

“judge you of your knight-errantry, and don’t meddle with other men’s fears, for I am as pretty a fearer of Heaven as any of my neighbours; and so let me despatch this *scum* (and much good may it do thee, honest Sancho); consider, sir, we must give an account for our idle words, another day; I must have the other pluck at the kettle.” With that he attacked it with so courageous an appetite, that he sharpened his master’s, who would certainly have kept him company, had he not been prevented by that which necessity obliges me to relate this instant.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PROGRESS OF CAMACHO’S WEDDING, WITH
OTHER DELIGHTFUL ACCIDENTS

WHILE Don Quixote and Sancho were discoursing, as the former chapter has told you, they were interrupted by a great noise of joy and acclamations raised by the horsemen, who, shouting and galloping, went to meet the young couple, who, surrounded by a thousand instruments and devices, were coming to the harbour, accompanied by the curate, their relations, and all the better sort of the neighbourhood, set out in their holiday clothes. “Hey-dey!” quoth Sancho, as soon as he saw the bride, “what have we here? Adzookers, this is no country lass, but a fine court lady, all in her silks and satins, by the mass! Look, look ye, master, see if, instead of glass necklaces, she have not on fillets of rich coral; and instead of green serge of Cuencha, a thirty-piled velvet. I’ll warrant her lacing is white linen too; but hold, may I never squint if it be not satin! Bless us! see what

rings she has on her fingers; no jet, no pewter baubles, pure beaten gold, as I am a sinner, and set with pearls too! if every pearl be not as white as a syllabub, and each of them as precious as an eye! How she is bedizened, and glistens from top to toe! And now yonder again, what fine long locks the young slut has got! if they be not false, I never saw longer in my born days. Ah, jade! what a fine stately person she is! What a many trinkets and glaring gewgaws are dangling in her hair and about her neck? Cudsniggers! she puts me in mind of an over-loaden date-tree. In my conscience! she is a juicy bit, a mettled wench, and might well pass muster in Flanders. Well! I say no more, but happy is the man that has thee!"

Don Quixote could not help smiling to hear Sancho set forth the bride after his rustic way, though at the same time he beheld her with admiration, thinking her the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, except his mistress Dulcinea. However the fair Quiteria appeared somewhat pale, probably with the ill rest which brides commonly have the night before their marriage, in order to dress themselves to advantage. There was a large scaffold erected on the side of the meadow,

and adorned with carpets and boughs, for the marriage ceremony, and the more convenient prospect of the shows and entertainments.

The procession was just arrived to this place, when they heard a piercing outcry, and a voice calling out, "Stay, rash and hasty people, stay!" Upon which all turning about, they saw a person coming after them in a black coat, bordered with crimson powdered with flames of fire. On his head he wore a garland of mournful cypress, and a large truncheon in his hand, headed with an iron spike. As soon as he drew near, they knew him to be the gallant Basil, and the whole assembly began to fear some mischief would ensue, seeing him come thus unlooked for, and with such an outcry and behaviour. He came up tired and panting before the bride and bridegroom; then leaning on his truncheon, he fixed his eyes on Quiteria, turning pale and trembling at the same time, and with a fearful hollow voice, "Too well you know," cried he, "unkind Quiteria, that, by the ties of truth, and law of that Heaven which we all revere, while I have life you cannot be married to another. You may remember too, that all the while I stayed, hoping that time and industry might better

my fortune, and render me a match more equal to you, I never offered to transcend the bounds of honourable love, by soliciting favours to the prejudice of your virtue. But you, forgetting all the ties between us, are going now to break them, and give my right to another, whose large possessions, though they can procure him all other blessings, I had never envied, could they not have purchased you. But no more. The fates have ordained it, and I will further their design, by removing this unhappy obstacle out of your way. Live, rich Camacho, live happy with the ungrateful Quiteria many years, and let the poor, the miserable Basil die, whose poverty has clipped the wings of his felicity, and laid him in the grave!"

