

The History of Don Quixote, Vol. II., Part 26

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

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DON QUIXOTE

Volume II.

Part 26.

by Miguel de Cervantes

Translated by John Ormsby

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF THE WONDERFUL THINGS THE INCOMPARABLE DON QUIXOTE SAID HE SAW IN THE PROFOUND CAVE OF MONTESINOS, THE IMPOSSIBILITY AND MAGNITUDE OF WHICH CAUSE THIS ADVENTURE TO BE DEEMED APOCRYPHAL

It was about four in the afternoon when the sun, veiled in clouds, with

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subdued light and tempered beams, enabled Don Quixote to relate, without heat or inconvenience, what he had seen in the cave of Montesinos to his two illustrious hearers, and he began as follows:

"A matter of some twelve or fourteen times a man's height down in this pit, on the right-hand side, there is a recess or space, roomy enough to contain a large cart with its mules. A little light reaches it through some chinks or crevices, communicating with it and open to the surface of the earth. This recess or space I perceived when I was already growing weary and disgusted at finding myself hanging suspended by the rope, travelling downwards into that dark region without any certainty or knowledge of where I was going, so I resolved to enter it and rest myself for a while. I called out, telling you not to let out more rope until I bade you, but you cannot have heard me. I then gathered in the rope you were sending me, and making a coil or pile of it I seated myself upon it, ruminating and considering what I was to do to lower myself to the bottom, having no one to hold me up; and as I was thus deep in thought and perplexity, suddenly and without provocation a profound sleep fell upon me, and when I least expected it, I know not how, I awoke and found myself in the midst of the most beautiful, delightful meadow that nature could produce or the most lively human imagination conceive. I opened my eyes, I rubbed them, and found I was not asleep but thoroughly awake. Nevertheless, I felt my head and breast to satisfy myself whether it was I myself who was there or some empty delusive phantom; but touch, feeling, the collected thoughts that passed through my mind, all convinced me that I was the same then and there that I am this moment. Next there presented itself to my sight a stately royal palace or castle, with walls that seemed built of clear transparent crystal; and through two great doors that opened wide therein, I saw coming forth and advancing towards me a venerable old man, clad in a long gown of mulberry-coloured serge that trailed upon the ground. On his shoulders and breast he had a green satin collegiate hood, and covering his head a black Milanese bonnet, and his snow-white beard fell below his girdle. He carried no arms whatever, nothing but a rosary of beads bigger than fair-sized filberts, each tenth bead being like a moderate ostrich egg; his bearing, his gait, his dignity and imposing presence held me spellbound and wondering. He approached me, and the first thing he did was to embrace me closely, and then he said to me, 'For a long time now, O valiant knight Don Quixote of La Mancha, we who are here enchanted in these solitudes have been hoping to see thee, that thou mayest make known to the world what is shut up and concealed in this deep cave, called the cave of Montesinos, which thou hast entered, an achievement reserved for thy invincible heart and stupendous courage alone to attempt. Come with me, illustrious sir, and I will show thee the marvels hidden within this transparent castle, whereof I am the alcaide and perpetual warden; for I am Montesinos himself, from whom the cave takes its name.'

"The instant he told me he was Montesinos, I asked him if the story they told in the world above here was true, that he had taken out the heart of his great friend Durandarte from his breast with a little dagger, and carried it to the lady Belerma, as his friend when at the point of death had commanded him. He said in reply that they spoke the truth in every respect except as to the dagger, for it was not a dagger, nor little, but a burnished poniard sharper than an awl."

"That poniard must have been made by Ramon de Hoces the Sevillian," said Sancho.

"I do not know," said Don Quixote; "it could not have been by that

poniard maker, however, because Ramon de Hoces was a man of yesterday, and the affair of Roncesvalles, where this mishap occurred, was long ago; but the question is of no great importance, nor does it affect or make any alteration in the truth or substance of the story."

"That is true," said the cousin; "continue, Senor Don Quixote, for I am listening to you with the greatest pleasure in the world."

"And with no less do I tell the tale," said Don Quixote; "and so, to proceed--the venerable Montesinos led me into the palace of crystal, where, in a lower chamber, strangely cool and entirely of alabaster, was an elaborately wrought marble tomb, upon which I beheld, stretched at full length, a knight, not of bronze, or marble, or jasper, as are seen on other tombs, but of actual flesh and bone. His right hand (which seemed to me somewhat hairy and sinewy, a sign of great strength in its owner) lay on the side of his heart; but before I could put any question to Montesinos, he, seeing me gazing at the tomb in amazement, said to me, 'This is my friend Durandarte, flower and mirror of the true lovers and valiant knights of his time. He is held enchanted here, as I myself and many others are, by that French enchanter Merlin, who, they say, was the devil's son; but my belief is, not that he was the devil's son, but that he knew, as the saying is, a point more than the devil. How or why he enchanted us, no one knows, but time will tell, and I suspect that time is not far off. What I marvel at is, that I know it to be as sure as that it is now day, that Durandarte ended his life in my arms, and that, after his death, I took out his heart with my own hands; and indeed it must have weighed more than two pounds, for, according to naturalists, he who has a large heart is more largely endowed with valour than he who has a small one. Then, as this is the case, and as the knight did really die, how comes it that he now moans and sighs from time to time, as if he were still alive?'

"As he said this, the wretched Durandarte cried out in a loud voice:

O cousin Montesinos!

'T was my last request of thee,
When my soul hath left the body,
And that lying dead I be,
With thy poniard or thy dagger
Cut the heart from out my breast,
And bear it to Belerma.
This was my last request."

