

of lovers, and grant to my fidelity that kind return which it so justly claims! so may indulgent fate shower on thee all the blessings thou ever canst desire, or heavens grant!—Ye lonesome trees, under whose spreading branches I come to linger out the gloomy shadow of a tedious being; let the soft language of your rustling leaves, and the kind nodding of your springing boughs, satisfy me that I am welcome to your shady harbours.—O thou, my trusty squire, the inseparable companion of my adventures, diligently observe what thou shalt see me do in this lonely retreat, that thou mayest inform the dear cause of my ruin with every particular.” As he said this, he alighted, and presently taking off his horse’s bridle and saddle, “Go, Rozinante,” saith he, giving the horse a clap on the posteriors, “he that has lost his freedom gives thee thine, thou steed as renowned for thy extraordinary actions, as for thy misfortunes; go rear thy awful front wherever thou pleasest, secure that neither the Hyppogryphon of Astolpho, nor the renowned Frontino,¹ which Bradamante purchased at so high a price, could ever be thought thy equals.”

“Well fare him,” cried Sancho, “that saved me the trouble of sending my ass to grass too:

¹ See Appendix, Note 5, Book III., Chapter XI.

poor thing, had I him here, he should not want two or three claps on the buttocks, nor a fine speech in his praise neither, while I took off his pannel. But stay, were he here, what need would there be to strip him of his harness? Alas, he never had any thing to do with these mad pranks of love, no more than myself, who was his master when fortune pleased. But do you hear me, now I think on it, Sir Knight of the Woeful Figure, if your worship is resolved to be mad, and send me away in good earnest, we must even clap the saddle again on Rozinante’s back; for to tell you the truth, I am but a sorry foot-man, and if I do not ride home, I do not know when I shall be able to come back again.”—“Do as thou thinkest fit for that, Sancho,” answered Don Quixote, “for I design thou shalt set forward about three days hence. In the mean while, thou shalt be a witness of what I will do for my lady’s sake, that thou mayest give her an account of it.”—“Bless my eye-sight,” quoth Sancho, “what can I see more than I have seen already?”—“Thou hast seen nothing yet,” answered Don Quixote; “thou must see me throw away my armour, tear my clothes, knock my head against the rocks, and do a thousand other things of that kind, that will fill thee with astonishment.”—

“For goodness sake, sir,” quoth Sancho, “take heed how you quarrel with those ungracious rocks; you may chance to get such a crack on the crown at the very first rap, as may spoil your penance at one dash. No, I do not like that way by no means; if you must needs be knocking your noddle, to go through stich with this ugly job, seeing it is all but a mockery, or as it were between jest and earnest, why cannot you as well play your fricks on something that is softer than these unconscionable stones? You may run your head against water, or rather against cotton, or this stuffing of Rozinante’s saddle, and then let me alone with the rest: I will be sure to tell my Lady Dulcinea, that you bebumped your pole against the point of a rock that is harder than a diamond.”

“I thank thee for thy good-will, dear Sancho,” replied Don Quixote; “but I assure thee, that all these seeming extravagances that I must run through, are no jests; far from it, they must all be performed seriously and solemnly; for otherwise we should transgress the laws of chivalry, that forbid us to tell lies upon pain of degradation; now to pretend to do one thing, and effect another, is an evasion, which I esteem to be as bad as lying. There-

fore the blows which I must give myself on the head, ought to be real, substantial, sound ones, without any trick or mental reservation; for which reason I would have thee leave me some lint and salve, since fortune has deprived us of the sovereign balsam which we lost.”—“It was a worse loss to lose the ass,” quoth Sancho, “for with him we have lost bag and baggage, lint and all: but no more of your damned drench, if you love me; the very thoughts on it are enough not only to turn my stomach, but my soul; such a rumbling I feel in my wame at the name of it. Then as for the three days you would have me loiter here to mind your mad tricks, you had as good make account they are already over; for I hold them for done, unsight unseen, and will tell wonders to my lady; wherefore write you your letter, and send me going with all haste; for let me be hanged if I do not long already to be back, to take you out of this purgatory wherein I leave you.”

