

and provided an honest man be possessed of the endowments of the mind which I mentioned, and nothing appear monstrous in him, it is enough to entitle him to the love of a reasonable creature."

Thus discoursing, they got into a wood quite out of the road; and on a sudden Don Quixote, before he knew where he was, found himself entangled in some nets of green thread, that were spread across among the trees. Not being able to imagine what it was, "Certainly, Sancho," cried he, "this adventure of the nets must be one of the most unaccountable that can be imagined. Let me die now if this be not a stratagem of the evil-minded necromancers that haunt me, to entangle me so that I may not proceed, purely to revenge my contempt of Altisidora's addresses. But let them know, that though these nets were adamantine chains, as they are only made of green thread, and though they were stronger than those in which the jealous god of blacksmiths caught Venus and Mars, I would break them with as much ease as if they were weak rushes, or fine cotton-yarn." With that the knight put briskly forwards, resolving to break through, and make his words good; but in the very moment there sprung from behind the trees

two most beautiful shepherdesses, at least they appeared to be so by their habits, only with this difference, that they were richly dressed in gold brocade. Their flowing hair hung down about their shoulders in curls, as charming as the sun's golden rays, and circled on their brows with garlands of green baize and red-flower-gentle interwoven. As for their age, it seemed not less than fifteen, nor more than eighteen years. This unexpected vision dazzled and amazed Sancho, surprised Don Quixote, made even the gazing sun stop short in his career, and held the surprised parties a while in the same suspense and silence; till at last one of the shepherdesses opening her coral lips, "Hold, sir," she cried; "pray do not tear those nets which we have spread here, not to offend you, but to divert ourselves; and because it is likely you will inquire why they are spread here, and who we are, I shall tell you in few words.

"About two leagues from this place lies a village, where there are many people of quality and good estates; among these several have made up a company, all of friends, neighbours, and relations, to come and take their diversion in this place, which is one of the most delightful in these parts. To this purpose we design

to set up a new Arcadia. The young men have put on the habit of shepherds, and ladies the dress of shepherdesses. We have got two eclogues by heart; one out of the famous Garcilasso, and the other out of Camoens, the most excellent Portuguese poet; though the truth is, we have not yet repeated them, for yesterday was but the first day of our coming hither. We have pitched some tents among the trees, near the banks of a large brook that waters all these meadows. And last night we spread these nets, to catch such simple birds as our calls should allure into the snare. Now, sir, if you please to afford us your company, you shall be made very welcome and handsomely entertained; for we are all disposed to pass the time agreeably, and, for a while, banish melancholy from this place.”—“Truly, fair lady,” answered Don Quixote, “Actæon could not be more lost in admiration and amazement, at the sight of Diana bathing herself, than I have been at the appearance of your beauty. I applaud the design of your entertainment, and return you thanks for your obliging offers; assuring you, that if it lies in my power to serve you, you may depend on my obedience to your commands; for my profession is the very reverse of ingratitude, and aims at

doing good to all persons, especially those of your merit and condition; so that were these nets spread over the surface of the whole earth, I would seek out a passage throughout new worlds, rather than I would break the smallest thread that conduces to your pastime: And that you may give some credit to this seeming exaggeration, know, that he who makes this promise is no less than Don Quixote de la Mancha, if ever such a name has reached your ears.”—“Oh, my dear,” cried the other shepherdess, “what good fortune is this! You see this gentleman before us: I must tell you, he is the most valiant, the most amorous, and the most complaisant person in the world, if the history of his exploits, already in print, does not deceive us. I have read it, my dear, and I hold a wager, that honest fellow there by him is one Sancho Panza, his squire, the most comical creature that ever was.”—“You have nicked it,” quoth Sancho, “I am that comical creature, and that very squire you wot of; and there is my lord and master, the self-same historified, and aforesaid Don Quixote de la Mancha.”—“Oh pray, my dear,” said the other, “let us entreat him to stay: our father and our brothers will be mighty glad of it; I have heard of his valour and his merit, as

much as you now tell me; and what is more, they say he is the most constant and faithful lover in the world; and that his mistress, whom they call Dulcinea del Toboso, bears the prize from all the beauties in Spain."—"It is not without justice," said Don Quixote, "if your peerless charms do not dispute her that glory. But, ladies, I beseech you do not endeavour to detain me; for the indispensable duties of my profession will not suffer me to rest in one place."

At the same time came the brother of one of the shepherdesses, clad like a shepherd, but in a dress as splendid and gay as those of the young ladies. They told him that the gentleman, whom he saw with them, was the valorous Don Quixote de la Mancha, and that other, Sancho Panza, his squire, of whom he had read the history. The gallant shepherd having saluted him, begged of him so earnestly to grant them his company to their tents, that Don Quixote was forced to comply, and go with them.

About the same time the nets were drawn and filled with divers little birds, who being deceived by the colour of the snare, fell into the danger they would have avoided. Above thirty persons, all gaily dressed like shepherds

and shepherdesses, got together there, and being informed who Don Quixote and his squire were, they were not a little pleased, for they were already no strangers to his history. In short, they carried them to their tents, where they found a clean, sumptuous, and plentiful entertainment ready. They obliged the knight to take the place of honour; and while they sat at table, there was not one that did not gaze on him, and wonder at so strange a figure.

