

"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

bear with this, when we think of the reward we are to expect; for that same knight-errant must be excessively unfortunate, that has not some time or other the government of some island, or some good handsome earldom, to bestow on his squire."—"As for me," quoth Sancho, "I have often told my master, I would be contented with the government of any island; and he is so noble and free-hearted, that he has promised it over and over."—"For my part," quoth the other Squire, "I should think myself well paid for my services with some good canonry, and I have my master's word for it too."—"Why then," quoth Sancho, "belike your master is some church-knight, and may bestow such livings on his good squires. But mine is purely laic; some of his wise friends indeed (no thanks to them for it) once upon a time counselled him to be an archbishop: I fancy they wished him no good, but he would not; for he will be nothing but an emperor. I was plaguily afraid he might have had a hankering after the church, and so have spoiled my preferment, I not being gifted that way; for between you and I, though I look like a man in a doublet, I should make but an ass in a cassock."—"Let me tell you, friend," quoth

the Squire of the Wood, "that you are out in your politics; for these island-governments bring more cost than worship; there is a great cry, but little wool; the best will bring more trouble and care than they are worth, and those that take them on their shoulders are ready to sink under them. I think it were better for us to quit this confounded slavery, and e'en jog home, where we may entertain ourselves with more delightful exercises, such as fishing and hunting, and the like; for he is a sorry country squire indeed, that wants his horse, his couple of hounds, or his fishing-tackle, to live pleasantly at home."—"All this I can have at will," quoth Sancho: "Indeed I have never a nag; but I have an honest ass here, worth two of my master's horses any day in the year. A bad Christmas be my lot, and may it be the next, if I would swop beasts with him, though he gave me four bushels of barley to boot, no, marry would not I: Laugh as much as you will at the value I set on my Dapple; for Dapple, you must know, is his colour. Now as for hounds, we have enough to spare in our town; and there is no sport like hunting at another man's cost."—"Faith and troth! brother squire," quoth the Squire of the Wood, "I am fully set upon it. These

vagrant knights may e'en seek their mad adventures by themselves; for me, I will home, and breed up my children, as it behoves me; for I have three, as precious as three orient pearls."—"I have but two," quoth Sancho; "but they might be presented to the Pope himself, especially my girl, that I breed up to be a countess (Heaven bless her,) in spite of her mother's teeth."—"And how old, pray," said the Squire of the Wood, "may this same young lady countess be?"—"Why, she is about fifteen," answered Sancho, "a little over or a little under; but she is as tall as a pike, as fresh as an April morning, and strong as a porter."—"With these parts," quoth the other, "she may set up not only for a countess, but for one of the wood-nymphs! Ah, the young buxom whore's brood! What a spring the mettlesome quean will have with her!"—"My daughter is no whore," quoth Sancho, in a grumbling tone, "and her mother was an honest woman before her: and they shall be honest, by heaven's blessing, while I live and do well: So, sir, pray keep your tongue between your teeth, or speak as you ought. Methinks your master should have taught you better manners; for knights-errant are the very pink of courtesy."

"Alas," quoth the Squire of the Wood, "how you are mistaken! how little you know the way of praising people now-a-days! Have you never observed when any gentleman at a bull-feast gives the bull a home thrust with his lance, or when any body behaves himself cleverly upon any occasion, the people will cry out, What a brisk son of a whore that is! a clever dog I will warrant him. So what seems to be slander, in that sense is notable commendation: And be advised by me, don't think those children worth the owning, who won't do that which may make their parents be commended in that fashion."—"Nay, if it be so," quoth Sancho, "I will disown them if they don't; and henceforth you may call my wife and daughters all the whores and bawds you can think on, and welcome; for they do a thousand things that deserve all these fine names. Heaven send me once more to see them, and deliver me out of this mortal sin of squire-erranting, which I have been drawn into a second time by the wicked bait of a hundred ducats, which the devil threw in my own way in Sierra Morena, and which he still haunts me with, and brings before my eyes here and there and every where. Oh that plaguy purse, it is still running in my head;

methinks I am counting such another over and over! Now I hug it, now I carry it home, now I am buying land with it; now I let leases, now I am receiving my rents, and live like a prince! Thus I pass away the time, and this lulls me on to drudge on to the end of the chapter, with this dunder-headed master of mine, who, to my knowledge, is more a madman than a knight."

"Truly," said the Squire of the Wood, "this makes the proverb true, covetousness breaks the sack. And now you talk of madmen, I think my master is worse than yours; for he is one of those, of whom the proverb says, fools will be meddling; and who meddles with another man's business, milks his cows into a sieve. In searching after another knight's wits, he loses his own; and hunts up and down for that, which may make him rue the finding."—"And is not the poor man in love?" quoth Sancho.—"Ay, marry," said the other, "and with one Casildea de Vandalia, one of the oddest pieces in the world; she will neither roast nor boil, and is neither fish, flesh, nor good red-herring. But that is not the thing that plagues his noddle now. He has some other crotchets in his crown, and you will hear more of it ere long."—"There