On hearing which, the venerable Montesinos fell on his knees before the unhappy knight, and with tearful eyes exclaimed, 'Long since, Senor Durandarte, my beloved cousin, long since have I done what you bade me on that sad day when I lost you; I took out your heart as well as I could, not leaving an atom of it in your breast, I wiped it with a lace handkerchief, and I took the road to France with it, having first laid you in the bosom of the earth with tears enough to wash and cleanse my hands of the blood that covered them after wandering among your bowels; and more by token, O cousin of my soul, at the first village I came to after leaving Roncesvalles, I sprinkled a little salt upon your heart to keep it sweet, and bring it, if not fresh, at least pickled, into the presence of the lady Belerma, whom, together with you, myself, Guadiana your squire, the duenna Ruidera and her seven daughters and two nieces, and many more of your friends and acquaintances, the sage Merlin has been keeping enchanted here these many years; and although more than five hundred have gone by, not one of us has died; Ruidera and her daughters

and nieces alone are missing, and these, because of the tears they shed, Merlin, out of the compassion he seems to have felt for them, changed into so many lakes, which to this day in the world of the living, and in the province of La Mancha, are called the Lakes of Ruidera. The seven daughters belong to the kings of Spain and the two nieces to the knights of a very holy order called the Order of St. John. Guadiana your squire, likewise bewailing your fate, was changed into a river of his own name, but when he came to the surface and beheld the sun of another heaven, so great was his grief at finding he was leaving you, that he plunged into the bowels of the earth; however, as he cannot help following his natural course, he from time to time comes forth and shows himself to the sun and the world. The lakes aforesaid send him their waters, and with these, and others that come to him, he makes a grand and imposing entrance into Portugal; but for all that, go where he may, he shows his melancholy and sadness, and takes no pride in breeding dainty choice fish, only coarse and tasteless sorts, very different from those of the golden Tagus. All this that I tell you now, O cousin mine, I have told you many times before, and as you make no answer, I fear that either you believe me not, or do not hear me, whereat I feel God knows what grief. I have now news to give you, which, if it serves not to alleviate your sufferings, will not in any wise increase them. Know that you have here before you (open your eyes and you will see) that great knight of whom the sage Merlin has prophesied such great things; that Don Quixote of La Mancha I mean, who has again, and to better purpose than in past times, revived in these days knight-errantry, long since forgotten, and by whose intervention and aid it may be we shall be disenchanting; for great deeds are reserved for great men.'

"And if that may not be,' said the wretched Durandarte in a low and feeble voice, 'if that may not be, then, my cousin, I say "patience and shuffle;"' and turning over on his side, he relapsed into his former silence without uttering another word.

"And now there was heard a great outcry and lamentation, accompanied by deep sighs and bitter sobs. I looked round, and through the crystal wall I saw passing through another chamber a procession of two lines of fair damsels all clad in mourning, and with white turbans of Turkish fashion on their heads. Behind, in the rear of these, there came a lady, for so from her dignity she seemed to be, also clad in black, with a white veil so long and ample that it swept the ground. Her turban was twice as large as the largest of any of the others; her eyebrows met, her nose was rather flat, her mouth was large but with ruddy lips, and her teeth, of which at times she allowed a glimpse, were seen to be sparse and ill-set, though as white as peeled almonds. She carried in her hands a fine cloth, and in it, as well as I could make out, a heart that had been mummied, so parched and dried was it. Montesinos told me that all those forming the procession were the attendants of Durandarte and Belerma, who were enchanted there with their master and mistress, and that the last, she who carried the heart in the cloth, was the lady Belerma, who, with her damsels, four days in the week went in procession singing, or rather weeping, dirges over the body and miserable heart of his cousin; and that if she appeared to me somewhat ill-favoured or not so beautiful as fame reported her, it was because of the bad nights and worse days that she passed in that enchantment, as I could see by the great dark circles round her eyes, and her sickly complexion; 'her sallowness, and the rings round her eyes,' said he, 'are not caused by the periodical ailment usual with women, for it is many months and even years since she has had any, but by the grief her own heart suffers because of that which she holds in her hand perpetually, and which recalls and brings back to her memory the

sad fate of her lost lover; were it not for this, hardly would the great Dulcinea del Toboso, so celebrated in all these parts, and even in the world, come up to her for beauty, grace, and gaiety.'

"Hold hard!" said I at this, 'tell your story as you ought, Senor Don Montesinos, for you know very well that all comparisons are odious, and there is no occasion to compare one person with another; the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso is what she is, and the lady Dona Belerma is what she is and has been, and that's enough.' To which he made answer, 'Forgive me, Senor Don Quixote; I own I was wrong and spoke unadvisedly in saying that the lady Dulcinea could scarcely come up to the lady Belerma; for it were enough for me to have learned, by what means I know not, that you are her knight, to make me bite my tongue out before I compared her to anything save heaven itself.' After this apology which the great Montesinos made me, my heart recovered itself from the shock I had received in hearing my lady compared with Belerma."

"Still I wonder," said Sancho, "that your worship did not get upon the old fellow and bruise every bone of him with kicks, and pluck his beard until you didn't leave a hair in it."

"Nay, Sancho, my friend," said Don Quixote, "it would not have been right in me to do that, for we are all bound to pay respect to the aged, even though they be not knights, but especially to those who are, and who are enchanted; I only know I gave him as good as he brought in the many other questions and answers we exchanged."

"I cannot understand, Senor Don Quixote," remarked the cousin here, "how it is that your worship, in such a short space of time as you have been below there, could have seen so many things, and said and answered so much."

"How long is it since I went down?" asked Don Quixote.

"Little better than an hour," replied Sancho.