“Dost thou only call it purgatory, Sancho?” cried Don Quixote; “call it hell rather, or something worse, if there be in nature a term expressive of a more wretched state.”—“Nay, not so neither,” quoth Sancho, “I would not call it hell; because as I heard our parson say,

'There is no retention! out of hell.'—'Retention!' cried Don Quixote; "what dost thou mean by that word?"—"Why," quoth Sancho, "retention is retention; it is, that whosoever is in hell, never comes, nor can come, out of it: which shall not be your case this bout, if I can stir my heels, and have but spurs to tickle Rozinante's flanks, till I come to my Lady Dulcinea; for I will tell her such strange things of your magotty tricks, your folly and your madness, for indeed they are no better, that I will lay my head to a hazel-nut, I will make her as supple as a glove, though I found her at first as tough-hearted as a cork; and when I have wheedled an answer out of her, all full of sweet honey words, away will I whisk it back to you, cutting the air as swift as a witch upon a broomstick, and free you out of your purgatory; for a purgatory I will have it to be in spite of hell, nor shall you gainsay me in that fancy; for, as I have told you before, there are some hopes of your retention out of this place."

"Well, be it so," said the Knight of the Woeful Figure: "but how shall I do to write this letter?"—"And the order for the three asses?" added Sancho.—"I will not forget it,"

* No redemption he means.

answered Don Quixote; "but since we have here no paper, I must be obliged to write on the leaves of bark of trees, or on wax, as they did in ancient times; yet now I consider on it, we are here as ill provided with wax as with paper: but stay, now I remember, I have Cardenio's pocket-book, which will supply that want in this exigence, and then thou shalt get the letter fairly transcribed at the first village where thou canst meet with a school-master; or, for want of a school-master, thou mayest get the clerk of the parish to do it: but by no means give it to any notary or scrivener to be written out; for they commonly write such confounded hands, that the devil himself would scarce be able to read it."—"Well," quoth Sancho, "but what shall I do for want of your name to it?"—"Why," answered Don Quixote, "Amadis never used to subscribe his letters."—"Ay," replied Sancho, "but the bill of exchange for the three asses must be signed; for should I get it copied out afterwards, they would say it is not your hand, and so I shall go without the asses."—"I will write and sign the order for them in the table-book," answered Don Quixote; "and as soon as my niece sees the hand, she will never scruple the delivery of the asses: and as for the love-letter, when

thou gettest it transcribed, thou must get it thus under-written, 'Yours till death, the Knight of the Woeful Figure.' It is no matter whether the letter and subscription be written by the same hand or no; for, as I remember, Dulcinea can neither read nor write, nor did she ever see any of my letters, nay not so much as any of my writing in her life: for my love and her's have always been purely Platonic, never extending beyond the lawful bounds of a modest look; and that too so very seldom, that I dare safely swear, that though for these twelve years she has been dearer to my soul than light to my eyes, yet I never saw her four times in my life; and perhaps of those few times that I have seen her, she has scarce perceived once that I beheld her; so strictly, and so discreetly, Lorenzo Corchuelo her father, and Aldonza Nogales her mother, have kept and educated her."—"Heighday!" quoth Sancho; "did you ever hear the like? and is my Lady Dulcinea del Toboso, at last the daughter of Lorenzo Corchuelo, she that is otherwise called Aldonza Lorenzo?"—"The same," answered Don Quixote; "and it is she that merits to be the sovereign mistress of the universe."—"Udsnigger," quoth Sancho, "I know her full well; it is a strapping wench, i'faith, and

itches the bar with e'er a lusty young fellow in our parish. By the mass, it is a notable, strong-built, sizable, sturdy, manly lass, and one that will keep her chin out of the mire, I warrant her; nay, and hold the best knight-errant to it that wears a head, if ever he venture upon her. Body of me, what a pair of lungs and a voice she has, when she sets up her throat! I saw her one day perched up o' top of our steeple to call some ploughmen that were at work in a fallow-field: and though they were half a league off, they heard her as plain as if they had been in the church-yard under her. The best of her is, that she is neither coy nor frumpish; she is a tractable lass, and fit for a courtier, for she will play with you like a kitten, and jibes and jokes at every body. And now, in good truth, Sir Knight of the Woeful Figure, you may e'en play at your gambols as you please; you may run mad, you may hang yourself for her sake; there is nobody but will say you e'en took the wisest course, though the devil himself should carry you away a pick-apack. Now am I even wild to be gone, though it were for nothing else but to see her, for I have not seen her this many a day: I fancy I shall hardly know her again, for a woman's face strangely alters by

