

CHAPTER XII

THE VALOROUS DON QUIXOTE'S STRANGE ADVENTURE
WITH THE BOLD KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS

DON QUIXOTE passed the night that succeeded his encounter with Death under the covert of some lofty trees; where, at Sancho's persuasion, he refreshed himself with some of the provisions which Dapple carried. As they were at supper, "Well, sir," quoth the squire, "what a rare fool I had been, had I chosen for my good news the spoils of your first venture, instead of the breed of the three mares! Troth! command me to the saying, A bird in hand is worth two in the bush."—"However," answered Don Quixote, "had'st thou let me fall on, as I would have done, thou mightest have shared at least the emperor's golden crown, and Cupid's painted wings; for I would have plucked them off, and put them into thy power."—"Ah, but," says Sancho, "your strolling emperor's crowns and sceptres are not of pure gold, but tinsel and copper."—"I grant it," said Don Quixote; "nor is it fit the decorations of the

stage should be real, but rather imitations, and the resemblance of realities, as the plays themselves must be; which, by the way, I would have you love and esteem, Sancho, and consequently those that write, and also those that act them; for they are all instrumental to the good of the common-wealth, and set before our eyes those looking-glasses that reflect a lively representation of human life; nothing being able to give us a more just idea of nature, and what we are or ought to be, than comedians and comedies. Prithee tell me, hast thou never seen a play acted, where kings, emperors, prelates, knights, ladies, and other characters, are introduced on the stage? one acts a ruffian, another a soldier; this man a cheat, and that a merchant; one plays a designing fool, and another a foolish lover: but the play done, and the actors undressed, they are all equal, and as they were before."—"All this I have seen," quoth Sancho.

"Just such a comedy," said Don Quixote, "is acted on the great stage of the world, where some play the emperors, others the prelates, and, in short, all the parts that can be brought into a dramatic piece; till death, which is the catastrophe and end of the action, strips the actors of all their marks of distinction, and

levels their quality in the grave.”—“A rare comparison,” quoth Sancho, “though not so new, but that I have heard it over and over. Just such another is that of a game at chess, where while the play lasts, every piece has its particular office; but when the game is over, they are all mingled and huddled together, and clapped into a bag, just as when life is ended we are laid up in the grave.”—“Truly, Sancho,” said Don Quixote, “thy simplicity lessens, and thy sense improves every day.”—“And good reason why,” quoth Sancho; “some of your worship’s wit must needs stick to me; for your dry unkindly land, with good dunging and tilling, will in time yield a good crop. I mean, sir, that the dung and muck of your conversation being thrown on the barren ground of my wit, together with the time I have served your worship, and kept you company, which is, as a body may say, the tillage, I must needs bring forth blessed fruit at last, so as not to shame my master, but keep in the paths of good manners, which you have beaten into my sodden understanding.” Sancho’s affected style made Don Quixote laugh, though he thought his words true in the main; and he could not but admire at his improvement. But the fellow never discovered his weakness

so much as by endeavouring to hide it, being most apt to tumble when he strove to soar too high. His excellence lay chiefly in a knack at drawing proverbs into his discourse, whether to the purpose or not, as any one that has observed his manner of speaking in this history, must have perceived.

In such discourses they passed a great part of the night, till Sancho wanted to drop the portcullices of his eyes, which was his way of saying he had a mind to go to sleep. Thereupon he unharnessed Dapple, and set him a grazing; but Rozinante was condemned to stand saddled all night, by his master’s injunction and prescription, used of old by all knights-errant, who never unsaddled their steeds in the field, but took off their bridles, and hung them at the pommel of the saddle. However, he was not forsaken by faithful Dapple, whose friendship was so unparalleled and inviolable, that unquestioned tradition has handed it down from father to son, that the author of this true history composed particular chapters of the united affection of these two beasts; though, to preserve the decorum due to so heroic a history, he would not insert them in the work. Yet sometimes he cannot forbear giving us some new touches on that subject;

