

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEREIN IS DISCOVERED WHO MASTER PETER WAS,
AND HIS APE; AS ALSO DON QUIXOTE'S ILL SUC-
CESS IN THE BRAYING ADVENTURE, WHICH DID
NOT END SO HAPPILY AS HE DESIRED AND EX-
PECTED

CID HAMET, the author of this celebrated history, begins this chapter with this asseveration, "I swear as a true Catholic;" which the translator illustrates and explains in this manner: That historian's swearing like a true Catholic, though he was a Mahometan Moor, ought to be received in no other sense, than that, As a true Catholic, when he affirms anything with an oath, does or ought to swear truth, So would he relate the truth as impartially as a Christian would do, if he had taken such an oath, in what he designed to write of Don Quixote; especially as to the account that is to be given us of the person who was known by the name of Master Peter, and the fortune-telling ape, whose answers occasioned such a noise, and created such an amazement all over the country.

He says then, that any one who has read the foregoing part of this history, cannot but remember one Gines de Passamonte, whom Don Quixote had rescued, with several other galley-slaves, in Sierra Morena; a piece of service for which the knight was not over-burdened with thanks, and which that ungrateful pack of rogues repaid with a treatment altogether unworthy such a deliverance. This Gines de Passamonte, or, as Don Quixote called him, Ginesillo de Parapilla, was the very man that stole Sancho's ass; the manner of which robbery, and the time when it was committed, being not inserted in the first part, has been the reason that some people have laid that, which was caused by the printer's neglect, to the inadvertency of the author. But it is beyond all question, that Gines stole the ass while Sancho slept on his back, making use of the same trick and artifice which Brunelo practised when he carried off Sacripante's horse from under his legs, at the siege of Albraca. However, Sancho got possession again, as has been told you before.

Gines, it seems, being obnoxious to the law, was apprehensive of the strict search that was made after him, in order to bring him to justice for his repeated villanies, which were so

great and numerous, that he himself had wrote a large book of them; and therefore he thought it advisable to make the best of his way into the kingdom of Arragon, and having clapped a plaister over his left eye, resolved in that disguise to set up a puppet-show, and stroll with it about the country; for you must know, he had not his fellow at anything that could be done by sleight of hand. Now it happened, that in his way he fell into the company of some Christian slaves who came from Barbary, and struck a bargain with them for this ape, whom he taught to leap on his shoulder at a certain sign, and to make as if he whispered something in his ear. Having brought his ape to this, before he entered into any town he informed himself in the adjacent parts, as well as he could, of what particular accidents had happened to this or that person; and having a very retentive memory, the first thing he did was to give them a sight of his show, that represented sometimes one story and sometimes another, which were generally well known and taking among the vulgar. The next thing he had to do, was to commend the wonderful qualities of his ape, and tell the company, that the animal had the gift of revealing things past and present; but that in things to come,

he was altogether uninstructed. He asked* two reals for every answer, though now and then he lowered his price as he felt the pulse of his customers. Sometimes when he came to the houses of people of whose concerns he had some account, and who would ask the ape no question, because they did not care to part with their money, he would notwithstanding be making signs to his ape, and tell them, the animal had acquainted him with this or that story, according to the information he had before; and by that means he got a great credit among the common people, and drew a mighty crowd after him. At other times, though he knew nothing of the person, the subtlety of his wit supplied his want of knowledge, and brought him handsomely off: and nobody being so inquisitive or pressing as to make him declare by what means his ape attained to this gift of divination, he imposed on every one's understanding, and got almost what money he pleased.

He was no sooner come to the inn, but he knew Don Quixote, Sancho, and the rest of the company: But he had like to have paid dear for his knowledge, had the knight's sword fallen but a little lower when he made King

* About a shilling.

Marsilius's head fly, and routed all his Moorish horse, as the reader may have observed in the foregoing chapter. And this may suffice in relation to Master Peter and his ape.

