

upon her feet, she gracefully advanced towards the knight, and, with her squire, falling on her knees before him, in spite of his endeavours to hinder her; "Thrice valorous and invincible knight,"¹ said she, "never will I rise from this place, till your generosity has granted me a boon, which shall redound to your honour, and the relief of the most disconsolate and most injured damsel that the sun ever saw: and indeed if your valour and the strength of your formidable arm be answerable to the extent of your immortal renown, you are bound by the laws of honour, and the knighthood which you profess, to succour a distressed princess, who, led by the resounding fame of your marvellous and redoubted feats of arms, comes from the remotest regions, to implore your protection."—"I cannot," said Don Quixote, "make you any answer, most beautiful lady, nor will I hear a word more, unless you vouchsafe to rise."—"Pardon me, noble knight," replied the petitioning damsel; "my knees shall first be rooted here, unless you will courteously condescend to grant me the boon which I humbly request."—"I grant it then, lady," said Don Quixote, "provided it be nothing to the disservice of my king, my country, and that

¹ See Appendix, Note 2, Chap. II., Book IV.

beauty who keeps the key of my heart and liberty."—"It shall not tend to the prejudice or detriment of any of these," cried the lady. With that Sancho closing up to his master, and whispering him in the ear, "Grant it, sir," quoth he, "grant it, I tell ye; it is but a trifle next to nothing, only to kill a great looby of a giant; and she that asks this, is the high and mighty Princess Micomicona, Queen of the huge kingdom of Micomicon in Ethiopia."—"Let her be what she will," replied Don Quixote, "I will discharge my duty, and obey the dictates of my conscience, according to the rules of my profession." With that turning to the damsel, "Rise, lady, I beseech you," cried he; "I grant you the boon which your singular beauty demands."—"Sir," said the lady, "the boon I have to beg of your magnanimous valour, is, that you will be pleased to go with me instantly whither I shall conduct you, and promise not to engage in any other adventure, till you have revenged me on a traitor who usurps my kingdom, contrary to all laws both human and divine."—"I grant you all this, lady," quoth Don Quixote; "and therefore from this moment shake off all desponding thoughts that sit heavy upon your mind, and study to revive your drooping hopes;

for by the assistance of Heaven, and my strenuous arm, you shall see yourself restored to your kingdom, and seated on the throne of your ancestors, in spite of all the traitors that dare oppose your right. Let us then hasten our performance; delay always breeds danger; and to protract a great design is often to ruin it." The thankful princess, to speak her grateful sense of his generosity, strove to kiss the knight's hand;³ however, he who was in every thing the most gallant and courteous of all knights, would by no means admit of such submission; but having gently raised her up, he embraced her with an awful grace and civility, and then called to Sancho for his arms. Sancho went immediately, and having fetched them from a tree,⁴ where they hung like trophies, armed his master in a moment. And now the champion being completely accoutred, "Come on," said he, "let us go and vindicate the rights of this dispossessed princess." The barber was all this while upon his knees, and had enough to do to keep himself from laughing, and his beard from falling, which, if it had dropped off, as it threatened, would have betrayed his face and their whole plot at once.

³ See Appendix, Note 3, Chap. II., Book IV.

⁴ See Appendix, Note 4, Chap. II., Book IV.

But being relieved by Don Quixote's haste to put on his armour, he rose up, and taking the princess by the hand, they both together set her upon her mule. Then the knight mounted his Rozinante, and the barber got on his beast. Only poor Sancho was forced to foot it, which made him fetch many heavy sighs for the loss of his dear Dapple. However, he bore his crosses patiently, seeing his master in so fair a way of being next door to an emperor; for he did not question but he would marry that princess, and so be at least King of Micomicon. But yet it grieved him, to think his master's dominions were to be in the land of the negroes, and that, consequently, the people, over whom he was to be governor, were all to be black. But he presently bethought himself of a good remedy for that: "What care I," quoth he, "though they be blacks? best of all; it is but loading a ship with them, and having them into Spain, where I shall find chapmen enow to take them off my hands, and pay me ready money for them; and so I'll raise a good round sum, and buy me a title or an office to live upon frank and easy all the days of my life. Hang him that has no shifts, say I; it is a sorry goose that will not baste herself. Why, what if I am not so book learned as

other folks, sure I have a head-piece good enough to know how to sell thirty or ten thousand slaves in the turn of a hand.* Let them even go higgledy-piggledy, little and great. What though they be as black as the devil in hell, let me alone to turn them into white and yellow boys; I think I know how to lick my own fingers."

