

The gentleman, hearing Don Quixote express himself in this manner, was struck with so much admiration, that he began to lose the bad opinion he had conceived of his understanding. As for Sancho, who did not much relish this fine talk, he took an opportunity to slink aside in the middle of it, and went to get a little milk of some shepherds that were hard by keeping their sheep. Now when the gentleman was going to renew his discourse, mightily pleased with these judicious observations, Don Quixote lifting up his eyes, perceived a waggon on the road, set round with little flags, that appeared to be the king's colours; and believing it to be some new adventure, he called out to Sancho to bring him his helmet. Sancho, hearing him call aloud, left the shepherds, and, clapping his heels vigorously to Dapple's sides, came trotting up to his master, to whom there happened a most terrifying and desperate adventure.

CHAPTER XVII

WHERE YOU WILL FIND SET FORTH THE HIGHEST AND UTMOST PROOF THAT GREAT DON QUIXOTE EVER GAVE, OR COULD GIVE, OF HIS INCREDIBLE COURAGE; WITH THE SUCCESSFUL ISSUE OF THE ADVENTURE OF THE LIONS

THE history relates, that Sancho was chaffering with the shepherds for some curds, when Don Quixote called to him; and finding that his master was in haste, he did not know what to do with them, nor what to bring them in; yet loth to lose his purchase (for he had already paid for them) he bethought himself at last of clapping them into the helmet, where having them safe, he went to know his master's pleasure. As soon as he came up to him, "Give me that helmet, friend," said the knight, "for if I understand any thing of adventures, I descry one yonder that obliges me to arm."

The gentleman in green, hearing this, looked about to see what was the matter, but could perceive nothing but a waggon, which made towards them; and by the little flags

about it, he judged it to be one of the king's carriages, and so he told Don Quixote. But his head was too much possessed with notions of adventures to give any credit to what the gentleman said; "Sir," answered he, "forewarned, fore-armed; a man loses nothing by standing on his guard. I know by experience, that I have enemies visible and invisible, and I cannot tell when nor where, nor in what shape they may attack me." At the same time he snatched the helmet out of Sancho's hands, before he could discharge it of the curds, and clapped it on his head, without examining the contents. Now the curds being squeezed between his bare crown and the iron, the whey began to run all about his face and beard; which so surprised him, that, calling to Sancho in great disorder, "What's this," cried he, "Sancho! What's the matter with me? Sure my skull is growing soft, or my brains are melting, or else I sweat from head to foot! But if I do, I am sure it is not for fear. This certainly must be a very dreadful adventure that is approaching. Give me something to wipe me if thou can'st, for I am almost blinded with the torrent of sweat."

Sancho did not dare to say a word, but giving him a cloth, blessed his stars that his

master had not found him out. Don Quixote dried himself, and taking off the helmet to see what it should be that felt so cold on his head, perceiving some white stuff, and putting it to his nose, soon found what it was. "Now, by the life of my lady Dulcinea del Toboso," cried he, "thou hast put curds in my helmet, vile traitor, and unmannerly squire!"—"Nay," replied Sancho cunningly, and keeping his countenance, "if they be curds, good your worship, give them me hither, and I will eat them: But hold, now I think on it, the devil eat them for me; for he himself must have put them there. What! I offer to do so beastly a trick! Do you think I have no more manners? As sure as I am alive, sir, I have got my enchanters too, that owe me a grudge, and plague me as a limb of your worship; and I warrant have put that nasty stuff there on purpose to set you against me, and make you fall foul on my bones. But I hope they have missed their aim this time, i'troth! My master is a wise man, and must needs know that I had neither curds nor milk, nor any thing of that kind; and if I had met with curds, I should sooner have put them in my belly than his helmet."—"Well," said Don Quixote, "there may be something in that."

The gentleman had observed these passages, and stood amazed, but especially at what immediately followed; for the knight-errant having put on his helmet again, fixed himself well in the stirrups, tried whether his sword were loose enough in his scabbard, and rested his lance. "Now," cried he, "come what will come: here am I, who dare encounter the devil himself *in propria persona*." By this time the waggon was come up with them, attended only by the carter, mounted on one of the mules, and another man that sat on the forepart of the waggon. Don Quixote making up to them, "Whither go ye, friends?" said he. "What waggon is this? What do you convey in it? And what is the meaning of these colours?"—"The waggon is mine," answered the waggoner: "I have there two brave lions, which the general of Oran is sending to the king our master, and these colours are to let the people understand that what goes here belongs to him."—"And are the lions large?" inquired Don Quixote. "Very large," answered the man in the forepart of the waggon: "There never came bigger from Afric into Spain. I am their keeper," added he, "and have had charge of several others, but I never saw the like of these before. In the foremost

cage is a he lion, and in the other behind, a lioness. By this time they are cruel hungry, for they have not eaten to-day; therefore, pray, good sir, ride out of the way, for we must make haste to get to the place where we intend to feed them."—"What!" said Don Quixote, with a scornful smile, "lion whelps against me! Against me those puny beasts! And at this time of day? Well, I will make those gentlemen, that sent their lions this way, know whether I am a man to be scared with lions. Get off, honest fellow; and since you are the keeper, open their cages, and let them both out; for, maugre and in despite of those enchanters that have sent them to try me, I will make the creatures know, in the midst of this very field, who Don Quixote de la Mancha is."—"So," thought the gentleman to himself, "now has our poor knight discovered what he is; the curds, I find, have softened his skull, and mellowed his brains."

