

from an angel to a devil; in short, from Dulcinea del Toboso, to a peasantness of Sayago.*—"Bless us!" cried the duke with a loud voice, "what villain has done the world such an injury? Who has robbed it not only of the beauty that was its ornament, but of those charming graces that were its delight, and that virtue which was its living honour?"—"Who should it be," replied Don Quixote, "but one of those damn'd enchanters, one of those numerous envious fiends, that without cessation persecute me; that wicked brood of hell, spawned into the world to eclipse the glory of good and valiant men, and blemish their exploits, while they labour to exalt and magnify the actions of the wicked? These cursed magicians have persecuted me, and persecute me now, and will continue till they have sunk me and my lofty deeds of chivalry into the profound abyss of oblivion. Yes, yes, they choose to wound me in that part which they well know is most sensible: Well knowing, that to deprive a knight-errant of his lady, is to rob him of those eyes with which he sees, of the sun that enlightens him, and the

* Sayago is a territory about Zamora, in the kingdom of Leon. The poor country-people about Zamora are called Sayagos from Sayal, a coarse sackcloth, their usual clothing; hence any poor people, especially mountaineers, are called Sayagos.

food that sustains him. For as I have often said, a knight-errant without a lady, is like a tree without leaves, a building without mortar, or a shadow without a body that causes it."

"I grant all this," said the duchess; "yet if we may believe the history of your life, which was lately published with universal applause, it seems to imply, to the best of my remembrance, that you never saw the Lady Dulcinea, and that there is no such lady in the world; but rather that she is a mere notional creature, engendered and brought forth by the strength and heat of your fancy, and there endowed with all the charms and good qualifications, which you are pleased to ascribe to her."

"Much may be said upon this point," said Don Quixote; "heaven knows whether there be a Dulcinea in the world or not, and whether she be a notional creature or not. These are mysteries not to be so narrowly inquired into. Neither have I engendered, or begot that lady. I do indeed make her the object of my contemplations, and, as I ought, look on her as a lady endowed with all those qualifications that may raise the character of a person to universal fame. She is to me beautiful without blemish, reserved without pride, amorous with modesty, agreeable for her courteous temper, and

courteous, as an effect of her generous education, and, in short, of an illustrious parentage. For beauty displays its lustre to a higher degree of perfection when joined with noble blood, than it can in those that are meanly descended."

"The observation is just," said the duke: "but give me leave, sir, to propose to you a doubt, which the reading of that history hath started in my mind. It is, that allowing there be a Dulcinea at Toboso, or elsewhere, and as beautiful as you describe her, yet I do not find she can any way equal in greatness of birth the Orianas,* the Alastrajareas, the Madasimas, and a thousand others, of whom we read in those histories, with which you have been so conversant."—"To this," said Don Quixote, "I answer, that Dulcinea is the daughter of her own actions, and that virtue ennobles the blood. A virtuous man of mean condition, is more to be esteemed than a vicious person of quality. Besides, Dulcinea is possessed of those other endowments that may entitle her to crowns and sceptres, since beauty alone has raised many of her sex to a throne. Where merit has no limits, hope may well have no bounds; and to be fair and virtuous is so extensive an advantage, that it gives, though

* The names of great ladies in romances.

not a *formal*, at least a *virtual* claim to larger fortunes."—"I must own, sir," said the duchess, "that in all your discourse, you, as we say, proceed with the plummet of reason, and fathom all the depths of controversy. Therefore I submit, and from this time I am resolved to believe, and will make all my domestics, nay, my husband too, if there be occasion, believe and maintain, that there is a Dulcinea del Toboso extant, and living at this day; that she is beautiful and of good extraction; and to sum up all in a word, altogether deserving the services of so great a knight as the noble Don Quixote; which I think is the highest commendation I can bestow on her. But yet I must confess, there is still one scruple that makes me uneasy, and causes me to have an ill opinion of Sancho. It is that the history tells us, that when Sancho Panza carried your letter to the Lady Dulcinea, he found her winnowing a sack of corn, by the same token that it was the worst sort of wheat, which makes me much doubt her quality."

