

CHAPTER XX

PROSECUTING THE COURSE OF DON QUIXOTE'S
ENCHANTMENT, WITH OTHER MEMORABLE OCCUR-
RENCES

DON QUIXOTE was not so much amazed at his enchantment, as at the manner of it: "Among all the volumes of chivalry that I have turned over," said he, "I never read before of knights-errant drawn in carts,¹ or tugged along so leisurely, by such slothful animals as oxen. For they used to be hurried along with prodigious speed, enveloped in some dark and dusky cloud; or in some fiery chariot drawn by winged griffins, or some such expeditious creatures; but I must confess, to be drawn thus by a team of oxen, staggers my understanding not a little; though perhaps the enchanters of our times take a different method from those in former ages. Or rather the wise magicians have invented some course in their proceedings for me, being the first reviver and restorer of arms, which have so long been lost in oblivion, and rusted through the disuse of chivalry. What is thy

¹ See Appendix, Note 1, Chapter XX., Book IV.

opinion, my dear Sancho?"—"Why truly, sir," said Sancho, "I cannot tell what to think, being not so well read in these matters as your worship; yet for all that, I am positive and can take my oath on it, that these same phantoms that run up and down here are not orthodox."—"Orthodox, my friend?" said Don Quixote, "how can they be orthodox, when they are devils, and have only assumed these phantastical bodies to surprise us into this condition? To convince you, endeavour to touch them, and you will find their substances are not material, but only subtile air, and outward appearance."—"Gadzookers, sir," said Sancho, "I have touched them, and touched them again, sir; and I find this same busy devil here, that is fiddling about, is as plump and fat as a capon: besides, he has another property very different from a devil; for the devils, they say, smell of brimstone and other filthy things, and this spark has such a fine scent of essence about him, that you may smell him at least half a league."—Meaning Don Ferdinand, who, in all probability, like other gentlemen of his quality, had his clothes perfumed.

"Alas, honest Sancho," answered Don Quixote, "the cunning of these fiends is above the reach of thy simplicity; for you must know

the spirits, as spirits, have no scent at all; and if they should, it must necessarily be some unsavoury stench, because they still carry their hell about them, and the least of a perfume or grateful odour were inconsistent with their torments; so that this mistake of yours must be attributed to some farther delusion of your sense." Don Ferdinand and Cardenio, upon these discourses between master and man, were afraid that Sancho would spoil all, and therefore ordered the innkeeper privately to get ready Rozinante and Sancho's ass, while the curate agreed with the officers for so much a-day to conduct them home. Cardenio having hung Don Quixote's target on the pommel of Rozinante's saddle, and the basin on the other side, he signified to Sancho by signs, that he should mount his ass, and lead Rozinante by the bridle; and lastly placed two officers with their firelocks on each side of the cart.

Being just ready to march, the hostess, her daughter, and Maritornes, came to the door to take their leave of the knight, pretending unsupportable grief for his misfortune. "Restrain your tears, most honourable ladies," said Don Quixote, "for these mischances are incident to those of my profession; and from these disasters it is we date the greatness of our glory and

renown; they are the effects of envy, which still attends virtuous and great actions, and brought upon us by the indirect means of such princes and knights as are emulous of our dignity and fame: but spite of all oppression, spite of all the magic, that ever its first inventor Zoroastres understood, virtue will come off victorious; and triumphing over every danger, will at last shine out in its proper lustre, like the sun to enlighten the world. Pardon me, fair ladies, if, through ignorance or omission of the respects due to your qualities, I have not behaved myself to please you; for, to the best of my knowledge, I never committed a wilful wrong. And I crave the assistance of your prayers, towards my enlargement from this prison, which some malicious magician has confined me to; and the first business of my freedom, shall be a grateful acknowledgment for the many and obliging favours conferred upon me in this your castle."

Whilst the ladies were thus entertained by Don Quixote, the curate and barber were busy taking their leaves of their company; and after mutual compliments and embraces, they engaged to acquaint one another with their succeeding fortunes. Don Ferdinand entreated the curate to give him a particular relation of

Don Quixote's adventures, assuring him, that nothing would be a greater obligation, and at the same time engaged to inform him of his own marriage and Lucinda's return to her parents; with an account of Zoraida's baptism, and Don Lewis's success in his amour.

