

CHAPTER XIV

A CONTINUATION OF THE ADVENTURE OF THE
KNIGHT OF THE WOOD

MANY were the discourses that passed between Don Quixote and the Knight of the Wood: Amongst the rest, "You must know, Sir Knight," said the latter, "that by the appointment of fate, or rather by my own choice, I became enamoured of the peerless Casildea de Vandalia. I call her peerless, because she is singular in the greatness of her stature, as well as in that of her state and beauty. But this lady has been pleased to take no other notice of my honourable passion, than employing me in many perilous adventures, like Hercules's step-mother: still promising me, after I had put an happy end to one, that the performance of the next should put me in possession of my desires. But after a succession of numberless labours, I do not know which of her commands will be the last, and will crown my lawful wishes. Once, by her particular injunction, I

challenged that famous giantess La Giralda* of Seville, who is as strong and undaunted as one that is made of brass, and who, without changing place, is the most changeable and inconstant woman in the world; I went, I saw, and overcame: I made her stand still, and fixed her in a constant point, for the space of a whole week; no wind having blown in the skies during all that time but the north. Another time she enjoined me to remove the ancient stones of the sturdy bulls of Guisando; † a task more suitable to the arms of porters than those of knights. Then she commanded me to descend and dive into the cavern or den of Cabra, ‡ (a terrible and unheard of attempt) and to bring her an account of all the wonders in that dismal profundity. I stopped the motion of La Giralda, I weighed the bulls of Guisando, and with a precipitated fall, plunged and brought to light the darkest secrets of Cabra's black abyss. But still, ah! still my hopes are dead. How dead? How, because her disdain still lives, lives to enjoin me new labours, new exploits. For, lastly, she has

* Giralda is a brass statue, on a steeple in Seville; which serves instead of a weathercock.

† The bulls of Guisando are two vast statues remaining in that town ever since the time of the Romans. Supposed to be set up by Metellus.

‡ A place like some of the caverns in the Peak in Derbyshire.

ordered me to traverse the remotest provinces of Spain, and exact a confession from all the knights-errant that roam about the land, that her beauty alone excels that of all other women, and that I am the most valiant and most enamoured knight in the world. I have already journeyed over the greatest part of Spain on this expedition, and overcome many knights who had the temerity to contradict my assertion: But the perfection of my glory, is the result of my victory over the renowned Don Quixote de la Mancha, whom I conquered in single combat, and compelled to submit his Dulcinea's to my Casildea's beauty. And now I reckon the wandering knights of the whole universe, all vanquished by my prowess: Their fame, their glory, and their honours being all vested in this great Don Quixote, who had before made them the spoils of his valorous arm; though now they must attend the triumphs of my victory, which is the greater, since the reputation of the victor rises in proportion to that of the vanquished; and all the latter's laurels are transferred to me."

Don Quixote was amazed to hear the knight run on at this rate, and had the lie ready at his tongue's end to give him a thousand times; but designing to make him own his falsity

with his own mouth, he strove to contain his choler; and arguing the matter very calmly, "Sir Knight," said he, "that your victories have extended over all the knights in Spain, and perhaps over the whole world, I will not dispute; but that you have vanquished Don Quixote de la Mancha, you must give me leave to doubt: It might be somebody like him; though he is a person whom but very few can resemble."—"What do ye mean?" answered the Knight of the Wood: "By yon spangled canopy of the skies, I fought Don Quixote hand to hand, vanquished him, and made him submit; he is a tall wither-faced, leathern-jaw fellow, scragged, grizzle-haired, hawk-nosed, and wears long, black, lank mustachios: He is distinguished in the field by the title of the Knight of the Woeful Figure: He has for his squire one Sancho Panza, a labouring man; he bestrides and manages that far-famed courser Rozinante; and has for the mistress of his affection, one Dulcinea del Toboso, sometimes called Aldonsa Lorenzo; as mine, whose name was Casildea, and who is of Andalusia, is now distinguished by the denomination of Casildea de Vandalia; and, if all these convincing marks be not sufficient to prove this truth, I wear a sword that shall force even

incredulity to credit it."—"Not so fast, good Sir Knight," said Don Quixote; "pray attend to what I shall deliver upon this head: You must know that this same Don Quixote is the greatest friend I have in the world; insomuch, that I may say I love him as well as I do myself. Now the tokens that you have described him by, are so agreeable to his person and circumstances, that one would think he should be the person you subdued. On the other hand, I am convinced by the more powerful argument of undeniable sense, that it cannot be he. But thus far I will allow you, as there are many enchanters that are his enemies, especially one whose malice hourly persecutes him, perhaps one of them has assumed his likeness, thus by a counterfeit conquest, to defraud him of the glory contracted by his signal chivalry over all the universe. In confirmation of which I can farther tell you, it is but two days ago that these envious magicians transformed the figure and person of the beautiful Dulcinea del Toboso into the base and sordid likeness of a rustic wench. And if this will not convince you of your error, behold Don Quixote himself in person, that here stands ready to maintain his words with his arms, either a-foot or on horseback, or

in what other manner you may think convenient."