"That cannot be," returned Don Quixote, "because night overtook me while I was there, and day came, and it was night again and day again three times; so that, by my reckoning, I have been three days in those remote regions beyond our ken."

"My master must be right," replied Sancho; "for as everything that has happened to him is by enchantment, maybe what seems to us an hour would seem three days and nights there."

"That's it," said Don Quixote.

"And did your worship eat anything all that time, senor?" asked the cousin.

"I never touched a morsel," answered Don Quixote, "nor did I feel hunger, or think of it."

"And do the enchanted eat?" said the cousin.

"They neither eat," said Don Quixote; "nor are they subject to the greater excrements, though it is thought that their nails, beards, and hair grow."

"And do the enchanted sleep, now, señor?" asked Sancho.

"Certainly not," replied Don Quixote; "at least, during those three days I was with them not one of them closed an eye, nor did I either."

"The proverb, 'Tell me what company thou keepest and I'll tell thee what thou art,' is to the point here," said Sancho; "your worship keeps company with enchanted people that are always fasting and watching; what wonder is it, then, that you neither eat nor sleep while you are with them? But forgive me, señor, if I say that of all this you have told us now, may God take me--I was just going to say the devil--if I believe a single particle."

"What!" said the cousin, "has Señor Don Quixote, then, been lying? Why, even if he wished it he has not had time to imagine and put together such a host of lies."

"I don't believe my master lies," said Sancho.

"If not, what dost thou believe?" asked Don Quixote.

"I believe," replied Sancho, "that this Merlin, or those enchanters who enchanted the whole crew your worship says you saw and discoursed with down there, stuffed your imagination or your mind with all this rigmarole you have been treating us to, and all that is still to come."

"All that might be, Sancho," replied Don Quixote; "but it is not so, for everything that I have told you I saw with my own eyes, and touched with my own hands. But what will you say when I tell you now how, among the countless other marvellous things Montesinos showed me (of which at leisure and at the proper time I will give thee an account in the course of our journey, for they would not be all in place here), he showed me three country girls who went skipping and capering like goats over the pleasant fields there, and the instant I beheld them I knew one to be the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso, and the other two those same country girls that were with her and that we spoke to on the road from El Toboso! I asked Montesinos if he knew them, and he told me he did not, but he thought they must be some enchanted ladies of distinction, for it was only a few days before that they had made their appearance in those meadows; but I was not to be surprised at that, because there were a great many other ladies there of times past and present, enchanted in various strange shapes, and among them he had recognised Queen Guinevere and her dame Quintanona, she who poured out the wine for Lancelot when he came from Britain."

When Sancho Panza heard his master say this he was ready to take leave of his senses, or die with laughter; for, as he knew the real truth about the pretended enchantment of Dulcinea, in which he himself had been the enchanter and concocter of all the evidence, he made up his mind at last that, beyond all doubt, his master was out of his wits and stark mad, so he said to him, "It was an evil hour, a worse season, and a sorrowful day, when your worship, dear master mine, went down to the other world, and an unlucky moment when you met with Señor Montesinos, who has sent you back to us like this. You were well enough here above in your full senses, such as God had given you, delivering maxims and giving advice at every turn, and not as you are now, talking the greatest nonsense that can be imagined."

"As I know thee, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "I heed not thy words."

"Nor I your worship's," said Sancho, "whether you beat me or kill me for those I have spoken, and will speak if you don't correct and mend your own. But tell me, while we are still at peace, how or by what did you recognise the lady our mistress; and if you spoke to her, what did you say, and what did she answer?"

"I recognised her," said Don Quixote, "by her wearing the same garments she wore when thou didst point her out to me. I spoke to her, but she did not utter a word in reply; on the contrary, she turned her back on me and took to flight, at such a pace that crossbow bolt could not have overtaken her. I wished to follow her, and would have done so had not Montesinos recommended me not to take the trouble as it would be useless, particularly as the time was drawing near when it would be necessary for me to quit the cavern. He told me, moreover, that in course of time he would let me know how he and Belerma, and Durandarte, and all who were there, were to be disenchanting. But of all I saw and observed down there, what gave me most pain was, that while Montesinos was speaking to me, one of the two companions of the hapless Dulcinea approached me on one without my having seen her coming, and with tears in her eyes said to me, in a low, agitated voice, 'My lady Dulcinea del Toboso kisses your worship's hands, and entreats you to do her the favour of letting her know how you are; and, being in great need, she also entreats your worship as earnestly as she can to be so good as to lend her half a dozen reals, or as much as you may have about you, on this new dimity petticoat that I have here; and she promises to repay them very speedily.' I was amazed and taken aback by such a message, and turning to Senor Montesinos I asked him, 'Is it possible, Senor Montesinos, that persons of distinction under enchantment can be in need?' To which he replied, 'Believe me, Senor Don Quixote, that which is called need is to be met with everywhere, and penetrates all quarters and reaches everyone, and does not spare even the enchanted; and as the lady Dulcinea del Toboso sends to beg those six reals, and the pledge is to all appearance a good one, there is nothing for it but to give them to her, for no doubt she must be in some great strait.' 'I will take no pledge of her,' I replied, 'nor yet can I give her what she asks, for all I have is four reals; which I gave (they were those which thou, Sancho, gavest me the other day to bestow in alms upon the poor I met along the road), and I said, 'Tell your mistress, my dear, that I am grieved to the heart because of her distresses, and wish I was a Fucar to remedy them, and that I would have her know that I cannot be, and ought not be, in health while deprived of the happiness of seeing her and enjoying her discreet conversation, and that I implore her as earnestly as I can, to allow herself to be seen and addressed by this her captive servant and forlorn knight. Tell her, too, that when she least expects it she will hear it announced that I have made an oath and vow after the fashion of that which the Marquis of Mantua made to avenge his nephew Baldwin, when he found him at the point of death in the heart of the mountains, which was, not to eat bread off a tablecloth, and other trifling matters which he added, until he had avenged him; and I will make the same to take no rest, and to roam the seven regions of the earth more thoroughly than the Infante Don Pedro of Portugal ever roamed them, until I have disenchanting her.' 'All that and more, you owe my lady,' the damsel's answer to me, and taking the four reals, instead of making me a curtsy she cut a caper, springing two full yards into the air."