as when he writes, that the two friendly creatures took a mighty pleasure in being together to scrub and lick one another; and when they had had enough of that sport, Rozinante would gently lean his head at least half a yard over Dapple's neck, and so they would stand very lovingly together, looking wistfully on the ground for two or three days; except somebody made them leave that contemplative posture, or hunger compelled them to a separation. Nay, I cannot pass by what is reported of the author, how he left in writing, that he had compared their friendship to that of Nisus and Euryalus, and that of Pylades and Orestes, which if it were so, deserves universal admiration; the sincere affection of these quiet animals being a just reflection on men, who are so guilty of breaking their friendship to one another. From hence came the saying, There is no friend; all friendship is gone: Now men hug, then fight anon.¹ And that other, Where you see your friend, trust to yourself. Neither should the world take it ill, that the cordial affection of these animals was compared by our author to that of men; since many important principles of prudence and morality have been learnt from irrational creatures; as, the use of

¹ See Appendix, Note 1, Chapter XII.

clysters from the stork, and the benefit of vomiting from the dog. The crane gave mankind an example of vigilance, the ant of providence, the elephant of honesty, and the horse of loyalty.

At last Sancho fell asleep at the root of a cork-tree, and his master fetched a slumber under a spacious oak. But it was not long e'er he was disturbed by a noise behind him, and starting up, he looked and hearkened on the side whence he thought the voice came, and discovered two men on horseback; one of whom letting himself carelessly slide down from the saddle, and calling to the other, "Alight, friend," said he, "and unbridle your horse; for methinks this place will supply them plentifully with pasture, and me with silence and solitude to indulge my amorous thoughts."—While he said this, he laid himself down on the grass; in doing which, the armour he had on made a noise, a sure sign, that gave Don Quixote to understand he was some knight-errant. Thereupon going to Sancho, who slept on, he plucked him by the arm; and having waked him with much ado, "Friend Sancho," said he, whispering him in his ear, "here is an adventure."—"Heaven grant it be a good one!" quoth Sancho. "But where is that

same lady adventure's worship?"—"Where! dost thou ask, Sancho? why, turn thy head, man, and look yonder. Dost thou not see a knight-errant there lying on the ground. I have reason to think he is in melancholy circumstances, for I saw him fling himself off from his horse, and stretch himself on the ground in a disconsolate manner, and his armour clashed as he fell."—"What of all that?" quoth Sancho.—"How do you make this to be an adventure?"—"I will not yet affirm," answered Don Quixote, "that it is an adventure; but a very fair rise to one as ever was seen. But hark! he is tuning some instrument, and by his coughing and spitting he is clearing his throat to sing."—"Troth now, sir," quoth Sancho, "it is even so in good earnest; and I fancy it is some knight that is in love."—"All knights-errant must be so," answered Don Quixote: "but let us hearken, and if he sings, we shall know more of his circumstances presently, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."—Sancho would have answered, but that the Knight of the Wood's voice, which was but indifferent, interrupted him with the following

SONG.

I.

"Bright queen, how shall your loving slave
Be sure not to displease?
Some rule of duty let him crave;
He begs no other ease.

II.

"Say, must I die, or hopeless live?
I'll act as you ordain:
Despair a silent death shall give,
Or Love himself complain.

III.

"My heart, though soft as wax, will prove
Like diamonds firm and true:
For, what th' impression can remove,
That's stamp'd by love and you?"

The Knight of the Wood concluded his song with a sigh, that seemed to be fetched from the very bottom of his heart; and after some pause, with a mournful and disconsolate voice, "O, the most beautiful, but most ungrateful of womankind," cried he, "how is it possible, most serene Casildea de Vandalia,¹ your heart should consent that a knight who idolizes your charms, should waste the flower of his youth, and kill himself with continual wanderings and hard fatigues? Is it not enough, that I have made you to be acknowl-

¹ See Appendix, Note 2, Chapter XII.

