

CHAPTER XXVIII

OF SOME THINGS WHICH BENENGELI TELLS US HE
THAT READS SHALL KNOW, IF HE READS THEM
WITH ATTENTION

WHEN the valiant man flies, he must have discovered some foul play, and it is the part of prudent persons to reserve themselves for more favourable opportunities. This truth is verified in Don Quixote, who, rather than expose himself to the fury of an incensed and ill-designing multitude, betook himself to flight, without any thoughts of Sancho, till he found himself beyond the reach of those dangers in which he had left his trusty squire involved. Sancho came after him, as we have told you before, laid across his ass, and having recovered his senses, overtook him at last, and let himself drop from his pack-saddle at Rozinante's feet, all battered and bruised, and in a sorrowful condition. Don Quixote presently dismounted to search his wounds, and finding no bones broken, but his skin whole from head to feet, "You must bray," cried he angrily, "you must bray, with a pox, must you! It is a piece of

excellent discretion to talk of halters in the house of a man whose father was hanged. What counter-part could you expect to your music, blockhead, but a thorough-bass of bastinadoes? Thank Providence, sirrah! that as they gave you a dry benediction with a quarter-staff, they did not cross you with a cutlass."—"I han't breath to answer you at present," quoth Sancho, "but my back and shoulders speak enough for me. Pray let us make the best of our way from this cursed place, and whene'er I bray again, may I get such another polt on my kidneys. Yet I cannot help saying that your knights-errant can betake themselves to their heels to save *one* upon occasion, and leave their trusty squires to be beaten like stock-fish, in the midst of their enemies."—"A retreat is not to be accounted a flight," replied Don Quixote; "for know, Sancho, that courage which has not wisdom for its guide, falls under the name of temerity; and the rash man's successful actions are rather owing to his good fortune, than to his bravery. I own I did retire, but I deny that I fled; and in such a retreat I did but imitate many valiant men, who, not to hazard their persons indiscreetly, reserved themselves for a more fortunate hour. Histories are full of examples of this nature,

which I do not care to relate at present, because they would be more tedious to me, than profitable to thee."

By this time Don Quixote had helped Sancho to bestride his ass, and being himself mounted on Rozinante, they paced softly along, and got into a grove of poplar-trees, about a quarter of a league from the place where they mounted. Yet as softly as they rid, Sancho could not help now and then heaving up deep sighs and lamentable groans. Don Quixote asked him, why he made such a heavy moan? Sancho told him, that from his rump to his pole, he felt such grievous pains, that he was ready to sink. "Without doubt," said Don Quixote, "the intenseness of thy torments is, by reason the staff with which thou wert struck was broad and long, and so having fallen on those parts of thy back, caused a contusion there, and affects them all with pain; and had it been of a greater magnitude, thy grievances had been so much the greater."

"Truly," quoth Sancho, "you have cleared that in very pithy words, of which nobody made any doubt. Body of me! was the cause of my ailing so hard to be guessed, that you must tell me that so much of me was sore as was hit by the weapon? Should my ankle-

bone ache, and you scratch your head till you had found out the cause of it, I would think that something; but for you to tell me that place is sore where I was bruised, every fool could do as much. Faith and troth, sir master of mine, I grow wiser and wiser every day; I find you are like all the world, that lay to heart nobody's harms but their own. I find whereabouts we are, and what I am like to get by you; for even as you left me now in the lurch, to be well belaboured and ribroasted, and the other day to dance the caper-galliard in the blanket you wot of, so I must expect a hundred and a hundred more of these good vails in your service; and, as the mischief has now lighted on my shoulders, next bout I look for it to fly at my eyes. A plague of my jolter-head, I have been a fool and sot all along, and am never like to be wiser while I live. Would it not be better for me to trudge home to my wife and children, and look after my house, with that little wit that heaven has given me, without galloping after your tail high and low, through confounded cross-roads and bye-ways, and wicked and crooked paths, that the ungodly themselves cannot find out? And then most commonly to have nothing to moisten one's weasand that is fitting for a Christian to

drink, nothing but mere element and dog's porridge; and nothing to stuff one's puddings that is worthy of a Catholic stomach. Then, after a man has tired himself off his legs, when he would be glad of a good bed, to have a master cry, 'Here, are you sleepy? lie down, Mr Squire, your bed is made: Take six foot of good hard ground, and measure your corpse there; and if that won't serve you, take as much more, and welcome. You are at rack and manger; spare not, I beseech your dogship, there is room enough.' Old Nick roast and burn to a cinder that unlucky son of mischief, that first set people a-madding after this whim of knight-errantry, or at least the first ninny-hammer that had so little forecast as to turn squire to such a parcel of madmen as were your knights-errant—in the days of yore, I mean; I am better bred than to speak ill of those in our time; no, I honour them, since your worship has taken up this blessed calling; for you have a long nose, the devil himself could not out-reach you; you can see farther into a mill-stone than he."

"I durst lay a wager," said Don Quixote, "that now thou art suffered to prate without interruption, thou feelest no manner of pain in thy whole body. Pr'ythee talk on, my child;

say anything that comes uppermost to thy mouth, or is burdensome to thy brain; so it but alleviates thy pain, thy impertinences will rather please than offend me; and if thou hast such a longing desire to be at home with thy wife and children, heaven forbid I should be against it. Thou hast money of mine in thy hands: see how long it is since we sallied out last from home, and cast up the wages by the month, and pay thyself."