"O blessed God!" exclaimed Sancho aloud at this, "is it possible that such things can be in the world, and that enchanters and enchantments can have such power in it as to have changed my master's right senses into a

craze so full of absurdity! O senor, senor, for God's sake, consider yourself, have a care for your honour, and give no credit to this silly stuff that has left you scant and short of wits."

"Thou talkest in this way because thou lovest me, Sancho," said Don Quixote; "and not being experienced in the things of the world, everything that has some difficulty about it seems to thee impossible; but time will pass, as I said before, and I will tell thee some of the things I saw down there which will make thee believe what I have related now, the truth of which admits of neither reply nor question."

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEREIN ARE RELATED A THOUSAND TRIFLING MATTERS, AS TRIVIAL AS THEY ARE NECESSARY TO THE RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF THIS GREAT HISTORY

He who translated this great history from the original written by its first author, Cide Hamete Benengeli, says that on coming to the chapter giving the adventures of the cave of Montesinos he found written on the margin of it, in Hamete's own hand, these exact words:

"I cannot convince or persuade myself that everything that is written in the preceding chapter could have precisely happened to the valiant Don Quixote; and for this reason, that all the adventures that have occurred up to the present have been possible and probable; but as for this one of the cave, I see no way of accepting it as true, as it passes all reasonable bounds. For me to believe that Don Quixote could lie, he being the most truthful gentleman and the noblest knight of his time, is impossible; he would not have told a lie though he were shot to death with arrows. On the other hand, I reflect that he related and told the story with all the circumstances detailed, and that he could not in so short a space have fabricated such a vast complication of absurdities; if, then, this adventure seems apocryphal, it is no fault of mine; and so, without affirming its falsehood or its truth, I write it down. Decide for thyself in thy wisdom, reader; for I am not bound, nor is it in my power, to do more; though certain it is they say that at the time of his death he retracted, and said he had invented it, thinking it matched and tallied with the adventures he had read of in his histories." And then he goes on to say:

The cousin was amazed as well at Sancho's boldness as at the patience of his master, and concluded that the good temper the latter displayed arose from the happiness he felt at having seen his lady Dulcinea, even enchanted as she was; because otherwise the words and language Sancho had addressed to him deserved a thrashing; for indeed he seemed to him to have been rather impudent to his master, to whom he now observed, "I, Senor Don Quixote of La Mancha, look upon the time I have spent in travelling with your worship as very well employed, for I have gained four things in the course of it; the first is that I have made your acquaintance, which I consider great good fortune; the second, that I have learned what the cave of Montesinos contains, together with the transformations of Guadiana and of the lakes of Ruidera; which will be of use to me for the Spanish Ovid that I have in hand; the third, to have discovered the antiquity of cards, that they were in use at least in the time of Charlemagne, as may be inferred from the words you say Durandarte

uttered when, at the end of that long spell while Montesinos was talking to him, he woke up and said, 'Patience and shuffle.' This phrase and expression he could not have learned while he was enchanted, but only before he had become so, in France, and in the time of the aforesaid emperor Charlemagne. And this demonstration is just the thing for me for that other book I am writing, the 'Supplement to Polydore Vergil on the Invention of Antiquities;' for I believe he never thought of inserting that of cards in his book, as I mean to do in mine, and it will be a matter of great importance, particularly when I can cite so grave and veracious an authority as Senor Durandarte. And the fourth thing is, that I have ascertained the source of the river Guadiana, heretofore unknown to mankind."

"You are right," said Don Quixote; "but I should like to know, if by God's favour they grant you a licence to print those books of yours-which I doubt--to whom do you mean dedicate them?"

"There are lords and grandees in Spain to whom they can be dedicated," said the cousin.

"Not many," said Don Quixote; "not that they are unworthy of it, but because they do not care to accept books and incur the obligation of making the return that seems due to the author's labour and courtesy. One prince I know who makes up for all the rest, and more-how much more, if I ventured to say, perhaps I should stir up envy in many a noble breast; but let this stand over for some more convenient time, and let us go and look for some place to shelter ourselves in to-night."

"Not far from this," said the cousin, "there is a hermitage, where there lives a hermit, who they say was a soldier, and who has the reputation of being a good Christian and a very intelligent and charitable man. Close to the hermitage he has a small house which he built at his own cost, but though small it is large enough for the reception of guests."

"Has this hermit any hens, do you think?" asked Sancho.

"Few hermits are without them," said Don Quixote; "for those we see now-a-days are not like the hermits of the Egyptian deserts who were clad in palm-leaves, and lived on the roots of the earth. But do not think that by praising these I am disparaging the others; all I mean to say is that the penances of those of the present day do not come up to the asceticism and austerity of former times; but it does not follow from this that they are not all worthy; at least I think them so; and at the worst the hypocrite who pretends to be good does less harm than the open sinner."

At this point they saw approaching the spot where they stood a man on foot, proceeding at a rapid pace, and beating a mule loaded with lances and halberds. When he came up to them, he saluted them and passed on without stopping. Don Quixote called to him, "Stay, good fellow; you seem to be making more haste than suits that mule."