While he was making this reflection, Sancho came up to him, and begged him to dissuade his master from his rash attempt. "O, good dear sir!" cried he, "for pity-sake, hinder my master from falling upon these lions, by all means, or we shall be torn a-pieces."—"Why," said the gentleman, "is your master so arrant

a madman then, that you should fear he would set upon such furious beasts?"—"Ah, sir!" said Sancho, "he is not mad, but woundy venturesome."—"Well," replied the gentleman, "I will take care there shall be no harm done;" and with that, advancing up to Don Quixote, who was urging the lion-keeper to open the cage, "Sir," said he, "knights-errant ought to engage in adventures from which there may be some hopes of coming off with safety, but not in such as are altogether desperate; for that courage which borders on temerity, is more like madness than true fortitude. Besides, these lions are not come against you, but sent as a present to the king, and therefore, it is not the best way to detain them, or stop the waggon."—"Pray, sweet sir," replied Don Quixote, "go and amuse yourself with your tame partridges and your ferrets, and leave every one to his own business. This is mine, and I know best whether these worthy lions are sent against me or no." Then turning about to the keeper, "Sirrah! you rascal you," said he, "either open your cages immediately, or I vow to God, I will pin thee to the waggon with this lance."—"Good sir," cried the waggoner, seeing this strange apparition in armour so resolute,

"for mercy's sake, do but let me take out our mules first, and get out of harm's way with them as fast as I can, before the lions get out; for if they should once set upon the poor beasts, I should be undone for ever; for alas! that cart and they are all I have in the world to get a living with."—"Thou man of little faith," said Don Quixote, "take them out quickly then, and go with them where thou wilt; though thou shalt presently see that thy precaution was needless, and thou mightest have spared thy pains."

The waggoner on this made all the haste he could to take out his mules, while the keeper cried out as loud as he was able, "Bear witness, all ye that are here present, that it is against my will I am forced to open the cages and let loose the lions; and that I protest to this gentleman here, that he shall be answerable for all the mischief and damage they may do; together with the loss of my salary and fees. And now, sirs, shift for yourselves as fast as you can, before I open the cages: For, as for myself, I know the lions will do me no harm." Once more the gentleman tried to dissuade Don Quixote from doing so mad a thing; telling him, that he tempted heaven, in exposing himself without reason to so great a

danger. To this Don Quixote made no other answer, but that he knew what he had to do. "Consider, however, what you do," replied the gentleman, "for it is most certain that you are very much mistaken."—"Well, sir," said Don Quixote, "if you care not to be spectator of an action, which you think is like to be tragical, e'en put spurs to your mare, and provide for your safety." Sancho, hearing this, came up to his master with tears in his eyes, and begged him not to go about this fearful undertaking, to which the adventure of the windmills, and the fullingmills, and all the brunts he had ever borne in his life, were but children's play. "Good your worship," cried he, "do but mind, here is no enchantment in the case, nor any thing like it. Alack-a-day! sir, I peeped even now through the grates of the cage, and I am sure I saw the claw of a true lion, and such a claw as makes me think the lion that owns it must be as big as a mountain." "Alas, poor fellow!" said Don Quixote, "thy fear will make him as big as half the world. Retire, Sancho, and leave me, and if I chance to fall here, thou knowest our old agreement; repair to Dulcinea—I say no more." To this he added some expressions, which cut off all hopes of his giving over his mad design.

The gentleman in green would have opposed him; but, considering the other much better armed, and that it was not prudence to encounter a madman, he even took the opportunity, while Don Quixote was storming at the keeper, to march off with his mare, as Sancho did with Dapple, and the carter with his mules, every one making the best of their way to get as far as they could from the waggon, before the lions were let loose. Poor Sancho at the same time made sad lamentations for his master's death; for he gave him for lost, not questioning but the lions had already got him into their clutches. He cursed his ill fortune, and the hour he came again to his service; but for all his wailing and lamenting, he punched on poor Dapple, to get as far as he could from the lions. The keeper, perceiving the persons who fled to be at a good distance, fell to arguing and entreating Don Quixote as he had done before. But the knight told him again, that all his reasons and entreaties were but in vain, and bid him say no more, but immediately despatch.

Now while the keeper took time to open the foremost cage, Don Quixote stood debating with himself, whether he had best make his attack on foot or on horseback; and upon