"Your grace must know," answered Don Quixote, "that almost everything that relates to me, is managed quite contrary to what the affairs of other knights-errant used to be. Whether it be the unfathomable will of

destiny, or the implacable malice of some envious enchanter orders it so, or no, I cannot well tell. For it is beyond all doubt, that most of us knights-errant still have had something peculiar in our fates. One has had the privilege to be above the power of enchantments, another invulnerable, as the famous Orlando, one of the twelve peers of France, whose flesh, they tell us, was impenetrable everywhere but in the sole of his left foot, and even there too he could be wounded with no other weapon than the point of a great pin; so that when Bernardo del Carpio deprived him of life at Roncesvalles, finding he could not wound him with his sword, he lifted him from the ground, and squeezed him to death in his arms; remembering how Hercules killed Antæus, that cruel giant, who was said to be the son of the Earth. Hence I infer, that probably I may be secured in the same manner, under the protection of some particular advantage, though it is not that of being invulnerable; for I have often found by experience, that my flesh is tender, and not impenetrable. Nor does any private prerogative free me from the power of enchantment; for I have found myself clapped into a cage, where all the world could not have locked me up, but

the force of necromantic incantations. But since I got free again, I believe that even the force of magic will never be able to confine me thus another time. So that these magicians, finding they cannot work their wicked ends directly on me, revenge themselves on what I most esteem, and endeavour to take away my life by persecuting that of Dulcinea, in whom, and for whom, I live. And therefore I believe, when my squire delivered my embassy to her, they transformed her into a country-dowdy, poorly busied in the low and base employment of winnowing wheat. But I do aver, that it was neither rye, nor wheat, but oriental pearl: and to prove this, I must acquaint your graces, that passing the other day by Toboso, I could not so much as find Dulcinea's palace; whereas my squire went the next day, and saw her in all her native charms, the most beautiful creature in the world! yet when I met her presently after, she appeared to me in the shape of an ugly, coarse, country-mawkin, boorish, and ill-bred, though she really is discretion itself. And therefore, because I myself cannot be enchanted, the unfortunate lady must be thus enchanted, misused, disfigured, chopped, and changed. Thus my enemies, wreaking their malice on her, have revenged themselves

on me, which makes me abandon myself to sorrow, till she be restored to her former perfections.

“I have been the more large in this particular, that nobody might insist on what Sancho said, of her sifting of corn; for if she appeared changed to me, what wonder is it if she seemed so to him? In short, Dulcinea is both illustrious and well-born, being descended of the most ancient and best families in Toboso, of whose blood I am positive she has no small share in her veins; and now that town will be no less famous in after-ages for being the place of her nativity, than Troy for Helen, or Spain for* Cava, though on a more honourable account.

“As for Sancho Panza’s part, I assure your grace he is one of the most pleasant squires that ever waited on a knight-errant. Sometimes he comes out with such sharp simplicities, that one is pleasantly puzzled to judge, whether he be more knave or fool. The varlet, indeed, is full of roguery enough to be thought a knave; but then he has yet more ignorance,

*The nick-name of Count Julian’s daughter, who, having been ravished by King Rodrigo, occasioned the bringing in of the Moors into Spain. Her true name was Florinda, but as she was the occasion of Spain’s being betrayed to the Moors, the name is left off among the women, and commonly given to bitches. See Notes.

and may better be thought a fool. He doubts of every thing, yet believes every thing; and when one would think he had entangled himself in a piece of downright folly, beyond recovery, he brings himself off of a sudden so cleverly, that he is applauded to the skies. In short, I would not change him for the best squire that wears a head, though I might have a city to boot, and therefore I do not know whether I had best let him go to the government which your grace has been pleased to promise him. Though, I must confess, his talents seem to lie pretty much that way: For, give never so little a whet to his understanding, he will manage his government as well as the king does his customs. Then experience convinces us, that neither learning nor any other abilities are very material to a governor. Have we not a hundred of them that can scarce read a letter, and yet they govern as sharp as so many hawks? Their main business is only to mean well, and to be resolved to do their best; for they cannot want able counsellors to instruct them. Thus those governors who are men of the sword, and no scholars, have their assessors on the bench to direct them. My counsel to Sancho shall be, that he neither take bribes, nor lose his privileges, with some other little

instructions, which I have in my head for him, and which at a proper time I will communicate, both for his private advantage, and the public good of the island he is to govern."

So far had the duke, the duchess, and Don Quixote been discoursing together, when they heard a great noise in the house, and by and by Sancho came running in unexpectedly into the room where they sat, in a terrible fright, with a dish-clout before him instead of a bib. The scullions, and other greasy rabble of the kitchen were after him, one of them pursuing him with a little kneading-trough full of dish-water, which he endeavoured by any means to put under his chin, while another stood ready to have washed the poor squire with it.—“How now, fellow!” said the duchess,—“What is the matter here? What would you do with this good man? Don’t you consider he is a governor elect?”—“Madam,” quoth the barber-scullion, “the gentleman won’t let us wash him according to custom, as my lord duke and his master were.”—“Yes, marry but I will,” quoth Sancho, in a mighty huff, “but then it shall be with cleaner suds, cleaner towels, and not quite so slovenly paws; for there is no such difference between my master and me neither, that he must be washed

with angel-water,¹ and I with the devil’s lye: So far the customs of great men’s houses are good as they give no offence. But this same beastly washing in a puddle, is worse penance than a friar’s flogging. My beard is clean enough, and wants no such refreshing. Stand clear, you had best; for the first that comes to wash me, or touch a hair of my head (my beard I would say), sir reverence of the company, I will take him such a dowse o’ the ear, he shall feel it a twelve-month after: For these kind of ceremonies and soapings, do ye see, look more like flouts and jeers, than like a civil welcome to strangers.”