As he said this, up he started, and laid his hand on his sword, expecting the motions and resolutions of the Knight of the Wood. But with a great deal of calmness, "Sir," said he, "a good pay-master grudges no surety; he that could once vanquish Don Quixote when transformed, needs not fear him in his proper shape. But since darkness is not proper for the achievements of knights, but rather for robbers and ruffians, let us expect the morning light, that the sun may be witness of our valour. The conditions of our combat shall be, That the conquered shall be wholly at the mercy of the conqueror, who shall dispose of him at discretion; provided always he abuses not his power, by commanding any thing unworthy the honour of knighthood."—"Content," said Don Quixote, "I like these terms very well."—With that they both went to look out their squires, whom they found snoring very soundly in just the same posture as when they first fell asleep. They roused them up, and ordered them to get their steeds ready; for the first rays of the rising sun must behold them engage in a bloody and unparalleled single combat.

This news thunder-struck Sancho, and put

him to his wits-end for his master's danger; having heard the Knight of the Wood's courage strangely magnified by his squire. However, without the least reply, he went with his companion to seek their beasts, who by this time had smelled out one another, and were got lovingly both together.—“Well, friend,” said the squire to Sancho, as they went, “I find our masters are to fight; so you and I are like to have a brush too; for it is the way among us Andalusians, not to let the seconds stand idly by, with arms across, while their friends are at it.”—“This,” said Sancho, “may be a custom in your country; but let me tell you, it is a damned custom, Sir Squire, and none but ruffians and bloody-minded fellows would stand up for it. But there is no such practice among squires-errant, else my master would have minded me of it ere this; for he has all the laws of knight-errantry by heart. But suppose there be such a law, I will not obey it, that is flat: I will rather pay the penalty that is laid on such peaceable squires: I do not think the fine can be above two pounds of wax,* and that will cost me less than the lint would to make tents

* A custom in Spain, of fining small offenders to pay a small quantity of wax for the use of some church.

for my skull, which methinks is already cleft down to my chin. Besides, how would you have me fight? I have ne'er a sword, nor ever wore any.”

“No, matter,” quoth the Squire of the Wood, “I have a cure for that sore. I have got here a couple of linen-bags, both of a size; you shall take one, and I the other, and so we will let drive at one another with these weapons, and fight at bag-blows.”—“Ay, ay, with all my heart,” quoth Sancho; “this will dust our jackets purely, and won't hurt our skins.”—“Not so neither,” replied the Squire of the Wood; “for we will put half a dozen of smooth stones into each bag, that the wind may not blow them to and fro, and they may play the better, and so we may brush one another's coats cleverly, and yet do ourselves no great hurt.”—“Body of my father!” quoth Sancho, “what soft sable fur, what dainty carded cotton and lamb's-wool he crams into the bags, to hinder our making pap of our brains, and touch-wood of our bones! But I say again and again, I am not in a humour to fight, though they were only full of silk balls. Let our masters fight, and hear on't in another world; but let us drink and live while we may, for why should we strive to end our lives

before their time and season; and be so eager to gather the plums that will drop of themselves when they are ripe?"—"Well," said the Squire of the Wood, "for all that, we must fight half an hour or so."—"Not a minute," replied Sancho: "I han't the heart to quarrel with a gentleman with whom I have been eating and drinking. I an't angry with you in the least, and were I to be hanged for it, I could never fight in cold blood."—"Nay, if that be all," said the Squire of the Wood, "you shall be angry enough, I'll warrant you; for before we go to it, d'ye see, I'll walk up very handsomely to you, and lend your worship three or four sound slaps o' the chaps, and knock you down; which will be sure to waken your choler, though it slept as sound as a dormouse."—"Nay then," quoth Sancho, "I have a trick for your trick, if that be all, and you shall have as good as you bring; for I will take me a pretty middling lever, (you understand me,) and before you can awaken my choler, will I lay yours asleep so fast, that it shall never wake more, unless in the other world, where it is well known, I am one who will let no man's fist dust my nose. Let every man look before he leaps. Many come for wool, that go home shorn. No man knows

what another can do: So, friend, let every man's choler sleep with him: Blessed are the peace-makers, and cursed are the peace-breakers. A baited cat may turn as fierce as a lion. Who knows then what I, that am a man, may turn to, if I am provoked? Take it, therefore, for a warning from me, squire, that all the mischief you may be hatching in this manner shall lie at your door."—"Well," said the other, "it will be day anon, and then we shall see what is to be done."

And now a thousand sorts of pretty birds began to warble in the trees, and with their various cheerful notes seemed to salute the fresh Aurora, who then displayed her rising beauties through the gates and arches of the east, and gently shook from her dewy locks a shower of liquid pearls, sprinkling and enriching the verdant meads with that reviving treasure, which seemed to spring and drop from the bending leaves. The willows distilled their delicious manna, the rivulets fondly murmured, the fountains smiled, the woods were cheered, the fields enriched, at her approach. But no sooner the dawning light recalled distinction, than the first thing that presented itself to Sancho's view, was the Squire of the Wood's nose, which was