

that is laid before you. I will take care to send you assistance, if you stand in need of it. And, in every thing, I rely on your prudence. From our castle, the 16th of August, at four in the morning.

“Your friend,
“THE DUKE.”

Sancho was astonished at the news, and those that were with him were no less concerned. But, at last, turning to the steward, “I will tell you,” said he, “what is first to be done in this case, and that with all speed. Clap me that same Doctor Rezio in a dungeon, for, if anybody has a mind to kill me, it must be he, and that with a lingering death, the worst of deaths, hunger-starving.”—“However,” said the carver, “I am of opinion your honour ought not to eat any of the things that stand here before you, for they were sent in by some of the convents; and it is a common saying, The devil lurks behind the cross.”—“Which nobody can deny,” quoth Sancho; “and, therefore, let me have for the present but a luncheon of bread, and some four pound of raisins; there can be no poison in that: For, in short, I cannot live without eating; and, if we must be in readiness against these battles,

we had need be well victualled; for it is the belly keeps up the heart, and not the heart the belly. Meanwhile secretary, do you send my lord duke an answer, and tell him his order shall be fulfilled in every part without fail. Remember me kindly to my lady duchess, and beg of her not to forget to send one on purpose with my letter and bundle to Tereza Panza, my wife; which I shall take as a special favour, and I will be mindful to serve her to the best of my power: And, when your hand is in, you may crowd in my service to my master Don Quixote de la Mancha, that he may see I am neither forgetful nor ungrateful; the rest I leave to you; put in what you will, and do your part like a good secretary, and a staunch Biscayner. Now, take away here, and bring me something to eat, and then you shall see I am able to deal with all the spies, wizards, and cut-throat dogs, that dare to meddle with me and my island.”

At that time, a page entering the room, “My lord,” said he, “there is a countryman without desires to speak with your lordship about business of great consequence.”—“It is a strange thing,” cried Sancho, “that one must be still plagued with these men of business! Is it possible they should be such sots, as not

to understand this is not a time for business? Do they fancy, that we governors and distributors of justice are made of iron and marble, and have no need of rest and refreshment, like other creatures of flesh and blood? Well, before heaven, and on my conscience, if my government does but last, as I shrewdly guess it will not, I will get some of these men of business laid by the heels. Well, for once, let the fellow come in; but first, take heed he be not one of the spies or ruffian rogues that would murder me.”—“As for that,” said the page, “I dare say he had no hand in the plot; poor soul, he looks as if he could not help it; there is no more harm in him, seemingly, than in a piece of good bread.”—“There is no need to fear,” said the steward, “since we are all here by you.”—“But, hark you,” quoth Sancho, “now Doctor Rezio is gone, might not I eat something that has some substance in it, though it were but a crust and an onion?”—“At night,” answered the carver, “your honour shall have no cause to complain; supper shall make amends for the want of your dinner.”—“Heaven grant it may,” said Sancho.

Now the countryman came in, and, by his looks, seemed to be a good, harmless, silly soul. As soon as he entered the room, “Which is

my lord governor?” quoth he.—“Who but he that sits in the chair?” answered the secretary.—“I humble myself to his worship’s presence,” quoth the fellow; and with that, falling on his knees, begged to kiss his hand, which Sancho refused, but bid him rise, and tell him what he had to say. The countryman then got up: “My lord,” quoth he, “I am a husbandman of Miguel Turra, a town some two leagues from Ciudad-Real.”—“Here is another Tirteafuera,” quoth Sancho; “well, go on, friend, I know the place full well; it is not far from our town.”—“If it please you,” said the countryman, “my business is this: I was married, by Heaven’s mercy, in the face of our holy mother the Roman Catholic church, and I have two boys that take their learning at the college; the youngest studies to become a bachelor, and the eldest to be a master of arts. I am a widower, because my wife is dead; she died, if it please you, or, to speak more truly, she was killed, as a body may say, by a damned doctor that gave her a purge when she was with child. Had it been Heaven’s blessed will that she had been brought to bed of a boy, I would have sent him to study to have been a doctor, that he might have had no cause to envy his brothers.”—“So, then,” quoth Sancho, “had not your

wife died, or had they not made her die, you had not been a widower.”—“Very true,” answered the man.—“We are much the nearer,” cried Sancho; “go on, honest friend, and pr’ythee dispatch, for it is rather time to take an afternoon’s nap, than to talk of business.”—“Now, sir, I must tell you,” continued the farmer, “that that son of mine, the bachelor of arts that is to be, fell in love with a maiden of our town, Clara Perlerino, by name, the daughter of Andrew Perlerino, a mighty rich farmer; and Perlerino is not the right name neither; but, because the whole generation of them is troubled with the palsy,* they used to be called, from the name of that ailing, Perlaticos, but now they go by that of Perlerino; and, truly, it fits the young woman rarely, for she is a precious pearl for beauty! especially if you stand on her right side, and view her, she looks like a flower in the fields. On the left, indeed, she does not look altogether so well; for there she wants an eye, which she lost by the small-pox, that has digged many pits somewhat deep all over her face; but those that wish her well say that is nothing, and that those pits are so many graves to bury lovers’ hearts in. She is