"I cannot stop, senor," answered the man; "for the arms you see I carry here are to be used tomorrow, so I must not delay; God be with you. But if you want to know what I am carrying them for, I mean to lodge to-night at the inn that is beyond the hermitage, and if you be going the same road you will find me there, and I will tell you some curious things; once more God be with you;" and he urged on his mule at such a pace that Don Quixote had no time to ask him what these curious things were that he

meant to tell them; and as he was somewhat inquisitive, and always tortured by his anxiety to learn something new, he decided to set out at once, and go and pass the night at the inn instead of stopping at the hermitage, where the cousin would have had them halt. Accordingly they mounted and all three took the direct road for the inn, which they reached a little before nightfall. On the road the cousin proposed they should go up to the hermitage to drink a sup. The instant Sancho heard this he steered his Dapple towards it, and Don Quixote and the cousin did the same; but it seems Sancho's bad luck so ordered it that the hermit was not at home, for so a sub-hermit they found in the hermitage told them. They called for some of the best. She replied that her master had none, but that if they liked cheap water she would give it with great pleasure.

"If I found any in water," said Sancho, "there are wells along the road where I could have had enough of it. Ah, Camacho's wedding, and plentiful house of Don Diego, how often do I miss you!"

Leaving the hermitage, they pushed on towards the inn, and a little farther they came upon a youth who was pacing along in front of them at no great speed, so that they overtook him. He carried a sword over his shoulder, and slung on it a budget or bundle of his clothes apparently, probably his breeches or pantaloons, and his cloak and a shirt or two; for he had on a short jacket of velvet with a gloss like satin on it in places, and had his shirt out; his stockings were of silk, and his shoes square-toed as they wear them at court. His age might have been eighteen or nineteen; he was of a merry countenance, and to all appearance of an active habit, and he went along singing seguidillas to beguile the wearisomeness of the road. As they came up with him he was just finishing one, which the cousin got by heart and they say ran thus--

I'm off to the wars
For the want of pence,
Oh, had I but money
I'd show more sense.

The first to address him was Don Quixote, who said, "You travel very airily, sir gallant; whither bound, may we ask, if it is your pleasure to tell us?"

To which the youth replied, "The heat and my poverty are the reason of my travelling so airily, and it is to the wars that I am bound."

"How poverty?" asked Don Quixote; "the heat one can understand."

"Senor," replied the youth, "in this bundle I carry velvet pantaloons to match this jacket; if I wear them out on the road, I shall not be able to make a decent appearance in them in the city, and I have not the wherewithal to buy others; and so for this reason, as well as to keep myself cool, I am making my way in this fashion to overtake some companies of infantry that are not twelve leagues off, in which I shall enlist, and there will be no want of baggage trains to travel with after that to the place of embarkation, which they say will be Carthage; I would rather have the King for a master, and serve him in the wars, than serve a court pauper."

"And did you get any bounty, now?" asked the cousin.

"If I had been in the service of some grandee of Spain or personage of

distinction," replied the youth, "I should have been safe to get it; for that is the advantage of serving good masters, that out of the servants' hall men come to be ancients or captains, or get a good pension. But I, to my misfortune, always served place-hunters and adventurers, whose keep and wages were so miserable and scanty that half went in paying for the starching of one's collars; it would be a miracle indeed if a page volunteer ever got anything like a reasonable bounty."

"And tell me, for heaven's sake," asked Don Quixote, "is it possible, my friend, that all the time you served you never got any livery?"

"They gave me two," replied the page; "but just as when one quits a religious community before making profession, they strip him of the dress of the order and give him back his own clothes, so did my masters return me mine; for as soon as the business on which they came to court was finished, they went home and took back the liveries they had given merely for show."

"What spilorceria!--as an Italian would say," said Don Quixote; "but for all that, consider yourself happy in having left court with as worthy an object as you have, for there is nothing on earth more honourable or profitable than serving, first of all God, and then one's king and natural lord, particularly in the profession of arms, by which, if not more wealth, at least more honour is to be won than by letters, as I have said many a time; for though letters may have founded more great houses than arms, still those founded by arms have I know not what superiority over those founded by letters, and a certain splendour belonging to them that distinguishes them above all. And bear in mind what I am now about to say to you, for it will be of great use and comfort to you in time of trouble; it is, not to let your mind dwell on the adverse chances that may befall you; for the worst of all is death, and if it be a good death, the best of all is to die. They asked Julius Caesar, the valiant Roman emperor, what was the best death. He answered, that which is unexpected, which comes suddenly and unforeseen; and though he answered like a pagan, and one without the knowledge of the true God, yet, as far as sparing our feelings is concerned, he was right; for suppose you are killed in the first engagement or skirmish, whether by a cannon ball or blown up by mine, what matters it? It is only dying, and all is over; and according to Terence, a soldier shows better dead in battle, than alive and safe in flight; and the good soldier wins fame in proportion as he is obedient to his captains and those in command over him. And remember, my son, that it is better for the soldier to smell of gunpowder than of civet, and that if old age should come upon you in this honourable calling, though you may be covered with wounds and crippled and lame, it will not come upon you without honour, and that such as poverty cannot lessen; especially now that provisions are being made for supporting and relieving old and disabled soldiers; for it is not right to deal with them after the fashion of those who set free and get rid of their black slaves when they are old and useless, and, turning them out of their houses under the pretence of making them free, make them slaves to hunger, from which they cannot expect to be released except by death. But for the present I won't say more than get ye up behind me on my horse as far as the inn, and sup with me there, and to-morrow you shall pursue your journey, and God give you as good speed as your intentions deserve."