Now let us overtake our champion of La Mancha. After he had left the inn, he resolved to take a sight of the River Ebro, and the country about it, before he went to Saragossa, since he was not straitened for time, but might do that, and yet arrive soon enough to make one at the jousts and tournaments at that city. Two days he travelled without meeting with anything worth his notice or the reader's, when on the third, as he was riding up a hill, he heard a great noise of drums, trumpets, and guns. At first he thought some regiment of soldiers was on its march that way, which made him spur up Rozinante to the brow of the hill, that he might see them pass by; and then he saw in a bottom above two hundred men, as near as he could guess, armed with various weapons, as lances, cross-bows, partisans, halberts, pikes, some few firelocks, and a great many targets. Thereupon he descended into the vale, and made his approaches towards the battalion so near as to be able to distinguish their banners, judge of their colours, and observe their devices; more especially one that

was to be seen on a standard of white satin, on which was represented to the life a little jackass, much like a Sardinian ass-colt, holding up his head, stretching out his neck, and thrusting out his tongue, in the very posture of an ass that is braying, with this distich written in fair characters about it:

“'Twas something more than nothing which one day
Made one and t'other worthy bailiff bray.”

Don Quixote drew this inference from the motto, that those were the inhabitants of the braying town, and he acquainted Sancho with what he had observed, giving him also to understand, that the man who told them the story of the two braying aldermen was apparently in the wrong, since, according to the verses on the standard, they were two bailiffs and not two aldermen.* “It matters not one rush what you call them,” quoth Sancho; “for those very aldermen that brayed might in time come to be made bailiffs of the town, and so both those titles might have been given them well enough. But what is it to you or me, or the story, whether the two brayers were aldermen or bailiffs, so they but brayed as we are told? As if a bailiff were not as likely to bray as an alderman.”

* The Spanish word *alcalde* answers nearly to our bailiff of a corporation, as *regidor* does to that of alderman.

In short, both master and man plainly understood, that the men who were thus up in arms, were those that were jeered for braying, got together to fight the people of another town, who had indeed abused them more than was the part of good neighbours; thereupon Don Quixote advanced towards them, to Sancho's great grief, who had no manner of liking to such kind of adventures. The multitude soon got about the knight, taking him for some champion, who was come to their assistance. But Don Quixote, lifting up his vizor, with a graceful deportment rode up to the standard, and there all the chief leaders of the army got together about him, in order to take a survey of his person, no less amazed at this strange appearance than the rest. Don Quixote seeing them look so earnestly on him, and no man offer so much as a word or question, took occasion from their silence to break his own; and, raising his voice, "Good gentlemen," cried he, "I beseech you with all the endearments imaginable, to give no interruption to the discourse I am now delivering to you, unless you find it distasteful or tedious; which if I am unhappy enough to occasion, at the least hint you shall give me, I will clap a seal on my lips, and a padlock on my tongue." They all cried

that he might speak what he pleased, and they would hear him with all their hearts. Having this license, Don Quixote proceeded.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I am a knight-errant: Arms are my exercise; and my profession is to shew favour to those that are in necessity of favour, and to give assistance to those that are in distress. I have for some time been no stranger to the cause of your uneasiness, which excites you to take arms to be revenged on your insulting neighbours; and having often busied my intellectuals, in making reflections on the motives which have brought you together, I have drawn this inference from it, that according to the laws of arms, you really injure yourselves, in thinking yourselves affronted; for no particular person can give an affront to a whole town and society of men, except it be by accusing them all of high-treason in general, for want of knowing on which of them to fix some treasonable action, of which he supposes some of them to be guilty. We have an instance of this nature, in Don Diego Ordonnez de Lara, who sent a challenge to all the inhabitants of Zamora, not knowing that Vellido de Olfos had assassinated the king his master in that town, without any accomplices; and so, accusing and defying them

all, the defence and revenge belonged to them all in general. Though it must be owned, that Don Diego was somewhat unreasonable in his defiance, and strained the point too far: For, it was very little to the purpose to defy the dead, the waters, the bread, those that were yet unborn, with many other trifling matters mentioned in the challenge. But let that pass; for when once the choler boils over, the tongue grows unruly, and knows no moderation. Taking it for granted then, that no particular person can affront a whole kingdom, province, city, commonwealth, or body politic, it is but just to conclude, that it is needless to revenge such a pretended affront; since such an abuse is no sufficient provocation, and indeed, positively no affront. It would be a pretty piece of wisdom, truly, should those out of the town of Reloxa sally out every day on those who spend their ill-natured breaths, miscalling them everywhere. It would be a fine business indeed, if the inhabitants of those several famous towns that are nick-named by our rabble, and called the one cheese-mongers, the other coster-mongers, these fish-mongers, and those soap-boilers, should know no better than to think themselves dishonoured, and in revenge be always drawing out their swords at