The curate having given his word and honour, to satisfy Don Ferdinand, and the last compliments being past, was just going, when the innkeeper made him a proffer of a bundle of papers found in the folds of the same cloak-bag where he got *The Curious Impertinent*, telling him withal, that they were all at his service; because since the owner was not like to come and demand them, and he could not read, they could not better be disposed of. The curate thanked him heartily, and opening the papers, found them entitled, *The Story of Rinconete and Cortadillo*. The title showing it to be a novel, and probably written by the author of *The Curious Impertinent*, because found in the same wallet, he put it in his pocket, with a resolution to peruse it the very first opportunity: then mounting with his friend the barber, and both putting on their masks, they followed the procession, which marched in this order. The carter led the van; and next his cart, flanked on right and

left with two officers with their firelocks; then followed Sancho on his ass, leading Rozinante; and lastly the curate and barber on their mighty mules brought up the rear of the body, all with a grave and solemn air, marching no faster than the heavy oxen allowed. Don Quixote sat leaning against the back of the cage with his hands tied and his legs at length; but so silent and motionless, that he seemed rather a statue than a man.

They had travelled about two leagues this slow and leisurely pace, when their conductor stopping in a little valley, proposed it as a fit place to bait in; but he was prevailed upon to defer halting a little longer, being informed by the barber of a certain valley beyond a little hill in their view, better stored with grass, and more convenient for their purpose. They had not travelled much farther when the curate spied coming a round pace after them six or seven men very well accoutred; they appeared, by their brisk riding, to be mounted on churchmen's mules, not carried as the Don was, by a team of sluggish oxen: they endeavoured before the heat of the day to reach their inn, which was about a league farther. In short, they soon came up with our slow itinerants; and one of them, that was a canon of Toledo,

and master of those that came along with him, marking the formal procession of the cart, guards, Sancho, Rozinante, the curate, and the barber, but chiefly the in-caged Don Quixote, could not forbear asking what meant their strange method of securing that man; though he already believed, having observed the guards, that he was some notorious criminal in custody of the holy brotherhood. One of the fraternity told him, that he could not tell the cause of that knight's imprisonment, but that he might answer for himself, because he best could tell.

Don Quixote over-hearing their discourse, "Gentlemen," said he, "if you are conversant and skilled in matters of knight-errantry, I will communicate my misfortunes to you; if you are not, I have no reason to give myself the trouble."—"Truly, friend," answered the canon, "I am better acquainted with books of chivalry than with Villalpando's divinity;¹ and if that be all your objection, you may safely impart to me what you please."—"With heaven's permission be it so," said Don Quixote. "You must then understand, sir knight, that I am borne away in this cage by the force of enchantments, through the envious spite and malice of some cursed magicians; for virtue is

¹ See Appendix, Note 2, Chapter XX., Book IV.

more zealously persecuted by ill men, than it is beloved by the good. I am, by profession, a knight-errant, and none of those, I assure you, whose deeds never merited a place in the records of fame; but one who, in spite of Envy's self, in spite of all the magi of Persia, the brachmans of India, or the gymnosophists of Ethiopia, shall secure to his name a place in the temple of Immortality, as a pattern and model to following ages, that ensuing knight-errant, following my steps, may be guided to the top and highest pitch of heroic honour."—"The noble Don Quixote de la Mancha speaks truth," said the curate, coming up to the company; "he is indeed enchanted in this cart, not through his own demerits or offences, but the malicious treachery of those whom virtue displeases and valour offends. This is, sir, the Knight of the Woeful Figure, of whom you have undoubtedly heard, whose mighty deeds shall stand engraved in lasting brass and time-surviving marble, till envy grows tired with labouring to deface his fame, and malice to conceal him."

The canon hearing the prisoner and his guard talk thus in the same style, was in amaze, and blessed himself for wonder, as did the rest of the company, till Sancho Panza coming

up, to amend the matter, "Look ye, sirs," said he, "I will speak the truth, take it well or take it ill. My master here, is no more enchanted than my mother: he is in his sober senses, he eats and drinks, and does his needs, like other folks, and as he used to do; and yet they will persuade me that a man, who can do all this, is enchanted, forsooth! he can speak too, for if they will let him alone, he will prattle you more than thirty attorneys."—Then turning towards the curate, "O Master Curate, Master Curate," continued he, "do you think I do not know you, and that I do not guess what all these new enchantments drive at! Yes, I know you well enough, for all you hide your face; and understand your design, for all your sly tricks, sir. But it is an old saying, There is no striving against the stream; and the weakest still goes to the wall. The devil take the luck on it; had not your reverence spoiled our sport, my master had been married before now to the Princess Micomicona, and I had been an earl at least; nay, that I was sure of, had the worst come to the worst; but the old proverb is true again, fortune turns round like a mill-wheel, and he that was yesterday at the top, lies to-day at the bottom. I wonder, Master Curate, you that are a clergyman should not

