

back this afternoon.”—“Be pleased then, sir,” said the curate, “to go with me, and partake of a slender meal at my house, for my neighbour Teresa is more willing than able to entertain so good a guest.” The page excused himself a while, but at last complied, being persuaded it would be much for the better; and the curate, on his side, was glad of his company, to have an opportunity to inform himself at large about Don Quixote and his proceedings. The bachelor proffered Teresa to write her answers to her letters, but as she looked upon him to be somewhat waggish, she would not permit him to be of her counsel: so she gave a roll and a couple of eggs to a young acolyte of the church who could write, and he wrote two letters for her; one to her husband, and the other to the duchess, all of her own inditing, and perhaps not the worst in this famous history, as hereafter may be seen.

CHAPTER LI

A CONTINUATION OF SANCHO PANZA'S GOVERNMENT,
WITH OTHER PASSAGES, SUCH AS THEY ARE

THE morning of that day arose which succeeded the governor's rounding night, the remainder of which the gentleman-waiter spent not in sleep, but in the pleasing thoughts of the lovely face and charming grace of the disguised virgin; on the other side, the steward bestowed that time in writing to his lord and lady what Sancho did and said; wondering no less at his actions than at his expressions, both which displayed a strange intermixture of discretion and simplicity.

At last the lord governor was pleased to rise; and, by Dr Pedro Rezio's order, they brought him for his breakfast a little conserve and a draught of fair water, which he would have exchanged with all his heart for a good luncheon of bread and a bunch of grapes; but seeing he could not help himself, he was forced to make the best of a bad market, and seem to be content, though full sore against his will and

appetite; for the doctor made him believe, that to eat but little, and that which was dainty, enlivened the spirits and sharpened the wit, and consequently such a sort of diet was most proper for persons in authority and weighty employments, wherein there is less need of the strength of the body than that of the mind. This sophistry served to famish Sancho, who, half-dead with hunger, cursed in his heart both the government and him that had given it him. However, hungry as he was, by the strength of his slender breakfast, he failed not to give audience that day; and the first that came before him was a stranger, who put the following case to him, the stewards and the rest of the attendants being present:—

“My lord,” said he, “a large river divides in two parts one and the same lordship. I beg your honour to lend me your attention, for it is a case of great importance, and some difficulty. Upon this river there is a bridge, at the one end of which there stands a gallows, and a kind of court of justice, where four judges used to sit for the execution of a certain law made by the lord of the land and river, which runs thus:—

“Whoever intends to pass from one end of this bridge to the other, must first upon his oath declare whither he goes, and what his

business is. If he swear truth, he may go on; but if he swear false, he shall be hanged, and die without remission upon the gibbet at the end of the bridge.’

“After due promulgation of this law, many people, notwithstanding its severity, adventured to go over this bridge, and as it appeared they swore true, the judges permitted them to pass unmolested. It happened one day that a certain passenger being sworn, declared, that by the oath he had taken, he was come to die upon that gallows, and that was all his business.

“This put the judges to a nonplus; ‘for,’ said they, ‘if we let this man pass freely he is forsworn, and, according to the letter of the law, he ought to die; if we hang him, he has sworn truth, seeing he swore he was to die on that gibbet; and then by the same law we should let him pass.’

“Now, your lordship’s judgment is desired what the judges ought to do with this man: For they are still at a stand, not knowing what to determine in this case; and having been informed of your sharp wit, and great capacity in resolving difficult questions, they sent me to beseech your lordship, in their names, to give your opinion in so intricate and knotty a case.”

“To deal plainly with you,” answered

Sancho, "those worshipful judges that sent you hither might as well have spared themselves the trouble; for I am more inclined to dulness, I assure you, than sharpness: However, let me hear your question once more, that I may thoroughly understand it, and perhaps I may at last hit the nail upon the head." The man repeated the question again and again; and when he had done, "To my thinking," said Sancho, "this question may be presently answered, as thus: The man swore he came to die on the gibbet, and if he die there, he swore true, and, according to the law, he ought to be free and go over the bridge. On the other side, if you do not hang him, he swore false, and by the same law he ought to be hanged."—"It is as your lordship says," replied the stranger; "you have stated the case right."—"Why then," said Sancho, "even let that part of the man that spoke true freely pass, and hang the other part of the man that swore false, and so the law will be fulfilled."—"But then, my lord," replied the stranger, "the man must be divided into two parts, which if we do, he certainly dies, and the law, which must, every tittle of it, be observed, is not put in execution."

"Well, hark you me, honest man," said Sancho, "either I am a very dunce, or there is

as much reason to put this same person you talk of to death, as to let him live and pass the bridge; for if the truth saves him, the lie condemns him. Now the case stands thus: I would have you tell those gentlemen that sent you to me, since there is as much reason to bring him off as to condemn him, that they even let him go free; for it is always more commendable to do good than hurt. And this I would give you under my own hand if I could write. Nor do I speak this of my own head; but I remember one precept, among many others, that my master Don Quixote gave me the night before I went to govern this island, which was, that when the scale of justice is even, or a case is doubtful, we should prefer mercy before rigour; and it has pleased God I should call it to mind so luckily at this juncture."—"For my part," said the steward, "this judgment seems to me so equitable, that I do not believe Lycurgus himself, who gave the laws to the Lacedæmonians, could ever have decided the matter better than the great Sancho has done.

"And now, sir, sure there is enough done for this morning; be pleased to adjourn the court, and I will give order that your excellency may dine to your heart's content."—"Well

said," cried Sancho; "that is all I want, and then a clear stage and no favour. Feed me well, and then ply me with cases and questions thick and threefold; you shall see me untwist them, and lay them open as clear as the sun."

The steward was as good as his word, believing it would be a burden to his conscience to famish so wise a governor: Besides, he intended the next night to put in practice the last trick which he had commission to pass upon him.

Now Sancho having plentifully dined that day, in spite of all the aphorisms of Dr Tirteafuera, when the cloth was removed, in came an express with a letter from Don Quixote to the governor. Sancho ordered the secretary to read it to himself, and if there was nothing in it for secret perusal, then to read it aloud. The secretary having first run it over accordingly, "My lord," said he, "the letter may not only be publicly read, but deserves to be engraved in characters of gold; and thus it is."

*Don Quixote de la Mancha to Sancho Panza,
Governor of the Island of Barataria.*

"When I expected to have had an account of thy carelessness and impertinences, friend

Sancho, I was agreeably disappointed with news of thy wise behaviour; for which I return particular thanks to Heaven, that can raise the lowest from their poverty, and turn the fool into a man of sense. I hear thou governest with all the discretion of a man; and that whilst thou approvest thyself one, thou retainest the humility of the meanest creature. But I desire thee to observe, Sancho, that it is many times very necessary and convenient to thwart the humility of the heart, for the better support of the authority of a place. For the ornament of a person that is advanced to an eminent post must be answerable to its greatness, and not debased to the inclination of his former meanness. Let thy apparel be neat and handsome; even a stake, well dressed, does not look like a stake. I would not have thee wear foppish gaudy things, nor affect the garb of a soldier in the circumstances of a magistrate; but let thy dress be suitable to thy degree, and always clean and decent.

"To gain the hearts of thy people, among other things, I have two chiefly to recommend: One is, to be affable, courteous, and fair to all the world. I have already told thee of that. And the other, to take care that plenty of provisions be never wanting; for nothing