Big with these imaginations, Sancho trudged along so pleased and light-hearted, that he forgot his pain of travelling a-foot. Cardenio and the curate had beheld the pleasant scene through the bushes, and were at a loss what they should do to join companies. But the curate, who had a contriving head, at last bethought himself of an expedient; and pulling out a pair of scissors, which he used to carry in his pocket, he snipped off Cardenio's beard in a trice; and having pulled off his black cloak and a sad-coloured riding-coat which he had on, he equipped Cardenio with them, while he himself remained in his doublet and breeches. In which new garb Cardenio was so strangely altered, that he would not have known himself in a looking-glass. This done, they made to the high-way, and there stayed till Don Quixote and his company were got clear of the rocks

* Literally, While one may say, take away these straws; *enquitam alla essas pajas*, i.e., in a moment.

and bad ways, which did not permit horsemen to go so fast as those on foot. When they came near, the curate looked very earnestly upon Don Quixote, as one that was in a study whether he might not know him; and then, like one that had made a discovery, he ran towards the knight with open arms, crying out, "Mirror of chivalry, my noble countryman Don Quixote de la Mancha! the cream and flower of gentility! the shelter and relief of the afflicted, and quintessence of knight-errantry! how overjoyed am I to have found you!" At the same time he embraced his left leg.

Don Quixote, admiring what adorer of his heroic worth this should be, looked on him earnestly; and at last calling him to mind, would have alighted to have paid him his respects, not a little amazed to meet him there. But the curate hindering him, "Reverend sir," cried the knight, "I beseech you, let me not be so rude as to sit on horseback, while a person of your worth and character is on foot."—"Sir," replied the curate, "you shall by no means alight. Let your Excellency be pleased to keep your saddle, since, thus mounted, you every day achieve the most stupendous feats of arms and adventures that were ever seen in

our age. It will be honour enough for an unworthy priest like me to get up behind some of your company, if they will permit me; and I will esteem it as great a happiness as to be mounted upon Pegasus, or the Zebra, or the fleet mare of the famous Moor Muzaraque, who to this hour lies enchanted in the dreary cavern of Zulema, not far distant from the great Compluto."⁵—"Truly, good sir, I did not think of this," answered Don Quixote; "but I suppose my lady the princess will be so kind as to command her squire to lend you his saddle, and to ride behind himself, if his mule be used to carry double."—"I believe it will," cried the princess; "and my squire, I suppose, will not stay for my commands to offer his saddle, for he is too courteous and well-bred to suffer an ecclesiastical person to go a-foot, when we may help him to a mule."—"Most certainly," cried the barber; and with that dismounting, he offered the curate his saddle, which was accepted without much entreaty. By ill fortune the mule was a hired beast, and consequently unlucky; so, as the barber was getting up behind the curate, the resty jade gave two or three jerks with her hinder legs, that, had they met with Master Nicholas's skull or ribs,

⁵ See Appendix, Note 5, Chap. II., Book IV.

he would have bequeathed his rambling after Don Quixote to the devil. However, he flung himself nimbly off, and was more afraid than hurt; but yet as he fell his beard dropt off, and being presently sensible of that accident, he could not think of any better shift than to clap both of his hands before his cheeks, and cry out he had broke his jaw-bone. Don Quixote was amazed to see such an overgrown bush of beard lie on the ground without jaws and bloodless. "Bless me," cried he, "what an amazing miracle is this! here is a beard as cleverly taken off by accident, as if a barber had mowed it."— The curate, perceiving the danger they were in of being discovered, hastily caught up the beard, and, running to the barber, who lay all the while roaring and complaining, he pulled his head close to his own breast, and then muttering certain words, which he said were a charm appropriated to the fastening on of fallen beards, he fixed it on again so handsomely, that the squire was presently then as bearded and as well as ever he was before; which raised Don Quixote's admiration, and made him engage the curate to teach him the charm at his leisure, not doubting but its virtue extended further than to the fastening on of beards, since it was impossible that such