"An' it like your worship," quoth Sancho, "when I served my master Carrasco, father to the bachelor, your worship's acquaintance, I had two ducats a-month, besides my victuals: I don't know what you'll give me; though I am sure there is more trouble in being squire to a knight-errant, than in being servant to a farmer; for truly, we that go to plough and cart in a farmer's service, though we moil and sweat so a-days as not to have a dry thread to our backs, let the worst come to the worst, are sure of a bellyful at night out of the pot, and to snore in a bed. But I don't know when I have had a good meal's meat, or a good night's rest, in all your service, unless it were that short time when we were at Don Diego's house, and when I made a feast on the savoury skimming of Camacho's cauldron, and eat, drank,

and lay at Mr Basil's. All the rest of my time I have had my lodging on the cold ground, and in the open fields, subject to the inclemency of the sky, as you call it; living on the rinds of cheese, and crusts of mouldy bread; drinking sometimes ditch-water, sometimes spring, as we chanced to light upon it in our way."

"Well," said Don Quixote, "I grant all this, Sancho; then how much more dost thou expect from me than thou hadst from thy master, Carrasco?"—"Why, truly," quoth Sancho, "if your worship will pay me twelve-pence a-month more than Thomas Carrasco¹ gave me, I shall think it very fair, and tolerable wages; but then, instead of the island which you know you promised me, I think you cannot in conscience give me less than six-and-thirty pence a-month more, which will make in all thirty reals, neither more nor less."—"Very well," said Don Quixote, "let us see then; it is now twenty-five days since we set out from home—reckon what this comes to, according to the wages thou hast allowed thyself, and be thy own pay-master."—"Odsniggers!" quoth Sancho, "we are quite out in our account; for as to the governor of an island's place, which you promised to help me to, we ought

¹ See Appendix, Note 1, Chapter XXVIII.

to reckon from the time you made the promise to this very day."—"Well, and pray, how long is it?" asked Don Quixote. "If I remember rightly," quoth Sancho, "it is about some twenty years ago, two or three days more or less."

With that Don Quixote, hitting himself a good clap on the forehead, fell a-laughing heartily. "Why," cried he, "we have hardly been out two months from the very beginning of our first expedition, and in all the time we were in Sierra Morena, and our whole progress; and hast thou the impudence to affirm it is twenty years since I promised the grant of the island? I am now convinced thou hast a mind to make all the money which thou hast of mine in thy keeping go for the payment of thy wages. If this be thy meaning, well and good; e'en take it, and much good may it do thee; for, rather than be troubled any longer with such a varlet, I would contentedly see myself without a penny. But tell me, thou perverter of the laws of chivalry that relate to squires, where didst thou ever see or read, that any squire to a knight-errant stood capitulating with his master as thou hast done with me, for so much or so much a month? Launch, unconscionable wretch, thou

cut-throat scoundrel! launch, launch, thou base spirit of Mammon, into the vast ocean of their histories; and if thou canst shew me a precedent of any squire, who ever dared to say, or but to think, as much as thou hast presumed to tell me, then will I give thee leave to affix it on my forehead, and hit me four fillips on the nose. Away then, pack off with thy ass this moment, and get thee home, for thou shalt never stay in my service any longer. Oh how much bread, how many promises, have I now ill bestowed on thee! Vile grovelling wretch, that hast more of the beast than of the man! when I was just going to prefer thee to such a post, that in spite of thy wife thou hadst been called my lord, thou sneakest away from me. Thou art leaving me, when I had fully resolved without any more delay to make thee lord of the best island in the world, sordid clod! Well mightest thou say indeed, that honey is not for the chaps of an ass. Thou art indeed a very ass; an ass thou wilt live, and an ass thou wilt die; for I dare say thou wilt never have sense enough while thou livest, to know thou art a brute."

While Don Quixote thus upbraided and railed at Sancho, the poor fellow, all dismayed,

and touched to the quick, beheld him with a wistful look; and the tears standing in his eyes for grief, "Good sweet sir," cried he, with a doleful and whining voice, "I confess I want nothing but a tail to be a perfect ass; if your worship will be pleased but to put one to my backside, I shall deem it well set on, and be your most faithful ass all the days of my life: but forgive me, I beseech you, and take pity on my youth. Consider I have but a dull headpiece of my own; and if my tongue runs at random sometimes, it is because I am more fool than knave, sir. Who errs and mends, to heaven himself commends."—"I should wonder much," said Don Quixote, "if thou shouldst not interlard thy discourse with some pretty proverb. Well, I will give thee my pardon for this once, provided thou correct those imperfections that offend me, and shewest thyself of a less craving temper. Take heart then, and let the hopes which thou mayest entertain of the performance of my promise raise in thee a nobler spirit. The time will come; do not think it impossible because delayed." Sancho promised to do his best, though he could not rely on his own strength.

Matters being thus amicably adjusted, they put into the grove, where the Don laid him-

self at the foot of an elm, and his squire at the foot of a beech; for every one of those trees, and such others, has always a foot, though never a hand. Sancho had but an ill night's rest of it, for his bruises made his bones more than ordinarily sensible of the cold. As for Don Quixote, he entertained himself with his usual imaginations. However, they both slept, and by break of day continued their journey towards the River Ebro, where they met—what shall be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FAMOUS ADVENTURE OF THE ENCHANTED BARK

FAIR and softly, step by step, Don Quixote and his squire got in two days' time to the banks of the River Ebro, which yielded a very entertaining prospect to the knight. The verdure of its banks, and the abounding plenty of the water, which, clear like liquid crystal, flowed gently along within the spacious channel, awaked a thousand amorous chimeras in his roving imagination, and more especially the thoughts of what he had seen in Montesinos' cave; for though Master Peter's ape had assured him, that it was partly false as well as partly true, he was rather inclined to believe it all true; quite contrary to Sancho, who thought it every tittle as false as hell.

While the knight went on thus agreeably amused, he spied a little boat without any oars or tackle, moored by the river-side to the stump of a tree:¹ Thereupon looking round about him, and discovering nobody, he pre-

¹ See Appendix, Note 1, Chapter XXIX.