

CHAPTER LIII

THE TOILSOME END AND CONCLUSION OF SANCHO

PANZA'S GOVERNMENT

To think the affairs of this life are always to remain in the same state, is an erroneous fancy. The face of things rather seems continually to change and roll with circular motion; summer succeeds the spring, autumn the summer, winter the autumn, and then spring again. So time proceeds in this perpetual round; only the life of man is ever hastening to its end, swifter than time itself, without hopes to be renewed, unless in the next, that is unlimited and infinite. This says Cid Hamet, the Mahometan philosopher. For even by the light of nature, and without that of faith, many have discovered the swiftness and instability of his present being, and the duration of the eternal life which is expected. But this moral reflection of our author is not here to be supposed as meant by him in its full extent; for he intended it only to show the uncertainty of Sancho's fortune, how soon it vanished like a

dream, and how from his high preferment he returned to his former low station.

It was now but the seventh night, after so many days of his government, when the careful governor had betaken himself to his repose, sated not with bread and wine, but cloyed with hearing causes, pronouncing sentences, making statutes, and putting out orders and proclamations. Scarce was sleep, in spite of wakeful hunger, beginning to close his eyes, when, of a sudden, he heard a great noise of bells, and most dreadful outcries, as if the whole island had been sinking. Presently he started, and sat up in bed, and listened with great attention, to try if he could learn how far this uproar might concern him. But, while he was thus hearkening in the dark, a great number of drums and trumpets were heard, and that sound being added to the noise of the bells and the cries, gave so dreadful an alarm, that his fear and terror increased, and he was in a sad consternation. Up he leaped out of his bed, and put on his slippers, the ground being damp, and without anything else on but his shirt, ran and opened his chamber-door, and saw about twenty men come running along the galleries with lighted links in one hand, and drawn swords in the other, all crying out, "Arm! my

lord governor, arm! a world of enemies are got into the island, and we are undone, unless your valour and conduct relieve us." Thus bawling and running with great fury and disorder, they got to the door where Sancho stood quite scared out of his senses. "Arm, arm this moment, my lord," cried one of them, "if you have not a mind to be lost with the whole island."—"What would you have me arm for?" quoth Sancho; "Do I know any thing of arms or fighting, think you? why do you not rather send for Don Quixote, my master? he will dispatch your enemies in a trice. Alas! as I am a sinner to Heaven, I understand nothing of this hasty service."—"For shame, my lord governor," said another; "what a faint-heartedness is this? See, we bring you here arms offensive and defensive; arm yourself, and march to the market-place; be our leader and captain as you ought, and shew yourself a governor."—"Why, then, arm me, and good luck attend me," quoth Sancho. With that, they brought him two large shields, which they had provided, and, without letting him put on his other clothes, clapped them over his shirt, and tied the one behind upon his back, and the other before upon his breast, having got his arms through some holes made

on purpose. Now the shields being fastened to his body, as hard as cords could bind them, the poor governor was cased up and immured as straight as an arrow, without being able so much as to bend his knees or stir a step. Then, having put a lance into his hand for him to lean upon, and keep himself up, they desired him to march, and lead them on, and put life into them all, telling him, that they did not doubt of victory, since they had him for their commander. "March!" quoth Sancho, "how do you think I am able to do it, squeezed as I am? These boards stick so plaguy close to me, I cannot so much as bend the joints of my knees; you must even carry me in your arms, and lay me across or set me upright before some passage, and I will make good that spot of ground, either with this lance or my body."—"Fie, my lord governor," said another, "it is more your fear than your armour that stiffens your legs, and hinders you from moving. Move, move, march on, it is high time, the enemy grows stronger, and the danger presses." The poor governor thus urged and upbraided, endeavoured to go forwards, but the first motion he made threw him to the ground at the full length, so heavily, that he gave over all his bones for broken; and there he lay like a huge tortoise