The page did not accept the invitation to mount, though he did that to supper at the inn; and here they say Sancho said to himself, "God be with you for a master; is it possible that a man who can say things so many and so good as he has said just now, can say that he saw the impossible

absurdities he reports about the cave of Montesinos? Well, well, we shall see."

And now, just as night was falling, they reached the inn, and it was not without satisfaction that Sancho perceived his master took it for a real inn, and not for a castle as usual. The instant they entered Don Quixote asked the landlord after the man with the lances and halberds, and was told that he was in the stable seeing to his mule; which was what Sancho and the cousin proceeded to do for their beasts, giving the best manger and the best place in the stable to Rocinante.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHEREIN IS SET DOWN THE BRAYING ADVENTURE, AND THE DROLL ONE OF THE PUPPET-SHOWMAN, TOGETHER WITH THE MEMORABLE DIVINATIONS OF THE DIVINING APE

Don Quixote's bread would not bake, as the common saying is, until he had heard and learned the curious things promised by the man who carried the arms. He went to seek him where the innkeeper said he was and having found him, bade him say now at any rate what he had to say in answer to the question he had asked him on the road. "The tale of my wonders must be taken more leisurely and not standing," said the man; "let me finish foddering my beast, good sir; and then I'll tell you things that will astonish you."

"Don't wait for that," said Don Quixote; "I'll help you in everything," and so he did, sifting the barley for him and cleaning out the manger; a degree of humility which made the other feel bound to tell him with a good grace what he had asked; so seating himself on a bench, with Don Quixote beside him, and the cousin, the page, Sancho Panza, and the landlord, for a senate and an audience, he began his story in this way:

"You must know that in a village four leagues and a half from this inn, it so happened that one of the regidores, by the tricks and roguery of a servant girl of his (it's too long a tale to tell), lost an ass; and though he did all he possibly could to find it, it was all to no purpose. A fortnight might have gone by, so the story goes, since the ass had been missing, when, as the regidor who had lost it was standing in the plaza, another regidor of the same town said to him, 'Pay me for good news, gossip; your ass has turned up.' 'That I will, and well, gossip,' said the other; 'but tell us, where has he turned up?' 'In the forest,' said the finder; 'I saw him this morning without pack-saddle or harness of any sort, and so lean that it went to one's heart to see him. I tried to drive him before me and bring him to you, but he is already so wild and shy that when I went near him he made off into the thickest part of the forest. If you have a mind that we two should go back and look for him, let me put up this she-ass at my house and I'll be back at once.' 'You will be doing me a great kindness,' said the owner of the ass, 'and I'll try to pay it back in the same coin.' It is with all these circumstances, and in the very same way I am telling it now, that those who know all about the matter tell the story. Well then, the two regidores set off on foot, arm in arm, for the forest, and coming to the place where they hoped to find the ass they could not find him, nor was he to be seen anywhere about, search as they might. Seeing, then, that there was no

sign of him, the regidor who had seen him said to the other, 'Look here, gossip; a plan has occurred to me, by which, beyond a doubt, we shall manage to discover the animal, even if he is stowed away in the bowels of the earth, not to say the forest. Here it is. I can bray to perfection, and if you can ever so little, the thing's as good as done.' 'Ever so little did you say, gossip?' said the other; 'by God, I'll not give in to anybody, not even to the asses themselves.' 'We'll soon see,' said the second regidor, 'for my plan is that you should go one side of the forest, and I the other, so as to go all round about it; and every now and then you will bray and I will bray; and it cannot be but that the ass will hear us, and answer us if he is in the forest.' To which the owner of the ass replied, 'It's an excellent plan, I declare, gossip, and worthy of your great genius;' and the two separating as agreed, it so fell out that they brayed almost at the same moment, and each, deceived by the braying of the other, ran to look, fancying the ass had turned up at last. When they came in sight of one another, said the loser, 'Is it possible, gossip, that it was not my ass that brayed?' 'No, it was I,' said the other. 'Well then, I can tell you, gossip,' said the ass's owner, 'that between you and an ass there is not an atom of difference as far as braying goes, for I never in all my life saw or heard anything more natural.' 'Those praises and compliments belong to you more justly than to me, gossip,' said the inventor of the plan; 'for, by the God that made me, you might give a couple of brays odds to the best and most finished brayer in the world; the tone you have got is deep, your voice is well kept up as to time and pitch, and your finishing notes come thick and fast; in fact, I own myself beaten, and yield the palm to you, and give in to you in this rare accomplishment.' 'Well then,' said the owner, 'I'll set a higher value on myself for the future, and consider that I know something, as I have an excellence of some sort; for though I always thought I brayed well, I never supposed I came up to the pitch of perfection you say.' 'And I say too,' said the second, 'that there are rare gifts going to loss in the world, and that they are ill bestowed upon those who don't know how to make use of them.' 'Ours,' said the owner of the ass, 'unless it is in cases like this we have now in hand, cannot be of any service to us, and even in this God grant they may be of some use.' So saying they separated, and took to their braying once more, but every instant they were deceiving one another, and coming to meet one another again, until they arranged by way of countersign, so as to know that it was they and not the ass, to give two brays, one after the other. In this way, doubling the brays at every step, they made the complete circuit of the forest, but the lost ass never gave them an answer or even the sign of one. How could the poor ill-starred brute have answered, when, in the thickest part of the forest, they found him devoured by wolves? As soon as he saw him his owner said, 'I was wondering he did not answer, for if he wasn't dead he'd have brayed when he heard us, or he'd have been no ass; but for the sake of having heard you bray to such perfection, gossip, I count the trouble I have taken to look for him well bestowed, even though I have found him dead.' 'It's in a good hand, gossip,' said the other; 'if the abbot sings well, the acolyte is not much behind him.' So they returned disconsolate and hoarse to their village, where they told their friends, neighbours, and acquaintances what had befallen them in their search for the ass, each crying up the other's perfection in braying. The whole story came to be known and spread abroad through the villages of the neighbourhood; and the devil, who never sleeps, with his love for sowing dissensions and scattering discord everywhere, blowing mischief about and making quarrels out of nothing, contrived to make the people of the other towns fall to braying whenever they saw anyone from our village, as if to throw the braying of our regidores in our teeth. Then the boys took to it, which was the same