her being always in the sun, and drudging and moiling in the open fields. Well, I must needs own I have been mightily mistaken all along: for I durst have sworn this Lady Dulcinea had been some great princess with whom you were in love, and such a one as deserved those rare gifts you bestowed on her, as the Biscayan, the galley-slaves, and many others, that, for aught I know, you may have sent her before I was your squire. I cannot choose but laugh to think how my Lady Aldonza Lorenzo (my Lady Dulcinea del Toboso, I should have said) would behave herself, should any of those men which you have sent, or may send to her, chance to go and fall down on their marrow-bones before her: for it is ten to one they may happen to find her a carding of flax, or threshing in the barn, and then how finely baulked they will be! as sure as I am alive, they must needs think the devil owed them a shame; and she herself will but flout them, and mayhap be somewhat nettled at it."

"I have often told thee, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "and I tell thee again, that thou oughtest to bridle or immure thy saucy prating tongue; for though thou art but a dull-headed dunce, yet now and then thy ill-mannered jests

bite too sharp. But that I may at once make thee sensible of thy folly and my discretion, I will tell thee a short story. A handsome, brisk, young, rich widow, and withal no prude, happened to fall in love with a well-set, lusty Lay-Brother.* His Superior hearing of it, took occasion to go to her, and said to her, by way of charitable admonition, 'I mightily wonder, madam, how a lady of your merit, so admired for beauty and for sense, and withal so rich, could make so ill a choice, and doat on a mean, silly, despicable fellow, as I hear you do, while we have in our house so many masters of art, bachelors, and doctors of divinity, among whom your ladyship may pick and choose, as you would among peers, and say, 'This I like, and that I do not like.' But she soon answered the officious grave gentleman: 'Sir,' said she, with a smile, 'you are much mistaken, and think altogether after the old out-of-fashion way, if you imagine I have made so ill a choice; for though you fancy the man is a fool, yet as to what I take him for, he knows as much, or rather more philosophy, than Aristotle himself.' So, Sancho, as to the use which I make of the Lady Dulcinea, she is

* Motillon, a lay-brother, or servant in the convent or college, so called from Motila, a cropped head; his hair being cropped short, he has no crown like those in orders.

equal to the greatest princess in the world. Pr'ythee tell me, dost thou think the poets, who, every one of them, celebrate the praises of some lady or other, had all real mistresses? or that the Amaryllis's, the Phyllis's, the Sylvia's, the Diana's, the Galatea's, the Alida's, and the like, which you shall find in so many poems, romances, songs and ballads, upon every stage, and even in every barber's shop, were creatures of flesh and blood, and mistresses to those that did, and do celebrate them? No, no, never think it; for I dare assure thee, the greatest part of them were nothing but the mere imaginations of the poets, for a ground-work to exercise their wits upon, and give to the world occasion to look on the authors as men of an amorous and gallant disposition: and so it is sufficient for me to imagine, that Aldonza Lorenzo is beautiful and chaste; as for her birth and parentage, they concern me but little; for there is no need to make an enquiry about a woman's pedigree, as there is of us men, when some badge of honour is bestowed on us; and so she is to me the greatest princess in the world: for thou oughtest to know, Sancho, if thou knowest it not already, that there are but two things that chiefly excite us to love a woman,—an

attractive beauty, and unspotted fame. Now these two endowments are happily reconciled in Dulcinea; for as for the one, she has not her equal, and few can vie with her in the other: but to cut off all objections at once, I imagine, that all I say of her is really so, without the least addition or diminution; I fancy her to be just such as I would have her for beauty and quality. Helen cannot stand in competition with her; Lucretia cannot rival her: and all the heroines which antiquity has to boast, whether Greeks, Romans, or Barbarians, are at once out-done by her incomparable perfections. Therefore let the world say what it will; should the ignorant vulgar foolishly censure me, I please myself with the assurances I have of the approbation of men of the strictest morals, and the nicest judgment."—"Sir," quoth Sancho, "I knock under: you have reason on your side in all you say, and I own myself an ass. Nay, I am an ass to talk of an ass; for it is ill talking of halts in the house of a man that was hanged. But where is the letter all this while, that I may be jogging?"