in his shell, or a fitch of bacon clapped between two boards, or like a boat overturned upon a flat, with the keel upwards. Nor had those drolling companions the least compassion upon him as he lay; quite contrary, having put out their lights, they made a terrible noise, and clattered with their swords, and trampled too and again upon the poor governor's body, and laid on furiously with their swords upon his shields, insomuch, that if he had not shrunk his head into them for shelter, he had been in a woful condition. Squeezed up in his narrow shell, he was in a grievous fright, and a terrible sweat, praying from the bottom of his heart for deliverance from the cursed trade of governing islands. Some kicked him, some stumbled and fell upon him, and one, among the rest, jumped full upon him, and there stood for some time as on a watch-tower, like a general encouraging his soldiers, and giving orders, crying out, "There, boys, there! the enemies charge most on that side: make good that breach, secure that gate, down with those scaling ladders, fetch fire-balls, more grenadoes, burning pitch, rosin, and kettles of scalding oil. Intrench yourselves, get beds, quilts, cushions, and barricade the streets;" in short, he called for all the instruments of death, and all the

engines used for the defence of a city that is besieged and stormed. Sancho lay snug, though sadly bruised; and while he endured all quietly, "Oh that it would please the Lord," quoth he to himself, "that this island were but taken, or that I were fairly dead, or out of this peck of troubles!" At last, Heaven heard his prayers; and, when he least expected it, he heard them cry, "Victory! victory! the enemy is routed. Now, my lord governor, rise, come and enjoy the fruits of conquest, and divide the spoils taken from the enemy, by the valour of your invincible arms."—"Help me up," cried poor Sancho, in a doleful tone; and when they had set him on his legs, "Let all the enemy I have routed," quoth he, "be nailed to my forehead: I will divide no spoils of enemies: but if I have one friend here, I only beg he would give me a draught of wine to comfort me, and help to dry up the sweat that I am in, for I am all over water." Thereupon they wiped him, gave him wine, and took off his shields. After that, as he sat upon his bed, what with his fright, and what with the toil he had endured, he fell into a swoon, insomuch, that those who acted this scene began to repent they had carried it so far. But Sancho, recovering from his fit in a little time, they also recovered

from their uneasiness. Being come to himself, he asked what it was o'clock. They answered, it was now break of day. He said nothing, but without any word, began to put on his clothes. While this was doing, and he continued seriously silent, all the eyes of the company were fixed upon him, wondering what could be the meaning of his being in such haste to put on his clothes. At last he made an end of dressing himself, and, creeping along softly (for he was too much bruised to go along very fast), he got to the stable, followed by all the company, and, coming to Dapple, he embraced the quiet animal, gave him a loving kiss on the forehead, and, with tears in his eyes, "Come hither," said he, "my friend; thou faithful companion, and fellow-sharer in my travels and miseries; when thee and I consorted together, and all my cares were but to mend thy furniture, and feed thy little carcase, then happy were my days, my months, and years.* But since I forsook thee, and clambered up the towers of ambition and pride, a thousand woes, a thousand torments, and four thousand tribulations, have haunted and worried my soul." While he was talking thus, he fitted on his pack-saddle, nobody offering to say anything to him. This done, with a great deal of

difficulty he mounted his ass, and then addressing himself to the steward, the secretary, the gentleman-waiter, and Doctor Pedro Rezio, and many others that stood by,—“Make way, gentlemen,” said he, “and let me return to my former liberty. Let me go, that I may seek my old course of life, and rise again from that death that buries me here alive. I was not born to be a governor, nor to defend islands nor cities from enemies that break in upon them. I know better what belongs to ploughing, delving, pruning, and planting of vineyards than how to make laws, and defend countries and kingdoms. St Peter is very well at Rome; which is as much as to say, let every one stick to the calling he was born to. A spade does better in my hand than a governor’s truncheon; and I had rather fill my belly with a mess of plain porridge,* than lie at the mercy of a coxcomby physic-monger, that starves me to death. I had rather solace myself under the shade of an oak in summer, and wrap up my corpse in a double sheep-skin in the winter, at my liberty, than lay me down, with the slavery of a government, in fine Holland sheets, and case my hide in furs and

* *Gaspacho*.—It is made of oil, vinegar, water, salt, and spice, with toasted bread. A sort of *soup maigre*, says Stevens’s Dictionary.

