

CHAPTER IX

THAT GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF THINGS WHICH YOU
WILL KNOW WHEN YOU READ IT

THE sable night had spun out half her course,¹ when Don Quixote and Sancho descended from a hill, and entered Toboso. A profound silence reigned over all the town, and all the inhabitants were fast asleep, and stretched out at their ease. The night was somewhat clear, though Sancho wished it dark, to hide his master's folly and his own. Nothing disturbed the general tranquillity, but now and then the barking of dogs, that wounded Don Quixote's ears, but more poor Sancho's heart. Sometimes an ass brayed, hogs grunted, cats mewed; which jarring mixture of sounds was not a little augmented by the stillness and serenity of the night, and filled the enamoured champion's head with a thousand inauspicious chimeras. However, turning to his squire, "My dear Sancho," said he, "shew me the way to Dulcinea's palace, perhaps we shall find her still awake."—"Body of me," cried San-

¹ See Appendix, Note 1, Chapter IX.

cho, "what palace do you mean? When I saw her highness, she was in a little paltry cot."—"Perhaps," replied the knight, "she was then retired into some corner of the palace, to divert herself in private with her damsels, as great ladies and princesses sometimes do."—"Well, sir," said Sancho, "since it must be a palace whether I will or no, yet can you think this a time of night to find the gates open, or a seasonable hour to thunder at the door, till we raise the house and alarm the whole town? Are we going to a bawdyhouse, think you, like your wenchers, that can rap at a door any hour of the night, and knock people up when they list?"—"Let us once find the palace," said the knight, "and then I will tell thee what we ought to do: but stay, either my eyes delude me, or that lofty gloomy structure, which I discover yonder, is Dulcinea's palace."—"Well, lead on, sir," said the squire; "and yet though I were to see it with my eyes, and feel it with my ten fingers, I shall believe it even as much as I believe it is now noonday."

The knight led on, and having rode about two hundred paces, came at last to the building which he took for Dulcinea's palace; but found it to be the great church of the town.—

“We are mistaken, Sancho,” said he, “I find this is a church.”—“I see it is,” said the squire; “and I pray the Lord we have not found our graves; for it is a plaguy ill sign to haunt church-yards at this time of night, especially when I told you, if I am not mistaken, that this lady’s house stands in a little blind alley, without any thorough-fare.”—“A curse on thy distempered brain!” cried Don Quixote; “where, blockhead, where didst thou ever see royal edifices and palaces built in a blind alley, without a thorough-fare?”—“Sir,” said Sancho, “every country has its several fashions; and for aught you know, they may build their great houses and palaces in blind alleys at Toboso: and therefore, good your worship, let me alone to hunt up and down in what bye-lanes and alleys I may strike into; mayhap in some nook or corner we may light upon this same palace. Would Old Nick had it for me, for leading us such a jaunt, and plaguing a body at this rate.”—“Sancho,” said Don Quixote, “speak with greater respect of my mistress’s concerns; be merry and wise, and do not throw the helve after the hatchet.”—“Cry mercy, sir,” quoth Sancho, “but would it not make any mad, to have you put me upon finding readily our dame’s house at all times,

which I never saw but once in my life? Nay, and to find it at midnight, when you yourself cannot find it, that have seen it a thousand times!”—“Thou wilt make me desperately angry,” said the knight: “Hark you, heretic, have I not repeated it a thousand times, that I never saw the peerless Dulcinea, nor ever entered the portals of her palace; but that I am in love with her purely by hearsay, and upon the great fame of her beauty and rare accomplishments?”—“I hear you say so now,” quoth Sancho; “and since you say you never saw her, I must needs tell you I never saw her neither.”—“That is impossible,” said Don Quixote; “at least you told me you saw her winnowing wheat, when you brought me an answer to the letter which I sent by you.”—“That is neither here nor there, sir,” replied Sancho; “for to be plain with you, I saw her but by hearsay too, and the answer I brought you was by hearsay as well as the rest, and I know the Lady Dulcinea no more than the man in the moon.”—“Sancho, Sancho,” said Don Quixote, “there is a time for all things; unseasonable mirth always turns to sorrow. What, because I declare that I have never seen nor spoken to the mistress of my soul, is it for you to trifle and say

so too, when you are so sensible of the contrary?"

