

the show. Then all the audience having taken their places, Don Quixote, Sancho, the scholar, and the page, being preferred to the rest, the boy, who was the mouth of the motion, began a story, that shall be heard or seen by those who will take the pains to read or hear the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXVI

A PLEASANT ACCOUNT OF THE PUPPET-PLAY, WITH
OTHER VERY GOOD THINGS TRULY

THE Tyrians and the Trojans were all silent; that is, the ears of all the spectators hung on the mouth of the interpreter of the show, when, in the first place, they heard a loud flourish of kettle-drums and trumpets within the machine, and then several discharges of artillery; which prelude being soon over, "Gentlemen," cried the boy, raising his voice, "we present you here with a true history, taken out of the chronicles of France, and the Spanish ballads, sung even by the boys about the streets, and in everybody's mouth; it tells you how Don Gayferos delivered his wife Melisandra, that was a prisoner among the Moors in Spain, in the city of Sansuena, now called Saragossa. Now, gallants, the first figure we present you with is Don Gayferos, playing at tables, according to the ballad:

Now Gayferos the live-long day,
Oh arrant shame, at draughts does play;
And, as at court most husbands do,
Forgets his lady fair and true.'

“Gentlemen, in the next place, mark that personage that peeps out there with a crown on his head, and a sceptre in his hand. It is the Emperor Charlemagne, the fair Melisandra’s reputed father, who, vexed at the idleness and negligence of his son-in-law, comes to chide him; and pray, observe with what passion and earnestness he rates him, as if he had a mind to lend him half-a-dozen sound raps over the pate with his sceptre; nay, some authors do not stick to tell ye he give him as many, and well laid on too. And after he had told him how his honour lay a-bleeding, till he had delivered his wife out of durance, among many other pithy sayings, ‘Look to it,’ quoth he to him as he went, ‘I will say no more.’ Mind how the emperor turns his back upon him, and how he leaves Don Gayferos nettled, and in the dumps. Now see how he starts up, and, in a rage, dings the tables one way, and whirls the men another; and, calling for his arms with all haste, borrows his cousin-german Orlando’s sword, Durindana, who withal offers to go along with him in this difficult adventure; but the valorous enraged knight will not let him, and says, he is able to deliver his wife himself, without his help, though they kept her down in the very centre of the earth. And now he is going

to put on his armour, in order to begin his journey.

“Now, gentlemen, cast your eyes upon yon tower; you are to suppose it one of the towers of the castle of Saragossa, now called the Aljferia. That lady, whom you see in the balcony there, in a Moorish habit, is the peerless Melisandra, that casts many a heavy look towards France, thinking of Paris and her husband, the only comfort in her imprisonment. But now!—silence, gentlemen, pray, silence! here is an accident wholly new, the like perhaps never heard of before. Don’t you see that Moor, who comes a-tiptoe, creeping and stealing along, with his finger in his mouth, behind Melisandra? Hear what a smack he gives on her sweet lips, and see how she spits, and wipes her mouth with her white smock-sleeve: see how she takes on, and tears her lovely hair for very madness, as if it were to blame this affront. Next, pray, observe that grave Moor that stands in the open gallery; that is Marsilius, the king of Sansuena, who, having been an eye-witness of the sauciness of the Moor, ordered him immediately to be apprehended, though his kinsman and great favourite; to have two hundred lashes given him; then to be carried through the city, with criers before to proclaim his

crime, the rods of justice behind. And look how all this is put in execution sooner almost than the fact is committed; for your Moors, ye must know, don't use any form of indictment as we do, nor yet have they any legal trials."

"Child, child," said Don Quixote, "go on directly with your story, and don't keep us here with your excursions and ramblings out of the road. I tell you there must be a formal process, and legal trial, to prove matters of fact."—"Boy," said the master from behind the show, "do as the gentleman bids you. Don't run so much upon flourishes, but follow your plain song, without venturing on counter-points, for fear of spoiling all."—"I will, sir," quoth the boy, and so proceeding: "Now, sirs, he that you see there a-horseback, wrapt up in the Gascoign cloak, is Don Gayferos himself, whom his wife, now revenged on the Moor for his impudence, seeing from the battlements of the tower, takes him for a stranger, and talks with him as such, according to the ballad,

'Quote Melisandra, if perchance,
Sir Traveller, you go for France,
For pity's sake, ask when you're there,
For Gayferos, my husband dear.'

"I omit the rest, not to tire you with a long story. It is sufficient that he makes himself known to her, as you may guess by the joy she shows; and, accordingly, now see how she lets herself down from the balcony, to come at her loving husband, and get behind him; but unhappily, alas! one of the skirts of her gown is caught upon one of the spikes of the balcony, and there she hangs and hovers in the air miserably, without being able to get down. But see how heaven is merciful, and sends relief in the greatest distress! Now Don Gayferos rides up to her, and, not fearing to tear her rich gown, lays hold on it, and at one pull brings her down; and then at one lift sets her astride upon his horse's crupper, bidding her to sit fast, and clap her arms about him, that she might not fall; for the Lady Melisandra was not used to that kind of riding.