ledged the greatest beauty in the world, by all the Knights of Navarre, all the Knights of Leon, all the Tartesians, all the Castilians, and, in fine, by all the Knights of La Mancha?"—"Not so neither," said Don Quixote then; "for I myself am of La Mancha, and never acknowledged, nor ever could, nor ought to acknowledge a thing so injurious to the beauty of my mistress; therefore, Sancho, it is a plain case, this knight is out of his senses. But let us hearken, perhaps we shall discover something more."—"That you will, I will warrant you," quoth Sancho, "for he seems in tune to hoan a month together." But it happened otherwise; for the Knight of the Wood overhearing them, ceased his lamentation, and raising himself on his feet, in a loud but courteous tone called to them, "Who is there? What are ye? Are ye of the number of the happy or the miserable?"—"Of the miserable," answered Don Quixote.—"Repair to me then," said the Knight of the Wood, "and be assured you have met misery and affliction itself."—Upon so moving and civil an invitation, Don Quixote and Sancho drew near him; and the mournful knight taking Don Quixote by the hand, "Sit down," said he, "Sir Knight; for that your profession is chivalry, I need no

other conviction than to have found you in this retirement, where solitude and the cold night-dews are your companions, and the proper stations and reposing places of knights-errant."—"I am a knight," answered Don Quixote, "and of the order you mention; and though my sorrows, and disasters, and misfortunes usurp the seat of my mind, I have still a heart disposed to entertain the afflictions of others. Yours, as I gather by your complaints, is derived from love, and, I suppose, owing to the ingratitude of that beauty you now mentioned."—While they were thus parleying together, they sat close by one another on the hard ground, very peaceably and lovingly, and not like men that by break of day were to break one another's heads.—"And is it your fortune to be in love?" asked the Knight of the Wood.—"It is my misfortune," answered Don Quixote; "though the pleasant reflection of having placed our affections worthily, sufficiently balances the weight of our disasters, and turns them to a blessing."—"This might be true," replied the Knight of the Wood, "if the disdain of some mistresses were not often so galling to our tempers, as to inspire us with something like the spirit of revenge."—"For my part," said Don Quixote,

"I never felt my mistress's disdain."—"No truly," quoth Sancho, who was near them, "for my lady is as gentle as a lamb, and as soft as butter."—"Is that your squire," said the Knight of the Wood.—"It is," answered Don Quixote.—"I never saw a squire," said the Knight of the Wood, "that durst presume to interrupt his master when he was speaking himself. There is my fellow yonder; he is as big as his father, and yet no man can say, he was ever so saucy as to open his lips when I spoke."—"Well, well," quoth Sancho, "I have talked, and may talk again, and before as, and perhaps—but I have done—The more ye stir, the more it will stink."—At the same time the Squire of the Wood pulling Sancho by the arm, "Come, brother," said he, "let us two go where we may chat freely by ourselves, like downright squires as we are, and let our masters get over head and ears in the stories of their loves: I will warrant ye they will be at it all night, and will not have done by that time it is day."—"With all my heart," quoth Sancho; "and then I will tell you who I am, and what I am, and you shall judge if I am not fit to make one among the talking squires."—With that the two squires withdrew, and had a dialogue, as comical as that of their masters was serious.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ADVENTURE WITH THE KNIGHT OF THE WOOD
CONTINUED; WITH THE WISE, RARE, AND
PLEASANT DISCOURSE THAT PASSED BETWEEN
THE TWO SQUIRES

THE knights and their squires thus divided the latter to tell their lives, and the former to relate their amours, the story begins with the Squire of the Wood.—"Sir," said he to Sancho, "this is a troublesome kind of life, that we squires of knights-errant lead: Well may we say, we eat our bread with the sweat of our brows; which is one of the curses laid on our first parents."—"Well may we say too," quoth Sancho, "we eat it with a cold shivering of our bodies; for there are no poor creatures that suffer more by heat or cold, than we do. Nay, if we could but eat at all, it would never vex one, for good fare lessens care; but sometimes we shall go ye a day or two, and never so much as breakfast, unless it be upon the wind that blows." "After all," said the Squire of the Wood, "we may