thing for it as getting into the hands and mouths of all the devils of hell; and braying spread from one town to another in such a way that the men of the braying town are as easy to be known as blacks are to be known from whites, and the unlucky joke has gone so far that several times the scoffers have come out in arms and in a body to do battle with the scoffers, and neither king nor rook, fear nor shame, can mend matters. To-morrow or the day after, I believe, the men of my town, that is, of the braying town, are going to take the field against another village two leagues away from ours, one of those that persecute us most; and that we may turn out well prepared I have bought these lances and halberds you have seen. These are the curious things I told you I had to tell, and if you don't think them so, I have got no others;" and with this the worthy fellow brought his story to a close.

Just at this moment there came in at the gate of the inn a man entirely clad in chamois leather, hose, breeches, and doublet, who said in a loud voice, "Senor host, have you room? Here's the divining ape and the show of the Release of Melisendra just coming."

"Ods body!" said the landlord, "why, it's Master Pedro! We're in for a grand night!" I forgot to mention that the said Master Pedro had his left eye and nearly half his cheek covered with a patch of green taffety, showing that something ailed all that side. "Your worship is welcome, Master Pedro," continued the landlord; "but where are the ape and the show, for I don't see them?" "They are close at hand," said he in the chamois leather, "but I came on first to know if there was any room." "I'd make the Duke of Alva himself clear out to make room for Master Pedro," said the landlord; "bring in the ape and the show; there's company in the inn to-night that will pay to see that and the cleverness of the ape." "So be it by all means," said the man with the patch; "I'll lower the price, and be well satisfied if I only pay my expenses; and now I'll go back and hurry on the cart with the ape and the show;" and with this he went out of the inn.

Don Quixote at once asked the landlord what this Master Pedro was, and what was the show and what was the ape he had with him; which the landlord replied, "This is a famous puppet-showman, who for some time past has been going about this Mancha de Aragon, exhibiting a show of the release of Melisendra by the famous Don Gaiferos, one of the best and best-represented stories that have been seen in this part of the kingdom for many a year; he has also with him an ape with the most extraordinary gift ever seen in an ape or imagined in a human being; for if you ask him anything, he listens attentively to the question, and then jumps on his master's shoulder, and pressing close to his ear tells him the answer which Master Pedro then delivers. He says a great deal more about things past than about things to come; and though he does not always hit the truth in every case, most times he is not far wrong, so that he makes us fancy he has got the devil in him. He gets two reals for every question if the ape answers; I mean if his master answers for him after he has whispered into his ear; and so it is believed that this same Master Pedro is very rich. He is a 'gallant man' as they say in Italy, and good company, and leads the finest life in the world; talks more than six, drinks more than a dozen, and all by his tongue, and his ape, and his show."

Master Pedro now came back, and in a cart followed the show and the ape--a big one, without a tail and with buttocks as bare as felt, but not vicious-looking. As soon as Don Quixote saw him, he asked him, "Can you tell me, sir fortune-teller, what fish do we catch, and how will it be

with us? See, here are my two reals," and he bade Sancho give them to Master Pedro; but he answered for the ape and said, "Senor, this animal does not give any answer or information touching things that are to come; of things past he knows something, and more or less of things present."

"Gad," said Sancho, "I would not give a farthing to be told what's past with me, for who knows that better than I do myself? And to pay for being told what I know would be mighty foolish. But as you know things present, here are my two reals, and tell me, most excellent sir ape, what is my wife Teresa Panza doing now, and what is she diverting herself with?"

Master Pedro refused to take the money, saying, "I will not receive payment in advance or until the service has been first rendered;" and then with his right hand he gave a couple of slaps on his left shoulder, and with one spring the ape perched himself upon it, and putting his mouth to his master's ear began chattering his teeth rapidly; and having kept this up as long as one would be saying a credo, with another spring he brought himself to the ground, and the same instant Master Pedro ran in great haste and fell upon his knees before Don Quixote, and embracing his legs exclaimed, "These legs do I embrace as I would embrace the two pillars of Hercules, O illustrious reviver of knight-errantry, so long consigned to oblivion! O never yet duly extolled knight, Don Quixote of La Mancha, courage of the faint-hearted, prop of the tottering, arm of the fallen, staff and counsel of all who are unfortunate!"

Don Quixote was thunderstruck, Sancho astounded, the cousin staggered, the page astonished, the man from the braying town agape, the landlord in perplexity, and, in short, everyone amazed at the words of the puppet-showman, who went on to say, "And thou, worthy Sancho Panza, the best squire and squire to the best knight in the world! Be of good cheer, for thy good wife Teresa is well, and she is at this moment hackling a pound of flax; and more by token she has at her left hand a jug with a broken spout that holds a good drop of wine, with which she solaces herself at her work."

"That I can well believe," said Sancho. "She is a lucky one, and if it was not for her jealousy I would not change her for the giantess Andandona, who by my master's account was a very clever and worthy woman; my Teresa is one of those that won't let themselves want for anything, though their heirs may have to pay for it."