a one could be torn off without fetching away flesh and all; and consequently such a sudden cure might be beneficial to him upon occasion. And now, everything being set to rights, they agreed that the curate should ride first by himself, and then the other two by turns relieving one another, sometimes riding, sometimes walking, till they came to their inn, which was about two leagues off. So Don Quixote, the princess, and the curate, being mounted, and Cardenio, the barber, and Sancho, ready to move forwards on foot, the knight, addressing himself to the distressed damsel, "Now, lady," said he, "let me entreat your greatness to tell me which way we must go, to do you service?" The curate, before she could answer, thought fit to ask her a question, that might the better enable her to make a proper reply. "Pray, madam," said he, "towards what country is it your pleasure to take your progress? is it not towards the kingdom of Micomicon? I am very much mistaken if that be not the part of the world whither you desire to go." The lady having got her cue, presently understood the curate, and answered that he was in the right. "Then," said the curate, "your way lies directly through the village where I live, from

whence we have a straight road to Carthagera, where you may conveniently take shipping; and if you have a fair wind and good weather, you may in something less than nine years, reach the vast lake Meona, I mean the Palus Maeotis, which lies somewhat more than a hundred days' journey from your kingdom."—"Surely, sir," replied the lady, "you are under a mistake; for it is not quite two years since I left the place; and besides, we have had very little fair weather all the while, and yet I am already got thither, and have so far succeeded in my designs, as to have obtained the sight of the renowned Don Quixote de la Mancha, the fame of whose achievements reached my ears as soon as I landed in Spain, and moved me to find him out, to throw myself under his protection, and commit the justice of my cause to his invincible valour."—"No more, madam, I beseech you," cried Don Quixote; "spare me the trouble of hearing myself praised, for I mortally hate whatever may look like adulation; and though your compliments may deserve a better name, my ears are too modest to be pleased with any such discourse: it is my study to deserve and to avoid applause. All I will venture to say is, that whether I have any valour or no, I am wholly at your ser-

vice, even at the expense of the last drop of my blood; and therefore, waiving all these matters till a fit opportunity, I would gladly know of this reverend clergyman, what brought him hither, unattended by any of his servants, alone, and so slenderly clothed; for I must confess I am not a little surprised to meet him in this condition."—"To tell you the reason in few words," answered the curate, "you must know, that Master Nicholas, our friend and barber, went with me to Seville, to receive some money which a relation of mine sent me from the Indies, where he has been settled these many years. Neither was it a small sum, for it was no less than seventy thousand pieces of eight, and all of due weight, which is no common thing, you may well judge; but upon the road hereabouts we met four highwaymen, that robbed us of all we had, even to our very beards, so that the poor barber was forced to get him a chin-periwig. And for that young gentleman whom you see there," continued he, pointing to Cardenio, "after they had stripped him to his shirt, they transfigured him as you see.* Now everybody hereabouts says, that those who robbed us were certainly a pack of rogues condemned to the galleys, who, as they were going to punishment, were

* The priest had clipped off Cardenio's beard in haste.

rescued by a single man, not far from this place, and that with so much courage, that in spite of the king's officer and his guards, he alone set them all at liberty. Certainly this man was either mad, or as great a rogue as any of them; for would any one that had a grain of sense or honesty, have let loose a company of wolves among sheep, foxes among innocent poultry, and wasps among the honey-pots? He has hindered public justice from taking its course, broke his allegiance to his lawful sovereign, disabled the strength of his galleys, rebelled against him, and opposed his officers in contempt of the law, and alarmed the holy brotherhood, that had lain quiet so long; nay, what is yet worse, he has endangered his life upon earth, and his salvation hereafter." Sancho had given the curate an account of the adventure of the galley-slaves, and this made him lay it on thick in the relation, to try how Don Quixote would bear it. The knight changed colour at every word, not daring to confess he was the pious knight-errant who had delivered those worthy gentlemen out of bondage. "These," said the curate, by way of conclusion, "were the men that reduced us to this condition; and may heaven in mercy forgive him who freed them from the punishment they so well deserved!"