At last, the cloth being removed, Don Quixote, with a great deal of gravity, lifting up his voice, "Of all the sins that men commit," said he, "none, in my opinion, is so great as ingratitude, though some think pride a greater; and I ground my assertion on this, that hell is said to be full of the ungrateful. Ever since I had the use of reason, I have employed my utmost endeavours to avoid this crime; and if I am not able to repay the benefits I receive in their kind, at least I am not wanting in real intentions of making suitable returns; and if that be not sufficient, I make my acknowledgments as public as I can; for he that proclaims the kindnesses he has received, shows his disposition to repay them if he could; and those that receive are generally inferior to those that

give. The Supreme Being, that is infinitely above all things, bestows his blessings on us so much beyond the capacity of all other benefactors, that all the acknowledgments we can make can never hold proportion with his goodness. However, a thankful mind in some measure supplies its want of power, with hearty desires and unfeigned expressions of a sense of gratitude and respect. I am in this condition, as to the civilities I have been treated with here; for I am unable to make an acknowledgment equal to the kindnesses I have received. I shall, therefore, only offer you what is within the narrow limits of my own abilities, which is, to maintain, for two whole days together, in the middle of the road that leads to Saragossa, that these ladies here, disguised in the habits of shepherdesses, are the fairest and most courteous damsels in the world, excepting only the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso, sole mistress of my thoughts; without offence to all that hear me, be it spoken."

Here Sancho, who had, with an uncommon attention, all the while given ear to his master's compliment, thought fit to put in a word or two. "Now, in the name of wonder," quoth he, "can there be any body in the world so impudent as to offer to swear, or but to say,

this master of mine is a madman? Pray, tell me, ye gentlemen shepherds, did you ever know any of your country parsons, though never so wise, or so good schollards, that could deliver themselves so finely? Or, is there any of your knights-errant, though never so famed for prowess, that can make such an offer as he has here done?"

Don Quixote turned towards Sancho, and, beholding him with eyes full of fiery indignation, "Can there be any body in the world," cried he, "that can say thou art not an incorrigible blockhead, Sancho, a compound of folly and knavery, wherein malice also is no small ingredient? Who bids thee meddle with my concerns, fellow, or busy thyself with my folly or discretion? Hold your saucy tongue, scoundrel! Make no reply, but go and saddle Rozinante, if he is unsaddled, that I may immediately perform what I have offered; for, in so noble and so just a cause, thou mayest reckon all those who shall presume to oppose me, subdued and overthrown." This said, up he started, in a dreadful fury, and with marks of anger in his looks, to the amazement of all the company, who were at a loss whether they should esteem him a madman or a man of sense. They endeavoured to prevail with him

to lay aside his challenges, telling him, they were sufficiently assured of his grateful nature, without exposing him to the danger of such demonstrations; and as for his valour, they were so well informed by the history of his numerous achievements, that there was no need of any new instance to convince them of it. But all these representations could not dissuade him from his purpose; and therefore, having mounted Rozinante, braced his shield, and grasped his lance, he went and posted himself in the middle of the highway, not far from the verdant meadow, followed by Sancho on his Dapple, and all the pastoral society, who were desirous to see the event of that arrogant and unaccountable resolution.

And now the champion, having taken his ground, made the neighbouring air ring with the following challenge:—"O ye, whoever you are, knights, squires, on foot or on horseback, that now pass, or shall pass this road within these two days, know, that Don Quixote de la Mancha, knight-errant, stays here, to assert and maintain, that the nymphs who inhabit these groves and meadows, surpass, in beauty and courteous disposition, all those in the universe, setting aside the sovereign of my soul, the lady Dulcinea del Toboso. And he that dares up-

hold the contrary, let him appear, for here I expect his coming."

Twice he repeated these lofty words, and twice they were repeated in vain, not being heard by any adventurer. But his old friend Fortune, that had a strange hand at managing his concerns, and always mended upon it, shewed him a jolly sight; for by and by he discovered on the road a great number of people on horseback, many of them with lances in their hands, all trooping together very fast. The company that watched Don Quixote's motions, no sooner spied such a squadron, driving the dust before them, than they got out of harm's way, not judging it safe to be so near danger; and as for Sancho, he sheltered himself behind Rozinante's crupper; only Don Quixote stood fixed with an undaunted courage. When the horsemen came near, one of the foremost, bawling to the champion, "So hey!" cried he, "get out of the way, and be hanged. The devil is in the fellow! stand off, or the bulls will tread thee to pieces."—"Go to, you scoundrels," answered Don Quixote, "none of your bulls are any thing to me, though the fiercest that ever were fed on the banks of Xarama.* Acknowledge, hang-dogs, all in a

The bulls of Xarama are accounted the fiercest in Spain.

body, what I have proclaimed here to be truth, or else stand combat with me." But the herdsman had not time to answer, neither had Don Quixote any to get out of the way, if he had been inclined to it; for the herd of wild bulls were presently upon him, as they poured along, with several tame cows,* and a huge company of drivers and people, that were going to a town where they were to be baited the next day. So, bearing all down before them, knight and squire, horse and man, they trampled them under foot at an unmerciful rate. There lay Sancho mauled, Don Quixote stunned, Dapple bruised, and Rozinante in very indifferent circumstances. But for all this, after the whole route of men and beasts were gone by, up started Don Quixote, ere he was thoroughly come to himself, and staggering and stumbling, falling and getting up again, as fast as he could, he began to run after them. "Stop, scoundrels, stop," cried he aloud; "stay, it is a single knight defies you all, one who scorns the humour of making a golden bridge for a flying enemy." But the hasty travellers did not stop, nor slacken their speed, for all his loud defiance; and minded it no more than the last year's snow.

* *Mansus Cabestros*. According to the Royal Dictionary, they are the old tame oxen, with bells about their necks.

At last, weariness stopped Don Quixote; so that, with all his anger, and no prospect of revenge, he was forced to sit down on the road, till Sancho came up to him with Rozinante and Dapple. Then the master and man made a shift to remount; and, ashamed of their bad success, hastened their journey, without taking leave of their friends of the new Arcadia.