"Now I declare," said Don Quixote, "he who reads much and travels much sees and knows a great deal. I say so because what amount of persuasion could have persuaded me that there are apes in the world that can divine as I have seen now with my own eyes? For I am that very Don Quixote of La Mancha this worthy animal refers to, though he has gone rather too far in my praise; but whatever I may be, I thank heaven that it has endowed me with a tender and compassionate heart, always disposed to do good to all and harm to none."

"If I had money," said the page, "I would ask senor ape what will happen me in the peregrination I am making."

To this Master Pedro, who had by this time risen from Don Quixote's feet, replied, "I have already said that this little beast gives no answer as to the future; but if he did, not having money would be of no consequence, for to oblige Senor Don Quixote, here present, I would give up all the profits in the world. And now, because I have promised it, and to afford him pleasure, I will set up my show and offer entertainment to

all who are in the inn, without any charge whatever." As soon as he heard this, the landlord, delighted beyond measure, pointed out a place where the show might be fixed, which was done at once.

Don Quixote was not very well satisfied with the divinations of the ape, as he did not think it proper that an ape should divine anything, either past or future; so while Master Pedro was arranging the show, he retired with Sancho into a corner of the stable, where, without being overheard by anyone, he said to him, "Look here, Sancho, I have been seriously thinking over this ape's extraordinary gift, and have come to the conclusion that beyond doubt this Master Pedro, his master, has a pact, tacit or express, with the devil."

"If the packet is express from the devil," said Sancho, "it must be a very dirty packet no doubt; but what good can it do Master Pedro to have such packets?"

"Thou dost not understand me, Sancho," said Don Quixote; "I only mean he must have made some compact with the devil to infuse this power into the ape, that he may get his living, and after he has grown rich he will give him his soul, which is what the enemy of mankind wants; this I am led to believe by observing that the ape only answers about things past or present, and the devil's knowledge extends no further; for the future he knows only by guesswork, and that not always; for it is reserved for God alone to know the times and the seasons, and for him there is neither past nor future; all is present. This being as it is, it is clear that this ape speaks by the spirit of the devil; and I am astonished they have not denounced him to the Holy Office, and put him to the question, and forced it out of him by whose virtue it is that he divines; because it is certain this ape is not an astrologer; neither his master nor he sets up, or knows how to set up, those figures they call judiciary, which are now so common in Spain that there is not a jade, or page, or old cobbler, that will not undertake to set up a figure as readily as pick up a knave of cards from the ground, bringing to nought the marvellous truth of the science by their lies and ignorance. I know of a lady who asked one of these figure schemers whether her little lap-dog would be in pup and would breed, and how many and of what colour the little pups would be. To which senior astrologer, after having set up his figure, made answer that the bitch would be in pup, and would drop three pups, one green, another bright red, and the third parti-coloured, provided she conceived between eleven and twelve either of the day or night, and on a Monday or Saturday; but as things turned out, two days after this the bitch died of a surfeit, and senior planet-ruler had the credit all over the place of being a most profound astrologer, as most of these planet-rulers have."

"Still," said Sancho, "I would be glad if your worship would make Master Pedro ask his ape whether what happened your worship in the cave of Montesinos is true; for, begging your worship's pardon, I, for my part, take it to have been all flam and lies, or at any rate something you dreamt."

"That may be," replied Don Quixote; "however, I will do what you suggest; though I have my own scruples about it."

At this point Master Pedro came up in quest of Don Quixote, to tell him the show was now ready and to come and see it, for it was worth seeing. Don Quixote explained his wish, and begged him to ask his ape at once to tell him whether certain things which had happened to him in the cave of Montesinos were dreams or realities, for to him they appeared to partake

of both. Upon this Master Pedro, without answering, went back to fetch the ape, and, having placed it in front of Don Quixote and Sancho, said: "See here, senor ape, this gentleman wishes to know whether certain things which happened to him in the cave called the cave of Montesinos were false or true." On his making the usual sign the ape mounted on his left shoulder and seemed to whisper in his ear, and Master Pedro said at once, "The ape says that the things you saw or that happened to you in that cave are, part of them false, part true; and that he only knows this and no more as regards this question; but if your worship wishes to know more, on Friday next he will answer all that may be asked him, for his virtue is at present exhausted, and will not return to him till Friday, as he has said."

"Did I not say, senor," said Sancho, "that I could not bring myself to believe that all your worship said about the adventures in the cave was true, or even the half of it?"

"The course of events will tell, Sancho," replied Don Quixote; "time, that discloses all things, leaves nothing that it does not drag into the light of day, though it be buried in the bosom of the earth. But enough of that for the present; let us go and see Master Pedro's show, for I am sure there must be something novel in it."

"Something!" said Master Pedro; "this show of mine has sixty thousand novel things in it; let me tell you, Senor Don Quixote, it is one of the best-worth-seeing things in the world this day; but operibus credite et non verbis, and now let's get to work, for it is growing late, and we have a great deal to do and to say and show."

Don Quixote and Sancho obeyed him and went to where the show was already put up and uncovered, set all around with lighted wax tapers which made it look splendid and bright. When they came to it Master Pedro ensconced himself inside it, for it was he who had to work the puppets, and a boy, a servant of his, posted himself outside to act as showman and explain the mysteries of the exhibition, having a wand in his hand to point to the figures as they came out. And so, all who were in the inn being arranged in front of the show, some of them standing, and Don Quixote, Sancho, the page, and cousin, accommodated with the best places, the interpreter began to say what he will hear or see who reads or hears the next chapter.

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