the least word, for every idle insignificant quarrel. No, no, heaven forbid! men of sagacity and wisdom, and well-governed commonwealths, are never induced to take up arms, nor endanger their persons, and estates, but on the four following occasions. In the first place, to defend the holy Catholic faith. Secondly, for the security of their lives, which they are commanded to preserve by the laws of God and nature. Thirdly, the preservation of their good name, the reputation of their family, and the conservation of their estates. Fourthly, the service due to their prince in a just war; and if we please, we may add a fifth, which indeed may be referred to the second, the defence of our country. To these five capital causes may be subjoined several others, which may induce men to vindicate themselves, and have recourse even to the way of arms: But to take them up for mere trifles, and such occasions as rather challenge our mirth and contemptuous laughter than revenge, shows the person who is guilty of such proceedings to labour under a scarcity of sense. Besides, to seek after an unjust revenge (and indeed no human revenge can be just) is directly against the holy law we profess, which commands us to forgive our enemies, and to do good to those

that hate us, an injunction, which though it seems difficult in the implicit obedience we should pay to it, yet is only so to those who have less of heaven than of the world, and more of the flesh than of the spirit. For, the Redeemer of mankind, whose words never could deceive, said, 'that his yoke was easy, and his burden light;' and according to that, he could prescribe nothing to our practice which was impossible to be done. Therefore, gentlemen, since reason and religion recommend love and peace to you, I hope you will not render yourselves obnoxious to all laws, both human and divine, by a breach of the public tranquillity."

"The devil fetch me," quoth Sancho to himself, "if this master of mine must not have been bred a parson; if not, he is as like one as one egg is like another." Don Quixote paused a while, to take breath; and, perceiving his auditory still willing to give him attention, had proceeded in his harangue, had not Sancho's good opinion of his parts made him lay hold on this opportunity to talk in his turn. "Gentlemen," quoth he, "my master Don Quixote de la Mancha, once called the Knight of the Woful Figure, and now the Knight of the Lions, is a very judicious gentleman, and talks Latin and his own mother-tongue as well as

any of your varsity-doctors. Whatever discourse he takes in hand, he speaks ye to the purpose, and like a man of mettle; he has ye all the laws and rules of that same thing you call duel and punctilio of honour, at his fingers end; so that you have no more to do but to do as he says, and if in taking his counsel you ever tread awry, let the blame be laid on my shoulders. And indeed, as you have already been told, it is a very silly fancy to be ashamed to hear one bray; for I remember when I was a boy, I could bray as often as I listed, and nobody went about to hinder me; and I could do it so rarely, and to the life, without vanity be it spoken, that all the asses in our town would fall a braying when they heard me bray; yet for all this, I was an honest body's child, and came of good parentage, do ye see; it is true, indeed, four of the best young men in our parish envied me for this great ability of mine; but I cared not a rush for their spite. Now, that you may not think I tell you a flam, do but hear me, and then judge; for this rare art is like swimming, which, when once learned, is never to be forgotten!"

This said, he clapped both the palms of his hands to his nose, and fell a braying so obstreperously, that it made the neighbouring

valleys ring again. But while he was thus braying, one of those that stood next to him, believing he did it to mock them, gave him such a hearty blow with a quarter-staff on his back, that down he brought him to the ground.

Don Quixote, seeing what a rough entertainment had been given to his squire, moved with his lance in a threatening posture towards the man that had used poor Sancho thus; but the crowd thrust themselves in such a manner between them, that the knight found it impracticable to pursue the revenge he designed. At the same time, finding that a shower of stones began to rain about his ears, and a great number of cross-bows and muskets were getting ready for his reception, he turned Rozinante's reins, and galloped from them as fast as four legs would carry him, sending up his hearty prayers to Heaven to deliver him from this danger; and, being under grievous apprehensions at every step, that he should be shot through the back, and have the bullet come out at his breast, he still went fetching his breath, to try if it did any ways fail him. But the country battalion were satisfied with seeing him fly, and did not offer to shoot at him.

As for Sancho, he was set upon his ass before he had well recovered his senses, which the

blow had taken from him, and then they suffered him to move off; not that the poor fellow had strength enough to guide him, but Dapple naturally followed Rozinante of his own accord, not being able to be a moment from him. The Don being at a good distance from the armed multitude, faced about, and seeing Sancho pacing after him without any troublesome attendants, stayed for his coming up. As for the rabble, they kept their posts till it grew dark, and their enemies having not taken the field to give them battle, they marched home, so overjoyed to have shown their courage, without danger, that, had they been so well bred as to have known the ancient custom of the Greeks, they would have erected a trophy in that place.