have more conscience; consider, sir, that I have a wife and family, who expect all to be great folks, and my master here is to do a world of good deeds: and do not you think, sir, that you will be made to answer for all this one day?"—"Snuff me those candles," said the barber, hearing Sancho talk at this rate: "what, fool, are you brain-sick of your master's disease too? If you be, you are like to bear him company in his cage, I will assure you, friend. What enchanted island is this that floats in your skull, or what succubus has been riding thy fancy,¹ and got it with child of these hopes?"—"With child, sir! what do you mean, sir?" said Sancho, "I scorn your words, sir; the best lord in the land should not get me with child, no, not the king himself, heaven bless him. For though I am a poor man, yet I am an honest man, and an old Christian, and do not owe any man a farthing; and though I desire islands, there are other folks not far off that desire worse things. Every one is the son of his own works; I am a man, and may be pope of Rome, much more governor of an island; especially considering my master may gain so many as he may want persons to bestow them on. Therefore, pray Master Barber, take heed what you say; for all consists not in

¹ See Appendix, Note 3, Chapter XX., Book IV.

shaving of beards, and there is some difference between a hawk and a hand-saw. I say so, because we all know one another, and nobody shall put a false card upon me. As to my master's enchantment, let it stand as it is, heaven knows best: and a stink is still worse for the stirring." The barber thought silence the best way to quiet Sancho's impertinence; and the curate, doubting that he might spoil all, entreated the canon to put on a little before, and he would enfold the mystery of the encaged knight, which perhaps he would find one of the pleasantest stories he had ever heard. The canon rid forward with him, and his men followed, while the curate made them a relation of Don Quixote's life and quality, his madness and adventures, with the original cause of his distraction, and the whole progress of his affairs, till his being shut up in the cage, to get him home in order to have him cured. They all admired at this strange account; and then the canon turning to the curate: "Believe me, Master Curate," said he, "I am fully convinced, that these they call books of knight-errantry are very prejudicial to the public. And though I have been led away with an idle and false pleasure, to read the beginnings of almost as many of them as have been

printed, I could never yet persuade myself to go through with any one to the end; for to me they all seem to contain one and the same thing; and there is as much in one of them as in all the rest. The whole composition and style resemble that of the Milesian fables,¹ which are a sort of idle stories, designed only for diversion, and not for instruction. It is not so with those fables which are called apologues, that at once delight and instruct. But though the main design of such books is to please; yet I cannot conceive how it is possible they should perform it, being filled with such a multitude of unaccountable extravagancies. For the pleasure which strikes the soul, must be derived from the beauty and congruity it sees or conceives in those things the sight or imagination lay before it; and nothing in itself deformed or incongruous can give us any real satisfaction. Now what beauty can there be, or what proportion of the parts to the whole, or of the whole to the several parts, in a book, or fable, where a stripling of sixteen years of age at one cut of a sword cleaves a giant, as tall as a steeple, through the middle, as easily as if he were made of paste-board? Or when they give us the relation

¹ See Appendix, Note 4, Chapter XX., Book IV.

of a battle, having said the enemy's power consisted of a million of combatants, yet provided the hero of the book be against them, we must of necessity, though never so much against our inclination, conceive that the said knight obtained the victory only by his own valour, and the strength of his powerful arm? And what shall we say of the great ease and facility with which an absolute queen or empress casts herself into the arms of an errant and unknown knight? What mortal, not altogether barbarous and unpolished, can be pleased to read, that a great tower, full of armed knights, cuts through the sea like a ship before the wind, and setting out in the evening from the coast of Italy, lands by break of day in Prester John's country,¹ or in some other, never known to Ptolemy, or seen by Marcus Paulus?* If it should be answered, that the persons who compose these books, write them as confessed lies; and therefore are not obliged to observe niceties, or to have regard to truth; I shall make this reply, that falsehood is so much the more commendable, by how much more it resembles truth; and is the more pleasing the more it is doubtful and

¹ See Appendix, Note 5, Chapter XX., Book IV.