"Observe now, gallants, how the horse neighs, and shows how proud he is of the burden of his brave master and fair mistress. Look now, how they turn their backs, and leave the city, and gallop it merrily away towards Paris. Peace be with you for a peerless couple of true lovers! may ye get safe and sound into your own country, without any lett or ill chance in your journey, and live as long

as Nestor, in peace and quietness among your friends and relations."—"Plainness, boy!" cried Master Peter, "none of your flights, I beseech you, for affectation is the devil."—The boy answered nothing, but going on: "Now, sirs," quoth he, "some of those idle people, that love to pry into everything, happened to spy Melisandra as she was making her escape, and ran presently and gave Marsilius notice of it: whereupon he straight commanded to sound an alarm; and now mind what a din and hurly-burly there is, and how the city shakes with the ring of the bells backwards in all the mosques!"—"There you are out, boy," said Don Quixote: "The Moors have no bells, they only use kettle-drums, and a kind of shaulms like our waits or hautboys; so that your ringing of bells in Sansuena is a mere absurdity, good Master Peter."—"Nay, sir," said Master Peter, giving over ringing, "if you stand upon these trifles with us, we shall never please you. Don't be so severe a critic: Are there not a thousand plays that pass with great success and applause, though they have many greater absurdities, and nonsense in abundance? On, boy, on, let there be as many impertinences as moats in the sun; no matter, so I get the money."—"Well said," answered Don Quixote.—"And now, sirs,"

quoth the boy, "observe what a vast company of glittering horse comes pouring out of the city, in pursuit of the Christian lovers; what a dreadful sound of trumpets, and clarions, and drums, and kettle-drums there is in the air. I fear they will overtake them, and then will the poor wretches be dragged along most barbarously at the tails of their horses, which would be sad indeed."

Don Quixote, seeing such a number of Moors, and hearing such an alarm, thought it high time to assist the flying lovers; and starting up, "It shall never be said while I live," cried he aloud, "that I suffered such a wrong to be done to so famous a knight and so daring a lover as Don Gayferos. Forbear then your unjust pursuit, ye base-born rascal! Stop, or prepare to meet my furious resentment!" Then drawing out his sword, to make good his threats, at one spring he gets to the show, and with a violent fury lays at the Moorish puppets, cutting and slashing in a most terrible manner; some he overthrows, and beheads others; maims this, and cleaves that in pieces. Among the rest of his merciless strokes, he thundered one down with such a mighty force, that had not Master Peter luckily ducked and squatted down, it had certainly chopped off his head as easily as

one might cut an apple.—“Hold, hold, sir,” cried the puppet-player, after the narrow escape, “hold for pity’s sake! What do you mean, sir? These are no real Moors that you cut and hack so, but poor harmless puppets made of paste-board. Think of what you do, you ruin me for ever. Oh that ever I was born! you have broke me quite.” But Don Quixote, without minding his words, doubled and redoubled his blows so thick, and laid about him so outrageously, that in less than two credos he had cut all the strings and wires, mangled the puppets, and spoiled and demolished the whole motion. King Marsilius was in a grievous condition. The Emperor Charlemagne’s head and crown were cleft in two. The whole audience was in a sad consternation. The ape scampered off to the top of the house. The scholar was frightened out of his wits; the page was very uneasy, and Sancho himself was in a terrible fright; for, as he swore after the hurricane was over, he had never seen his master in such a rage before.

The general rout of the puppets being over, Don Quixote’s fury began to abate; and with a more pacified countenance turning to the company, “Now,” said he, “I could wish all those incredulous persons here who slight

knight-errantry might receive conviction of their error, and behold undeniable proofs of the benefit of that function; for how miserable had been the condition of poor Don Gayferos and the fair Melisandra by this time, had I not been here and stood up in their defence! I make no question but those infidels would have apprehended them, and used them barbarously. Well, when all is done, long live knight-errantry; long let it live, I say, above all things whatsoever in this world!”—“Ay, ay,” said Master Peter in a doleful tone, “let it live long for me, so I may die; for why should I live so unhappy, as to say with King Roderigo,* ‘Yesterday I was lord of Spain, to-day have not a foot of land I can call mine?’ It is not half an hour, nay scarce a moment, since I had kings and emperors at command. I had horses in abundance, and chests and bags full of fine things; but now you see me a poor sorry undone man, quite and clean broke and cast down, and in short a mere beggar. What is worst of all, I have lost my ape too, who I am sure will make me sweat ere I catch him again; and all through the rash fury of this Sir Knight here, who they

* The last king of the Goths that reigned in Spain, conquered by the Moors.

say protects the fatherless, redresses wrongs, and does other charitable deeds, but has failed in all these good offices to miserable me, heaven be praised for it: Well may I call him the Knight of the Woful Figure, for he has put me and all that belongs to me in a woful case."