* *Perleria*, in Spanish, is the palsy; and those who have it the Spaniards call *perlaticos*; whence this name.

so cleanly, that, because she will not have her nose drop upon her lips, she carries it cocked up; and her nostrils are turned up on each side, as if they shunned her mouth, that is somewhat of the widest; and, for all that, she looks exceedingly well; and, were it not for some ten or dozen of her butter-teeth and grinders which she wants, she might set up for one of the cleverest lasses in the country. As for her lips, I do not know what to say of them, for they are so thin and so slender, that, were it the fashion to wind lips as they do silk, one might make a skein of hers; besides, they are not of the ordinary hue of common lips; no, they are of the most wonderful colour that ever was seen, as being speckled with blue, green, and orange tawney. I hope my lord governor will pardon me for dwelling thus on the picture, and several rare features of her that is one day to be my daughter, seeing it is merely out of my hearty love and affection for the girl.”—“Pr’ythee, paint on as long as thou wilt,” said Sancho; “I am mightily taken with this kind of painting; and, if I had but dined, I would not desire a better dessert than thy original.”—“Both myself and that are at your service,” quoth the fellow; “or, at least, we may be in time, if we are not now. But, alas, sir, that

is nothing; could I set before your eyes her pretty carriage, and her shape, you would admire. But that is not to be done; for she is so crooked and crumpled up together, that her knees and her chin meet; and yet any one may perceive, that, if she could but stand upright, her head would touch the very ceiling; and she would have given her hand to my son the bachelor, in the way of matrimony, before now, but that she is not able to stretch it forth, the sinews being quite shrunk up: However, the broad long-guttered nails add no small grace to it, and may let you know what a well-made hand she has."

"So far so good," said Sancho; "but let us suppose you have drawn her from head to foot; what is it you would be at now? Come to the point, friend, without so many windings and turnings, and going round about the bush."—"Sir," said the farmer, "I would desire your honour to do me the kindness to give me a letter of accommodation to the father of my daughter-in-law, beseeching him to be pleased to let the marriage be fulfilled, seeing we are not unlike neither in estate nor bodily concerns; for, to tell you the truth, my lord governor, my son is bewitched, and there is not a day passes over his head but the foul fiends torment him

three or four times; and, having once had the ill-luck to fall into the fire, the skin of his face is shrivelled up like a piece of parchment, and his eyes are somewhat sore, and full of rheum. But, when all is said, he has the temper of an angel; and, were he not apt to thump and belabour himself now and then in his fits, you would take him to be a saint."

"Have you anything else to ask, honest man?" said Sancho.—"Only one thing more," quoth the farmer; "but I am somewhat afraid to speak it; yet I cannot find in my heart to let it rot within me; and, therefore, fall back fall edge, I must out with it. I would desire your worship to bestow on me some three hundred or six hundred ducats towards my bachelor's portion, only to help him to begin the world, and furnish him a house; for, in short, they would live by themselves, without being subject to the impertinences of a father-in-law."—"Well," said Sancho, "see if you would have anything else; if you would, do not let fear or bashfulness be your hinderance: Out with it, man."—"No, truly," quoth the farmer; and he had scarcely spoken the words, when the governor, starting up, and laying hold of the chair he sat on, "You brazen-faced, silly, impudent country booby," cried he, "get out of

my presence this moment, or, by the blood of the Panzas, I will crack your jolter-head with this chair! You whoreson raggamuffin painter for the devil, dost thou come, at this time of day, to ask me for six hundred ducats? Where should I have them, mangy clod-pate? And if I had them, why should I give them thee, thou old doting scoundrel? What a pox care I for Miguel Turra, or all the generation of the Perlerinos? Avoid the room, I say, or, by the life of the duke, I'll be as good as my word, and ding out thy cuckoo brains. Thou art no native of Miguel Turra, but some imp of the devil, sent on his master's errand to tempt my patience. It is not a day and a half that I have been governor, and thou wouldst have me have six hundred ducats already, dunder-headed sot!"

The steward made signs to the farmer to withdraw, and he went out, accordingly, hanging down his head, and, to all appearance, very much afraid, lest the governor should make good his angry threats; for the cunning knave knew very well how to act his part. But let us leave Sancho in his angry mood, and let there be peace and quietness, while we return to Don Quixote, whom we left with his face covered over with plasters, the scratches which

he had got when the cat so clapper-clawed him, having obliged him to no less than eight days retirement; during which time there happened that to him, which Cid Hamet promises to relate with the same punctuality and veracity with which he delivers the particulars of this history, how trivial soever they may be.