Saying these last words, he drew out of his supposed truncheon a short tuck that was concealed in it, and setting the hilt of it to the ground, he fell upon the point in such a manner that it came out all bloody at his back, the poor wretch weltering on the ground in blood. His friends, strangely confounded by this sad accident, ran to help him, and Don Quixote, forsaking Rozinante, made haste to his assistance, and taking him up in his arms, found there was still life in him. They

would fain have drawn the sword out of his body, but the curate urged it was not convenient till he had made confession, and prepared himself for death, which would immediately attend the effusion of blood, upon pulling the tuck out of his body.

While they were debating this point, Basil seemed to come a little to himself, and calling on the bride, "Oh! Quiteria," said he, with a faint and doleful voice, "now, now, in this last and departing minute of my life, even in this dreadful agony of death, would you but vouchsafe to give me your hand, and own yourself my wife, I should think myself rewarded for the torments I endure; and, pleased to think this desperate deed made me yours, though but for a moment, I would die contented." The curate, hearing this, very earnestly recommended to him the care of his soul's health, which at the present juncture was more proper than any gratification of his outward man; that his time was but short, and he ought to be very earnest with Heaven, in imploring its mercy and forgiveness for all his sins, but especially for this last desperate action. To which Basil answered, "that he could think of no happiness till Quiteria yielded to be his; but if she would do it, that satis-

faction would calm his spirits, and dispose him to confess himself heartily."

Don Quixote, hearing this, cried out aloud, "that Basil's demand was just and reasonable, and Signior Camacho might as honourably receive her as the worthy Basil's widow, as if he had received her at her father's hands. Say but the word, madam," continued he, "pronounce it once to save a man from despair and damnation; you will not be long bound to it, since the nuptial bed of this bridegroom must be the grave." Camacho stood all this while strangely confounded, till at last he was prevailed on, by the repeated importunities of Basil's friends, to consent that Quiteria should humour the dying man, knowing her own happiness would thereby be deferred but a few minutes longer. Then they all bent their entreaties to Quiteria, some with tears in their eyes, others with all the engaging arguments their pity could suggest. She stood a long time inexorable, and did not return any answer, till at last the curate came to her, and bid her resolve what she would do, for Basil was just ready to give up the ghost. But then the poor virgin, trembling and dismayed, without speaking a word, came to poor Basil, who lay gasping for breath, with his eyes fixed

in his head as if he were just expiring; she kneeled down by him, and with the most manifest signs of grief beckoned to him for his hand. Then Basil opening his eyes, and fixing them in a languishing posture on hers, "Oh! Quiteria," said he, "your heart at last relents when your pity comes too late. Thy arms are now extended to relieve me, when those of death draw me to their embraces; and they, alas! are much too strong for thine. All I desire of thee, O fatal beauty, is this, let not that fair hand deceive me now, as it has done before, but confess, that what you do is free and voluntary, without constraint, or in compliance to any one's commands; declare me openly thy true and lawful husband: thou wilt not sure dissemble with one in death, and deal falsely with his departing soul, that all his life has been true to thee?"

In the midst of all this discourse he fainted away, and all the by-standers thought him gone. The poor Quiteria, with a blushing modesty, a kind of violence upon herself, took him by the hand, and with a great deal of emotion, "No force," said she, "could ever work upon my will to this degree; therefore believe it purely my own free will and inclination, that I here publicly declare you my only

lawful husband: here is my hand in pledge, and I expect yours as freely in return, if your pains and this sudden accident have not yet bereft you off all sense."—"I give it you," said Basil, with all the presence of mind imaginable, "and here I own myself thy husband."—"And I thy wife," said she, "whether thy life be long, or whether from my arms they bear thee this instant to the grave."—"Methinks," quoth Sancho, "this young man talks too much for a man in his condition; pray advise him to leave off his wooing, and mind his soul's health. I am afraid his death is more in his tongue than between his teeth." Now when Basil and Quiteria had thus plighted their faith to each other, while yet their hands were joined together, the tender-hearted curate, with tears in his eyes, poured on them both the nuptial blessing, beseeching heaven, at the same time, to have mercy on the new-married man's soul, and in a manner mixing the burial service with the matrimonial.