With that Don Quixote pulled out the table-book, and, retiring a little aside, he very seriously began to write the letter; which he

had no sooner finished, but he called Sancho, and ordered him to listen while he read it over to him, that he might carry it as well in his memory as in his pocket-book, in case he should have the ill luck to lose it by the way; for so cross was fortune to him, that he feared every accident. "But, sir," said Sancho, "write it over twice or thrice there in the book, and give it me, and then I will be sure to deliver the message safe enough I warrant ye: for it is a folly to think I can get it by heart; alas, my memory is so bad, that many times I forget my own name! but yet for all that, read it out to me, I beseech you, for I have a hugeous mind to hear it. I dare say, it is as fine as though it were in print."—"Well, then, listen," said Don Quixote.

Don Quixote de la Mancha to Dulcinea del Toboso.

"High and Sovereign Lady!

"He that is stabbed to the quick with the poniard of absence, and wounded to the heart with love's most piercing darts, sends you that health which he wants himself,* sweetest Dulcinea del Toboso. If your beauty reject me, if your virtue refuse to raise my fainting hopes,

* Dulcissima Dulcinea.

if your disdain exclude me from relief, I must at last sink under the pressure of my woes, though much inured to sufferings: for my pains are not only too violent, but too lasting. My trusty squire Sancho will give you an exact account of the condition to which love and you have reduced me, too beautiful ingrate! If you relent at last, and pity my distress, then I may say I live, and you preserve what is yours. But if you abandon me to despair, I must patiently submit, and, by ceasing to breathe, satisfy your cruelty and my passion.—Yours, till death,

"The Knight of the Woeful Figure."

"By the life of my father," quoth Sancho, "If I ever saw a finer thing in my born days! How neatly and roundly you tell your mind, and how cleverly you bring in at last, 'The Knight of the Woeful Figure!' Well, I say it again in good earnest, you are a devil at every thing, and there is no kind of thing in the 'versal world but what you can turn your hand to."—"A man ought to have some knowledge of everything," answered Don Quixote, "if he would be duly qualified for the employment I profess."—"Well then," quoth Sancho, "do so much as write the warrant for the three asses

on the other side of that leaf; and pray write it mighty plain, that they may know it is your hand at first sight."—"I will," said Don Quixote; and with that he wrote it accordingly, and then read it in this form:

"My dear Niece,

"Upon sight of this my first bill of asses, be pleased to deliver three of the five which I left at home in your custody to Sancho Pança, my squire, for the like number received of him here in tale; and this, together with his receipt, shall be your discharge. Given in the very bowels of Sierra Morena, the 22d of August, in the present year.'

"It is as it should be," quoth Sancho; "there only wants your name at the bottom,"—"There is no need to set my name," answered Don Quixote, "I will only set the two first letters of it, and it will be as valid as if it were written at length, though it were not only for three asses, but for three hundred."—"I dare take your worship's word," quoth Sancho. "And now I am going to saddle Rozinante, and then you shall give me your blessing, for I intend to set out presently, without seeing any of your mad tricks; and I will relate, that I saw

you perform so many, that she can desire no more."—"Nay," said Don Quixote, "I will have thee stay awhile, Sancho, and see me stark naked; it is also absolutely necessary thou shouldst see me practise some twenty or thirty mad gambols. I shall have dispatched them in less than half an hour, and when thou hast been an eye-witness of that essay, thou mayest with a safe conscience swear thou hast seen me play a thousand more; for I dare assure thee, for thy encouragement, thou never canst exceed the number of those I shall perform."—"Good sir," quoth Sancho, "as you love me do not let me stay to see you naked! it will grieve me so to the heart, that I shall cry my eyes out; and I have blubbered and howled but too much since yesternight for the loss of my ass; my head is so sore with it, I am not able to cry any longer: but if you will needs have me see some of your antics, pray, do them in your clothes out of hand, and let them be such as are most to the purpose, for the sooner I go, the sooner I shall come back, and the way to be gone is not to stay here. I long to bring you an answer to your heart's content, and I will be sure to do it, or let the Lady Dulcinea look to it; for if she does not answer it as she should do, I protest solemnly I will force an answer