is no way so smooth," quoth Sancho, "but it has a hole or rub in it to make a body stumble. In some houses they boil beans, and in mine are whole kettles full. So madness has more need of good attendants than wisdom. But if this old saying be true, that it lightens sorrow to have companions in our grief, you are the fittest to comfort me; you serve one fool and I another."—"My master," quoth the Squire of the Wood, "is more stout than foolish, but more knave than either."—"Mine is not like yours then," quoth Sancho, "he has not one grain of knavery in him; he is as dull as an old cracked pitcher, hurts no body, does all the good he can to every body; a child may persuade him it is night at noon-day; and he is so simple that I cannot help loving him, with all my heart and soul, and cannot leave him, in spite of all his follies."—"Have a care, brother," said the Squire of the Wood, "when the blind leads the blind both may fall into the ditch. It is better to wheel about fair and softly, and steal home again to our own fire-sides; for those who follow their nose are often led into a stink."

Here the Squire of the Wood observing that Sancho spit very often and very dry, "I fancy, brother," said he, "that our tongues stick to

the palates of our mouths with talking; but to cure that disease I have something that hangs to the pommel of my saddle, as good as ever was tipped over tongue."—Then he went and took down a leather bottle of wine, and a cold pye, at least half a yard long; which is no fiction, for Sancho himself, when he laid his hands on it, took it rather for a baked goat than a kid, though it was indeed but an overgrown rabbit. "What," said Sancho, at the sight, "did you bring this too abroad with you?"—"What d'ye think?" said the other: "Do you take me for one of your fresh-water squires? I'd have you know, I carry as good provisions at my horse's crupper, as any general upon his march."

Sancho did not stay for an invitation, but fell to in the dark, cramming down morsels as big as his fist. "Ay, marry, sir," said he, "you are a squire every inch of you, a true and trusty, round and sound, noble and free-hearted squire. This good cheer is a proof of it, which I do not say jumped hither by witchcraft; but one would almost think so. Now here sits poor wretched I, that have nothing in my knapsack but a crust of cheese, so hard, a giant might break his grinders in't, and a few acorns, walnuts and filberds; a shame on my master's

niggardly temper, and his cursed maggot, in fancying that all knights-errant must live on a little dried fruit and sallads!"—"Well, well, brother," replied the Squire of the Wood, "our masters may diet themselves by rules of chivalry, if they please; your thistles, and your herbs and roots, do not at all agree with my stomach; I must have good meat, i'faith! and this bottle here still at hand at the pommel of my saddle. It is my joy, my life, the comfort of my soul; I hug and kiss it every moment, and now recommend it to you as the best friend in the world."

Sancho took the bottle, and rearing it to his thirsty lips, with his eyes fixed upon the stars, kept himself in that happy contemplation for a quarter of an hour together. At last, when he had taken his draught, with a deep groan, a nod on one side, and a cunning leer, "O! the son of a whore! What a rare and catholic bub this is!"—"Oh ho!" quoth the Squire of the Wood, "have I caught you at your son of a whore! Did not I tell you, that it was a way of commending a thing?"—"I knock under," quoth Sancho, "and own it is no dishonour to call one a son of a whore, when we mean to praise him. But now, by the remembrance of her you love best, prithee tell me, is not this

your right Ciudad Real* wine?"—"Thou hast a rare palate," answered the Squire of the Wood; "it is the very same, and of a good age too."—"I thought so," said Sancho; "but is it not strange now, that turn me but loose among a parcel of wines, I shall find the difference? Adad! Sir, I no sooner clap my nose to a taster of wine, but I can tell the place, the grape, the flavour, the age, the strength, and all the qualities of the parcel: And all this is natural to me, sir, for I had two relations by the father's side that were the nicest tasters that were known of a long time in La Mancha; of which two I will relate you a story that makes good what I said. It fell out on a time, that some wine was drawn fresh out of a hog's-head, and given to these same friends of mine to taste; and they were asked their opinions of the condition, the quality, the goodness, the badness of the wine, and all that. The one tried it with the tip of his tongue, the other only smelled it; the first said the wine tasted of iron; the second said, it rather had a tang of goat's leather. The vintner swore his vessel was clean, and the wine neat, and so pure that it could have no taste of any such thing, Well, time ran on, the wine was sold, and

* Ciudad Real, is a city of Spain, noted for good wine.

when the vessel came to be emptied, what do you think, sir, was found in the cask? A little key, with a bit of leathern thong tied to it. Now, judge you by this, whether he that comes of such a generation, has not reason to understand wine?"—"More reason than to understand adventures," answered the other: "Therefore, since we have enough, let us not trouble ourselves to look after more, but e'en jog home to our little cots, where heaven will find us, if it be its will."—"I intend," said Sancho, "to wait on my master till we come to Saragosa, but then I will turn over a new leaf."

To conclude: The two friendly squires having talked and drank, and held out almost as long as their bottle, it was high time that sleep should lay their tongues, and assuage their thirst, for to quench it was impossible. Accordingly they had no sooner filled their bellies, but they fell fast asleep, both keeping their hold on their almost empty bottle. Where we shall for a while leave them to their rest, and see what passed between their masters.