The duchess was like to have burst her sides with laughing, to see Sancho’s fury, and hear how he argued for himself. But Don Quixote did not very well like to see him with such a nasty dish-clout about his neck, and made the sport of the kitchen-pensioners. Therefore after he had made a deep bow to the duke, as it were desiring leave to speak, looking on the scullions,—“Hark ye gentlemen,”² cried he, very gravely, “pray let the young man alone, and get you gone as you came, if you think fit. My squire is as cleanly as another man; that trough won’t do; you had better have

¹ See Appendix, Note 2, Chapter XXXII.

² See Appendix, Note 3, Chapter XXXII.

brought him a dram-cup. Away; be advised by me, and leave him: For neither he nor I can abide such slovenly jestings."—"No, no," quoth Sancho, taking the words out of his master's mouth, "let them stay, and go on with their show. I'll pay my barbers, I'll warrant ye. They had as good take a lion by the beard as meddle with mine. Let them bring a comb hither, or what they will, and curry-comb it; and if they find anything there that should not be there, I will give them leave to cut and mince me as small as a horse."—"Sancho is in the right," said the duchess, still laughing, "and will be in the right, in all he says; he is as clean and neat as can be, and needs none of your scouring, and if he does not like our way of washing, let him do as he pleases. Besides, you who pretend to make others clean, have shewn yourselves now very careless and idle, I don't know whether I mayn't say impudent too, to offer to bring your kneading-trough and your dish-clouts to such a person, and such a beard, instead of a golden basin and ewer, and fine diaper towels. But you are a pack of unmannerly varlets, and, like saucy rascals as you are, cannot help shewing your spite to the squires of knights-errant."

The greasy regiment, and even the steward who was with them, thought verily the duchess had been in earnest. So they took the cloth from Sancho's neck, and sneaked off quite out of countenance. Sancho, seeing himself delivered from his apprehension of this danger, ran and threw himself on his knees before the duchess. "Heaven bless your worship's grace," quoth he, "Madam Duchess. Great persons are able to do great kindnesses. For my part, I don't know how to make your worship amends for this you have done me now. I can only wish I might see myself an armed knight-errant for your sake, that I might spend all the days of my life in the service of so high a lady. I am a poor countryman,—my name is Sancho Panza,—children I have, and serve as a squire. If in any of these matters I can do you any good, you need but speak; I will be nimbler in doing than your worship shall be in ordering."—"It is evident, Sancho," said the duchess, "that you have learned civility in the school of courtesy itself, and have been bred up under the wings of Don Quixote, who is the very cream of compliment, and the flower of ceremonies. All happiness attend such a knight and such a squire; the one the north-star of chivalry-errant, the other

the bright luminary of squire-like fidelity. Rise, my friend Sancho, and assure yourself, that for the recompense of your civilities, I will persuade my lord duke to put you in possession of the government he promised you as soon as he can."

After this, Don Quixote went to take his afternoon's sleep; but the duchess desired Sancho, if he were not very sleepy, he would pass the afternoon with her and her women in a cool room. Sancho told her grace, that indeed he did use to take a good sound nap, some four or five hours long, in a summer's afternoon; but to do her good honour a kindness, he would break an old custom for once, and do his best to hold up that day, and wait on her worship. The duke, on his side, gave fresh orders that Don Quixote should be entertained exactly like a knight-errant, without deviating the least step from the road of chivalry, such as is observable in books of that kind.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE SAVOURY CONFERENCE WHICH THE DUCHESS
AND HER WOMEN HELD WITH SANCHO PANZA,
WORTH YOUR READING AND OBSERVATION

THE story afterwards informs us, that Sancho slept not a wink all that afternoon, but waited on the duchess as he had promised. Being mightily taken with his comical discourse, she ordered him to take a low chair, and sit by her; but Sancho, who knew better things, absolutely declined it, till she pressed him again to sit, as he was a governor, and speak as he was a squire; in both which capacities he deserved the very seat of Cid Ruy Diaz, the famous champion. Sancho shrugged up his shoulders, and obeyed, and all the duchess's women standing round about her to give her silent attention, she began the conference.

"Now that we are private," said she, "and nobody to overhear us, I would desire you, my lord governor, to resolve me of some doubts in the printed history of the great Don Quixote, which puzzle me very much. First, I find that