king will force any body?"—"I don't say so,"

answered Sancho; "I mean these are rogues whom the law has sentenced for their misdeeds, to row in the king's galleys."—"However," replied Don Quixote, "they are forced, because they do not go of their own free will."—"Sure enough," quoth Sancho.—"If it be so," said Don Quixote, "they come within the verge of my office, which is to hinder violence and oppression, and succour all people in misery."—"Ay, sir," quoth Sancho, "but neither the king nor law offer any violence to such wicked wretches, they have but their deserts." By this the chain of slaves came up, when Don Quixote, in very civil terms, desired the guards to inform him why these people were led along in that manner?—"Sir," answered one of the horsemen, "they are criminals, condemned to serve the king in his galleys: that is all I have to say to you, and you need enquire no farther."—"Nevertheless, sir," replied Don Quixote, "I have a great desire to know in a few words the cause of their misfortune, and I will esteem it an extraordinary favour, if you will let me have that satisfaction."—"We have here the copies and certificates of their several sentences," said the other horseman, "but we can't stand to pull them out and read them now; you may draw near and examine the

men yourself: I suppose they themselves will tell you why they are condemned; for they are such honest people, they are not ashamed to boast of their rogueries."

With this permission, which Don Quixote would have taken of himself had they denied it him, he rode up to the chain, and asked the first, for what crimes he was in these miserable circumstances? The galley-slave answered him, that it was for being in love. "What, only for being in love?" cried Don Quixote; "were all those that are in love to be used thus, I myself might have been long since in the galleys."—"Ay, but," replied the slave, "my love was not of that sort which you conjecture: I was so desperately in love with a basket of linen, and embraced it so close, that had not the judge taken it from me by force, I would not have parted with it willingly. In short, I was taken in the fact, and so there was no need to put me to the rack, it was proved so plain upon me. So I was committed, tried, condemned, had the gentle lash; and besides that, was sent, for three years, to be an element-dasher, and there is an end of the business."—"An element-dasher," cried Don Quixote, "what do you mean by that?"—"A galley-slave," answered the criminal, who was a

young fellow, about four and twenty years old, and said he was born at Piedra Hita.

Then Don Quixote examined the second, but he was so sad and desponding, that he would make no answer; however, the first rogue informed the knight of his affairs: "Sir," said he, "this canary-bird keeps us company for having sung too much."—"Is it possible!" cried Don Quixote, "are men sent to the galleys for singing?"—"Ay, marry are they," quoth the arch rogue; "for there is nothing worse than to sing in anguish."—"How!" cried Don Quixote; "that contradicts the saying, Sing away sorrow, cast away care."—"Ay, but with us the case is different," replied the slave; "he that sings in disaster weeps all his life after."—"This is a riddle which I cannot unfold," cried Don Quixote.—"Sir," said one of the guards, "Singing in anguish, among these jail-birds, means to confess upon the rack: this fellow was put to the torture, and confessed his crime, which was stealing of cattle; and because he squeaked, or sung, as they call it, he was condemned to the galleys for six years, besides an hundred jirks with a cat of nine tails that have whisked and powdered his shoulders already. Now the reason why he goes thus mopish and out o'sorts, is only be-

cause his comrogues jeer and laugh at him continually for not having had the courage to deny; as if it had not been as easy for him to have said no as yes; or as if a fellow, taken up on suspicion, were not a lucky rogue, when there is no positive evidence can come in against him but his own tongue; and in my opinion they are somewhat in the right.”—“I think so too,” said Don Quixote.

Thence addressing himself to the third, “And you,” said he, “what have you done?”—“Sir,” answered the fellow readily and pleasantly enough, “I must mow the great meadow for five years together, for want of twice five ducats.”—“I will give twenty with all my heart,” said Don Quixote, “to deliver thee from that misery.”—“Thank you for nothing,” quoth the slave; “it is just like the proverb, After meat comes mustard; or, like money to a starving man at sea, when there are no victuals to be bought with it: had I had the twenty ducats you offer me before I was tried, to have greased the clerk’s [or recorder’s] fist, and have whetted my lawyer’s wit, I might have been now at Toledo in the market-place of Zocodover, and not have been thus led along like a dog in a string. But heaven is powerful. Basta; I say no more.”