As soon as the benediction was pronounced, up starts Basil briskly from the ground, and with an unexpected activity whips the sword out of his body, and caught his dear Quiteria close in his arms. All the spectators stood amazed, and some of the simpler sort stuck

not to cry out, "A miracle, a miracle!"—"No, no," cried Basil, "no miracle, no miracle, but a stratagem, a stratagem." The curate, more astonished and concerned than all the rest, came with both his hands to feel the wound, and discovered that the sword had no where passed through the cunning Basil's body, but only through a tin pipe full of blood artfully fitted to his body, and, as it was afterwards known, so prepared, that the blood could not congeal. In short, the curate, Camacho, and the company, found they had all been egregiously imposed upon. As for the bride, she was so far from being displeased, that hearing it urged that the marriage could not stand good in law, because it was fraudulent and deceitful, she publicly declared that she again confirmed it to be just, and by the free consent of both parties.

Camacho, and his friends, judging by this, that the trick was premeditated, and that she was privy to the plot, enraged at this horrid disappointment, had recourse to a stronger argument, and, drawing their swords, set furiously on Basil, in whose defence almost as many were immediately unsheathed. Don Quixote immediately mounting, with his lance couched, and covered with his shield, led the van of Basil's party, and falling in with the

enemy, charged clear through the gross of their battalia. Sancho, who never liked any dangerous work, resolved to stand neuter, and so retired under the walls of the mighty pot whence he had got the precious skimmings, thinking that would be respected whatever side gained the battle.

Don Quixote, addressing himself to Camacho's party, "Hold, gentlemen," cried he, "it is not just thus with arms to redress the injuries of love. Love and war are the same thing, and stratagems and policy are as allowable in the one as in the other. Quiteria was designed for Basil, and he for her, by the unalterable decrees of Heaven. Camacho's riches may purchase him a bride, and more content elsewhere, and those whom Heaven has joined let no man put asunder. Basil had but this one lamb, and the lamb of his bosom. Let none therefore offer to take his single delight from him, though presuming on his power; for here I solemnly declare, that he who first attempts it must pass through me, and this lance through him." At which he shook his lance in the air with so much vigour and dexterity, that he cast a sudden terror into those that beheld him, who did not know the threatening champion.

In short, Don Quixote's words, the good

curate's diligent meditation, together with Quiteria's inconstancy, brought Camacho to a truce; and he then discreetly considered, that since Quiteria loved Basil before marriage, it was probable she would love him afterwards, and that therefore he had more reason to thank Heaven for so good a riddance, than to repine at losing her. This thought, improved by some other considerations, brought both parties to a fair accommodation; and Camacho, to shew he did not resent the disappointment, blaming rather Quiteria's levity than Basil's policy, invited the whole company to stay, and take share of what he had provided. But Basil, whose virtues, in spite of his poverty, had secured him many friends, drew away part of the company to attend him and his bride to her own town; and among the rest Don Quixote, whom they all honoured as a person of extraordinary worth and bravery. Poor Sancho followed his master with a heavy heart; he could not be reconciled to the thoughts of turning his back so soon upon the good cheer and jollity at Camacho's feast, that lasted till night; and had a strange hankering after those dear flesh-pots of Egypt, which, though he left behind in reality, he yet carried along with him in mind. The beloved *scum*

which he had, that was nigh guttled already, made him view with sorrow the almost empty kettle, the dear casket where his treasure lay: So that stomaching mightily his master's defection from Camacho's feast, he sullenly paced on after Rozinante, very much out of humour, though he had just filled his belly.

CHAPTER XXII

AN ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT ADVENTURE OF MONTESINOS' CAVE, SITUATED IN THE HEART OF LA MANCHA, WHICH THE VALOROUS DON QUIXOTE SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED

THE new-married couple entertained Don Quixote very nobly, in acknowledgment of his readiness to defend their cause; they esteemed his wisdom equal to his valour, and thought him both a Cid in arms, and a Cicero in arts. Honest Sancho too, recruited himself to the purpose, during the three days his master stayed, and so came to his good humour again. Basil then informed them that Quiteria knew nothing of his stratagem; but being a pure device of his own, he had made some of his nearest friends acquainted with it, that they should stand by him if occasion were, and bring him off upon the discovery of the deceit.—“It deserves a handsomer name,” said Don Quixote, “since conducive to so good and honourable an end, as the marriage of a loving couple. By the way, sir, you must know that the greatest