Here their discourse was interrupted, a fellow with two mules happening to pass by them, and by the noise of the plough which they drew along they guessed it might be some country labourer going out before day to his husbandry; and so indeed it was. He went singing the doleful ditty of the defeat of the French at Roncesvalles;* "*Ye Frenchmen all must rue the woful day.*"—"Let me die," said Don Quixote, hearing what the fellow sung, "if we have any good success to-night; do'st thou hear what this peasant sings, Sancho?"—"Ay, marry do I," quoth the squire; "but what is the rout at Roncesvalles to us? it concerns us no more than if he had sung the ballad of *Colly my Cow*;¹ we shall speed neither the better nor the worse for it." By this time the ploughman being come up to them; "Good-morrow, honest friend," cried Don Quixote to him; "pray can you inform me which is the palace of the Peerless Princess, the Lady Dulcinea del Toboso?"—"Sir," said the fellow, "I am a stranger, and but lately

* The battle of Roncesvalles is a doleful melancholy sound like our Chevy-Chase, which is the reason why it is looked upon as ominous, by superstitious people. See Appendix, Note 2, Chapter IX.

¹ See Appendix, Note 3, Chapter IX.

come into this town; I am ploughman to a rich farmer. But here, right over-against you, lives the curate and the sexton; they are the likeliest to give you some account of that lady-princess, as having a list of all the folks in town, though I fancy there is no princess at all lives here. There be indeed a power of gentle-folk, and each of them may be a princess in her own house for aught I know."—"Perhaps, friend," said Don Quixote, "we shall find the lady for whom I inquire among those."—"Why truly, master," answered the ploughman, "as you say, such a thing may be, and so speed you well! 'Tis break of day." With that, switching his mules, he staid for no more questions.

Sancho perceiving his master in suspense, and not very well satisfied; "Sir," said he, "the day comes on apace, and I think it will not be very handsome for us to stay to be stared at, and sit sunning ourselves in the street. We had better slip out of town again, and betake ourselves to some wood hard by, and then I will come back, and search every hole and corner in town for this same house, castle, or palace of my lady's, and it will go hard if I do not find it out at long run; then will I talk to her highness, and tell her how

you do, and how I left you hard by, waiting her orders and instructions about talking with her in private, without bringing her name in question."—"Dear Sancho," said the knight, "thou hast spoke and included a thousand sentences in the compass of a few words; I approve, and lovingly accept thy advice. Come, my child, let us go, and in some neighbouring grove find out a convenient retreat; then, as thou sayest, thou shall return to seek, to see, and to deliver my embassy to my lady, from whose discretion and most courteous mind I hope for a thousand favours, that may be counted more than wonderful." Sancho sat upon thorns till he had got his master out of town, lest he should discover the falsehood of the account he brought him in Sierra Morena, of Dulcinea's answering his letter; so hastening to be gone, they were presently got two miles from the town into a wood, where Don Quixote took covert, and Sancho was dispatched to Dulcinea. In which negotiation some accidents fell out, that require new attention and a fresh belief.

CHAPTER X

HOW SANCHO CUNNINGLY FOUND OUT A WAY TO ENCHANT THE LADY DULCINEA; WITH OTHER PASSAGES NO LESS CERTAIN THAN RIDICULOUS

THE author of this important history being come to the matters which he relates in this chapter, says he would willingly have left them buried in oblivion, in a manner despairing of his reader's belief. For Don Quixote's madness flies here to so extravagant a pitch, that it may be said to have outstripped, by two bowshots, all imaginable credulity. However, notwithstanding this mistrust, he has set down every particular, just as the same was transacted, without adding or diminishing the least atom of truth through the whole history; not valuing in the least such objections as may be raised to impeach him of breach of veracity. A proceeding which ought to be commended; for truth indeed rather alleviates than hurts, and will always bear up against falsehood, as oil does above water. And so continuing his narration, he tells us, that when Don Quixote