* A Venetian, and a very great traveller. He lived in the 13th century, 1272.

possible. Fabulous tales ought to be suited to the reader's understanding, being so contrived, that all impossibilities ceasing, all great accidents appearing feasible, and the mind wholly hanging in suspense, they may at once surprise, astonish, please and divert; so that pleasure and admiration may go hand in hand. This cannot be performed by him that flies from probability and imitation, which is the perfection of what is written. I have not seen any book of knight-errantry that composes an entire body of a fable with all its parts, so that the middle is answerable to the beginning, and the end to the beginning and middle; but on the contrary, they form them of so many limbs, that they rather seem a chimæra or monster, than a well-proportioned figure. Besides all this, their style is uncouth, their exploits incredible, their love immodest, their civility impertinent, their battles tedious, their language absurd, their voyages preposterous; and in short, they are altogether void of solid ingenuity, and therefore fit to be banished a Christian commonwealth as useless and prejudicial."

The curate was very attentive, and believed him a man of a sound judgment, and much in the right in all he had urged; and therefore

told him, that being of the same opinion, and an enemy to the books of knight-errantry, he had burnt all that belonged to Don Quixote, which were a considerable number. Then he recounted to him the scrutiny he had made among them, what he had condemned to the flames, and what spared; at which the canon* laughed heartily, and said, "that notwithstanding all he had spoken against those books, yet he found one good thing in them, which was the subject they furnished a man of understanding with to exercise his parts, because they allow a large scope for the pen to dilate upon without any check, describing shipwrecks, storms, skirmishes and battles; representing to us a brave commander, with all the qualifications requisite in such a one, shewing his prudence in disappointing the designs of the enemy, his eloquence in persuading or dissuading his soldiers, his judgment in council, his celerity in execution, and his valour in assailing or repulsing an assault; laying before us sometimes a dismal and melancholy accident, sometimes a delightful and unexpected adventure; in one place, a beautiful, modest, discreet and reserved lady; in another, a Christian-like, brave, and courteous gentle-

* This canon of Toledo is Cervantes himself all along.

man; here a boisterous, inhuman, boasting ruffian; there an affable, warlike and wise prince; livelily expressing the fidelity and loyalty of subjects, generosity and bounty of sovereigns. He may no less, at times, make known his skill in astrology, cosmography, music and policy; and if he pleases, he cannot want an opportunity of appearing knowing even in necromancy. We may describe the subtilty of Ulysses, the piety of Æneas, the valour of Achilles, the misfortunes of Hector, the treachery of Sinon, the friendship of Euryalus, the liberality of Alexander, the valour of Cæsar, the clemency and sincerity of Trajan, the fidelity of Zopyrus, the prudence of Cato; and in fine, all those actions that may make up a complete hero? sometimes attributing them all to one person, and at other times dividing them among many. This being so performed in a grateful style, and with ingenious invention, approaching as much as possible to truth, will doubtless compose so beautiful and various a work, that, when finished, its excellency and perfection must attain the best end of writing, which is at once to delight and instruct, as I have said before: for the loose method practised in these books, gives the author liberty to play the epic, the

lyric, and the dramatic poet, and to run through all the parts of poetry and rhetoric; for epics may be as well writ in prose* as in verse."

* The adventures of Telemachus is a proof of this.

CHAPTER XXI

CONTAINING A CONTINUATION OF THE CANON'S DISCOURSE UPON BOOKS OF KNIGHT-ERRANTRY, AND OTHER CURIOUS MATTER

"You are much in the right, sir," replied the curate; "and therefore those who have hitherto published books of that kind, are the more to be blamed, for having had no regard to good sense, art, or rules, by the observation of which they might have made themselves as famous in prose, as the two princes of Greek and Latin poetry are in verse."—"I must confess," said the canon, "I was once tempted to write a book of knight-errantry myself, observing all those rules; and to speak the truth, I writ above one hundred pages, which for the better trial, whether they answered my expectation, I communicated to some learned and judicious men fond of those subjects, as well as to some of those ignorant persons, who only are delighted with extravagancies; and they all gave me a satisfactory approbation. And yet I made no farther progress, as well in regard I look upon it to be a thing noway agreeable with