The puppet-player's lamentations moving Sancho's pity, "Come," quoth he, "don't cry, Master Peter, thou break'st my heart to hear thee take on so; don't be cast down, man, for my master's a better Christian, I am sure, than to let any poor man come to loss by him: when he comes to know he has done you wrong, he will pay you for every farthing of damage, I will engage."—"Truly," said Master Peter, "if his worship would but pay me for the fashion of my puppets he has spoiled, I will ask no more, and he will discharge a good conscience; for he that wrongs his neighbour, and does not make restitution, can never hope to be saved, that is certain."—"I grant it," said Don Quixote; "but I am not sensible how I have in the least injured you, good Master Peter!"—"No, sir! not injured me?" cried Master Peter. "Why these poor relics that lie here on the cold ground, cry out for vengeance against you. Was it not the invincible force of that powerful arm of yours that has scattered

and dismembered them so? And whose were those bodies, sir, but mine? and by whom was I maintained, but by them?"

"Well," said Don Quixote, "now I am thoroughly convinced of a truth, which I have had reason to believe before, that those cursed magicians that daily persecute me, do nothing but delude me, first drawing me into dangerous adventures by the appearances of them as really they are, and then presently after changing the face of things as they please. Really and truly, gentlemen, I vow and protest before you all that hear me, that all that was acted here seemed to be really transacted *ipso facto* as it appeared. To me, Melisandra appeared to be Melisandra, Don Gayferos was Don Gayferos, Marsilius Marsilius, and Charlemagne was the real Charlemagne. Which being so, I could not contain my fury, and acted according to the duties of my function, which obliges me to take the injured side. Now, though what I have done proves to be quite contrary to my good design, the fault ought not to be imputed to me, but to my persecuting foes; yet I own myself sorry for the mischance, and will condemn myself to pay the costs. Let Master Peter see what he must have for the figures that are damaged, and I will pay it him now in

good and lawful money on the nail."—"Heaven bless your worship," cried Master Peter, with a profound cringe, "I could expect no less from the wonderful Christianity of the valorous Don Quixote de la Mancha, the sure relief and bulwark of all miserable wanderers. Now let my landlord and the great Sancho be mediators and appraisers between your worship and myself, and I will stand to their award."

They agreed: and presently Master Peter taking up Marsilius, King of Saragossa, that lay by on the ground with his head off: "You see, gentlemen," said he, "it is impossible to restore this king to his former dignity; and therefore, with submission to your better judgments, I think that for his destruction, and to get him a successor,* seven and twenty pence is little enough on conscience."—"Proceed," said Don Quixote.—"Then for this that is cleft in two," said Master Peter, taking up the Emperor Charlemagne, "I think he is richly worth † one and thirty pence half-penny."—"Not so richly neither," quoth Sancho.—"Truly," said the innkeeper, "I think, it is pretty reasonable; but we will make it even money, let the poor fellow have half-a-crown."

* Four reals and a half.

† Five reals and a quarter.

—"Come," said Don Quixote, "let him have his full price; we will not stand haggling for so small a matter in a case like this: So make haste, Master Peter, for it is near supper-time, and I have some strong presumptions that I shall eat heartily."—"Now," said Master Peter, "for this figure here that is without a nose and blind with one eye, being the fair Melisandra, I will be reasonable with you; give me* fourteen pence, I would not take less from my brother."—"Nay," said Don Quixote, "the devil is in it, if Melisandra be not by this time with her husband, upon the frontiers of France at least; for the horse that carried them seemed to me rather to fly than to gallop; and now you tell me of a Melisandra here without a nose forsooth, when it is ten to one but she is now in her husband's arms in a good bed in France. Come, come, friend, God help every man to his own; let us have fair dealing; so proceed."

Master Peter finding that the knight began to harp upon the old string, was afraid he would fly off; and making as if he had better considered of it, "Cry ye mercy, sir," said he, "I was mistaken; this could not be Melisandra indeed, but one of the damsels that waited on

* Two reals and twelve maravedis.

her; and so I think five pence will be fair enough for her." In this manner he went on, setting his price upon the dead and wounded, which the arbitrators moderated to the content of both parties; and the whole sum amounted to forty reals and three quarters, which Sancho paid him down; and then Master Peter demanded two reals more, for the trouble of catching his ape. "Give it him," said Don Quixote, "and set the monkey to catch the ape; and now would I give two hundred more to be assured that Don Gayferos and the lady Melisandra were safely arrived in France among their friends."—"Nobody can better tell than my ape," said Master Peter, "though the devil himself will hardly catch him, if hunger, or his kindness for me do not bring us together again to-night. However to-morrow will be a new day, and when it is light we will see what is to be done."

The whole disturbance being appeased, to supper they went lovingly together, and Don Quixote treated the whole company, for he was liberality itself. Before day the man with the lances and halberts left the inn, and some time after the scholar and the page came to take leave of the knight; the first to return home, and the second to continue his journey, towards

whose charges Don Quixote gave him twelve reals. As for Master Peter, he knew too much of the knight's humour to desire to have anything to do with him, and therefore having picked up the ruins of the puppet-show, and got his ape again, by break of day he packed off to seek his fortune. The inn-keeper, who did not know Don Quixote, was as much surprised at his liberality as at his madness. In fine, Sancho paid him very honestly by his master's order, and mounting a little before eight o'clock, they left the inn, and proceeded on their journey; where we will leave them, that we may have an opportunity to relate some other matters very requisite for the better understanding of this famous history.