richest sables. Heaven be with you, gentlefolks; and pray, tell my lord duke from me, that naked I was born, and naked I am at present. I have neither won nor lost; which is as much as to say, without a penny I came to this government, and without a penny I leave it—quite contrary to what other governors of islands used to do, when they leave them. Clear the way, then, I beseech you, and let me pass; I must get myself wrapped up all over in cerecloth; for I do not think I have a sound rib left, thanks to the enemies that have walked over me all night long.”—“This must not be, my lord governor,” said Dr Rezio, “for I will give your honour a balsamic drink, that is a specific against falls, dislocations, contusions, and all manner of bruises, and that will presently restore you to your former health and strength. And then, for your diet, I promise to take a new course with you, and to let you eat abundantly of whatsoever you please.”—“It is too late, Mr Doctor,” answered Sancho; “you should as soon make me turn Turk, as hinder me from going. No, no, these tricks shall not pass upon me again; you shall as soon make me fly to heaven without wings, as get me to stay here, or ever catch me nibbling at a government again, though it were served

up to me in a covered dish. I am of the blood of the Panzas, and we are all wilful and positive. If once we cry odd, it shall be odd, in spite of all mankind, though it be even. Go to, then; let the pismire leave behind him, in this stable, those wings that lifted him up in the air, to be a prey to martlets and sparrows. Fair and softly. Let me now tread again on plain ground; though I may not wear pinked cordovan leather pumps, I shall not want a pair of sandals* to my feet. Every sheep to her mate. Let not the cobbler go beyond his last; and so, let me go, for it is late.”—“My lord governor,” said the steward, “though it grieves me to part with your honour, your sense and Christian behaviour engaging us to covet your company, yet we would not presume to stop you against your inclination; but you know, that every governor, before he leaves the place he has governed, is bound to give an account of his administration. Be pleased, therefore, to do so for the ten days † you have been among us, and then, peace be

* A sort of flat sandal or shoe, made of hemp or of bulrushes, artfully plaited, and fitted to the foot; worn by the poor people in Spain and Italy.

† How comes the steward to say ten days, when it is plain Sancho governed only seven days? It is, says Jarvis, either owing to forgetfulness in the author, or perhaps is a new joke of the steward's, imagining Sancho to be as ignorant of reckoning as of writing. And, in effect, Sancho, by not denying it, allows the ten days.

with you.”—“No man has power to call me to an account,” replied Sancho, “unless it be my lord duke’s appointment. Now, to him it is that I am going, and to him I will give a fair and square account. And indeed, going away so bare as I do, there needs no greater signs that I have governed like an angel.”—“In truth,” said Dr Rezio, “the great Sancho is in the right; and I am of opinion we ought to let him go; for certainly the duke will be very glad to see him.” Thereupon, they all agreed to let him pass, offering first to attend him, and supply him with whatever he might want in his journey, either for entertainment or convenience. Sancho told them, that all he desired was a little corn for his ass, and half a cheese and half a loaf for himself, having occasion for no other provisions in so short a journey. With that, they all embraced him, and he embraced them all, not without tears in his eyes, leaving them in admiration of the good sense which he discovered, both in his discourse and unalterable resolution.

CHAPTER LIV

WHICH TREATS OF MATTERS THAT RELATE TO THIS HISTORY, AND NO OTHER

THE duke and duchess resolved that Don Quixote’s challenge against their vassal should not be ineffectual; and the young man being fled into Flanders, to avoid having Donna Rodriguez to his mother-in-law, they made choice of a Gascoin lackey, named Tosilos, to supply his place, and gave him instructions how to act his part. Two days after, the duke acquainted Don Quixote, that within four days his antagonist would meet him in the lists, armed at all points like a knight, to maintain that the damsel lied through the throat, and through the beard, to say that he had ever promised her marriage. Don Quixote was mightily pleased with this news, promising himself to do wonders on this occasion, and esteeming it an extraordinary happiness to have such an opportunity to shew, before such noble spectators, how extensive were his valour and his strength. Cheered and elevated with