Then passing to the fourth, who was a venerable old Don, with a grey beard that reached to his bosom, he put the same question to him; whereupon the poor creature fell weeping, and was not able to give him an answer; so the next behind him lent him a tongue. “Sir,” said he, “this honest person goes to the galleys for four years, having taken his progress through the town in state, and rested at the usual stations.”—“That is,” quoth Sancho, “as I take it, after he had been exposed to public shame.”*—“Right,” replied the slave; “and all this he is condemned to for being a broker of human flesh: for, to tell you the truth, the gentleman is a pimp, and besides that, he has a smack of conjuring.”—“If it were not for that addition of conjuring,” cried Don Quixote, “he ought not to have been sent to the galleys purely for being a pimp, unless it were to be general of the galleys: for, the profession of a bawd pimp, or messenger of love, is not like other common employments, but an office that requires a great deal of prudence and sagacity; an office of trust and weight, and most highly necessary in a well-regulated commonwealth; nor should it be

* Instead of the pillory, in Spain, they carry malefactors on an ass, and in a particular habit, along the streets, the crier going before, and proclaiming their crime.

executed but by civil well-descended persons of good natural parts, and of a liberal education. Nay'twere requisite there should be a comptroller and surveyor of the profession, as there are of others; and a certain and settled number of them, as there are of exchange-brokers. This would be a means to prevent an infinite number of mischiefs that happen every day, because the trade or profession is followed by poor ignorant pretenders, silly waiting women, young giddy-brained pages, shallow footmen, and such raw inexperienced sort of people, who in unexpected turns and emergencies stand with their fingers in their mouths, know not their right hand from their left, but suffer themselves to be surprised, and spoil all for want of quickness of invention either to conceal, carry on, or bring off a thing artificially. Had I but time I would point out what sort of persons are best qualified to be chosen professors of this most necessary employment in the commonwealth; however, at some future season I will inform those of it who may remedy this disorder. All I have to say now, is, that the grief I had to see these venerable grey hairs in such distress, for having followed that no less useful than ingenious vocation of pimping, is now lost in my abhorrence of his additional character

of a conjurer; though I very well know that no sorcery in the world can effect or force the will, as some ignorant credulous persons fondly imagine: for our will is a free faculty, and no herb nor charms can constrain it. As for philtres, and such-like compositions, which some silly women and designing pretenders make, they are nothing but certain mixtures and poisonous preparations, that make those who take them run mad; though the deceivers labour to persuade us they can make one person love another; which, as I have said, is an impossible thing, our will being a free, uncontrollable power."—"You say very well, sir," cried the old coupler: "and upon my honour, I protest I am wholly innocent, as to the imputation of witchcraft. As for the business of pimping, I cannot deny it, but I never took it to be a criminal function; for my intention was, that all the world should taste the sweets of love, and enjoy each other's society, living together in friendship and in peace, free from those griefs and jars that unpeople the earth. But my harmless design has not been so happy as to prevent my being sent now to a place whence I never expect to return, stooping as I do under the heavy burden of old age, and being grievously afflicted with the strangury,

which scarce affords me a moment's respite from pain." This said, the reverend procurer burst out afresh into tears and lamentations, which melted Sancho's heart so much that he pulled a piece of money out of his bosom, and gave it to him as an alms.

Then Don Quixote turned to the fifth, who seemed to be nothing at all concerned. "I go to serve his majesty," said he, "for having been somewhat too familiar with two of my cousin-germans, and two other kind-hearted virgins that were sisters; by which means I have multiplied my kin, and begot so odd and intricate a medley of kindred, that it would puzzle a convocation of casuists to resolve their degrees of consanguinity. All this was proved upon me. I had no friends, and, what was worse, no money, and so was like to have swung for it; however, I was only condemned to the galleys for six years, and patiently submitted to it. I feel myself yet young, to my comfort; so if my life does but hold out, all will be well in time. If you will be pleased to bestow something upon poor sinners, heaven will reward you; and when we pray, we will be sure to remember you, that your life may be as long and prosperous, as your presence is goodly and noble." This brisk spark appeared

to be a student by his habit, and some of the guards said he was a fine speaker, and a good latinist.

After him came a man about thirty years old, a clever, well-set, handsome fellow, only he squinted horribly with one eye: he was strangely loaded with irons; a heavy chain clogged his leg, and was so long, that he twisted it about his waist like a girdle: he had a couple of collars about his neck, the one to link him to the rest of the slaves, and the other, one of those iron-ruffs which they call a keep-friend, or a friend's foot; from whence two irons went down to his middle, and to their two bars were rivetted a pair of manacles that griped him by the fists, and were secured with a large padlock; so that he could neither lift his hands to his mouth, nor bend down his head towards his hands. Don Quixote enquiring why he was worse hampered with irons than the rest, "Because he alone has done more rogueries than all the rest," answered one of the guards. "This is such a reprobate, such a devil of a fellow, that no gaol nor fetters will hold him; we are not sure he is fast enough, for all he is chained so."—"What sort of crimes then has he been guilty of," asked Don Quixote, "that he is only sent to the galleys?"—"Why," an-