

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT BEFELL DON QUIXOTE WITH CERTAIN GOATHERDS

He was cordially welcomed by the goatherds, and Sancho, having as best he could put up Rocinante and the ass, drew towards the fragrance that came from some pieces of salted goat simmering in a pot on the fire; and though he would have liked at once to try if they were ready to be transferred from the pot to the stomach, he refrained from doing so as the goatherds removed them from the fire, and laying sheepskins on the ground, quickly spread their rude table, and with signs of hearty good-will invited them both to share what they had. Round the skins six of the men belonging to the fold seated themselves, having first with rough politeness pressed Don Quixote to take a seat upon a trough which they placed for him upside down. Don Quixote seated himself, and Sancho remained standing to serve the cup, which was made of horn. Seeing him standing, his master said to him:

"That thou mayest see, Sancho, the good that knight-errantry contains in itself, and how those who fill any office in it are on the high road to be speedily honoured and esteemed by the world, I desire that thou seat thyself here at my side and in the company of these worthy people, and that thou be one with me who am thy master and natural lord, and that thou eat from my plate and drink from whatever I drink from; for the same may be said of knight-errantry as of love, that it levels all."

"Great thanks," said Sancho, "but I may tell your worship that provided I have enough to eat, I can eat it as well, or better, standing, and by myself, than seated alongside of an emperor. And indeed, if the truth is to be told, what I eat in my corner without form or fuss has much more relish for me, even though it be bread and onions, than the turkeys of those other tables where I am forced to chew slowly, drink little, wipe my mouth every minute, and cannot sneeze or cough if I want or do other things that are the privileges of liberty and solitude. So, senor, as for these honours which your worship would put upon me as a servant and follower of knight-errantry, exchange them for other things which may be of more use and advantage to me; for these, though I fully acknowledge them as received, I renounce from this moment to the end of the world."

"For all that," said Don Quixote, "thou must seat thyself, because him who humbleth himself God exalteth;" and seizing him by the arm he forced him to sit down beside himself.

The goatherds did not understand this jargon about squires and knights-errant, and all they did was to eat in silence and stare at their guests, who with great elegance and appetite were stowing away pieces as big as one's fist. The course of meat finished, they spread upon the sheepskins a great heap of parched acorns, and with them they put down a half cheese harder than if it had been made of mortar. All this while the horn was not idle, for it went round so constantly, now full, now empty, like the bucket of a water-wheel, that it soon drained one of the two wine-skins that were in sight. When Don Quixote had quite appeased his appetite he took up a handful of the acorns, and contemplating them

attentively delivered himself somewhat in this fashion:

"Happy the age, happy the time, to which the ancients gave the name of golden, not because in that fortunate age the gold so coveted in this our iron one was gained without toil, but because they that lived in it knew not the two words "mine" and "thine"! In that blessed age all things were in common; to win the daily food no labour was required of any save to stretch forth his hand and gather it from the sturdy oaks that stood generously inviting him with their sweet ripe fruit. The clear streams and running brooks yielded their savoury limpid waters in noble abundance. The busy and sagacious bees fixed their republic in the clefts of the rocks and hollows of the trees, offering without usance the plenteous produce of their fragrant toil to every hand. The mighty cork trees, unenforced save of their own courtesy, shed the broad light bark that served at first to roof the houses supported by rude stakes, a protection against the inclemency of heaven alone. Then all was peace, all friendship, all concord; as yet the dull share of the crooked plough had not dared to rend and pierce the tender bowels of our first mother that without compulsion yielded from every portion of her broad fertile bosom all that could satisfy, sustain, and delight the children that then possessed her. Then was it that the innocent and fair young shepherdess roamed from vale to vale and hill to hill, with flowing locks, and no more garments than were needful modestly to cover what modesty seeks and ever sought to hide. Nor were their ornaments like those in use to-day, set off by Tyrian purple, and silk tortured in endless fashions, but the wreathed leaves of the green dock and ivy, wherewith they went as bravely and becomingly decked as our Court dames with all the rare and

far-fetched artifices that idle curiosity has taught them. Then the love-thoughts of the heart clothed themselves simply and naturally as the heart conceived them, nor sought to commend themselves by forced and rambling verbiage. Fraud, deceit, or malice had then not yet mingled with truth and sincerity. Justice held her ground, undisturbed and unassailed by the efforts of favour and of interest, that now so much impair, pervert, and beset her. Arbitrary law had not yet established itself in the mind of the judge, for then there was no cause to judge and no one to be judged. Maidens and modesty, as I have said, wandered at will alone and unattended, without fear of insult from lawlessness or libertine assault, and if they were undone it was of their own will and pleasure. But now in this hateful age of ours not one is safe, not though some new labyrinth like that of Crete conceal and surround her; even there the pestilence of gallantry will make its way to them through chinks or on the air by the zeal of its accursed importunity, and, despite of all seclusion, lead them to ruin. In defence of these, as time advanced and wickedness increased, the order of knights-errant was instituted, to defend maidens, to protect widows and to succour the orphans and the needy. To this order I belong, brother goatherds, to whom I return thanks for the hospitality and kindly welcome ye offer me and my squire; for though by natural law all living are bound to show favour to knights-errant, yet, seeing that without knowing this obligation ye have welcomed and feasted me, it is right that with all the good-will in my power I should thank you for yours."

All this long harangue (which might very well have been spared) our knight delivered because the acorns they gave him reminded him of the

golden age; and the whim seized him to address all this unnecessary argument to the goatherds, who listened to him gaping in amazement without saying a word in reply. Sancho likewise held his peace and ate acorns, and paid repeated visits to the second wine-skin, which they had hung up on a cork tree to keep the wine cool.

Don Quixote was longer in talking than the supper in finishing, at the end of which one of the goatherds said, "That your worship, senor knight-errant, may say with more truth that we show you hospitality with ready good-will, we will give you amusement and pleasure by making one of our comrades sing: he will be here before long, and he is a very intelligent youth and deep in love, and what is more he can read and write and play on the rebeck to perfection."

The goatherd had hardly done speaking, when the notes of the rebeck reached their ears; and shortly after, the player came up, a very good-looking young man of about two-and-twenty. His comrades asked him if he had supped, and on his replying that he had, he who had already made the offer said to him:

"In that case, Antonio, thou mayest as well do us the pleasure of singing a little, that the gentleman, our guest, may see that even in the mountains and woods there are musicians: we have told him of thy accomplishments, and we want thee to show them and prove that we say true; so, as thou livest, pray sit down and sing that ballad about thy love that thy uncle the prebendary made thee, and that was so much liked in the town."

"With all my heart," said the young man, and without waiting for more pressing he seated himself on the trunk of a felled oak, and tuning his rebeck, presently began to sing to these words.

ANTONIO'S BALLAD

Thou dost love me well, Olalla;
Well I know it, even though
Love's mute tongues, thine eyes, have never
By their glances told me so.

For I know my love thou knowest,
Therefore thine to claim I dare:
Once it ceases to be secret,
Love need never feel despair.

True it is, Olalla, sometimes
Thou hast all too plainly shown
That thy heart is brass in hardness,
And thy snowy bosom stone.

Yet for all that, in thy coyness,
And thy fickle fits between,
Hope is there--at least the border
Of her garment may be seen.

Lures to faith are they, those glimpses,
And to faith in thee I hold;
Kindness cannot make it stronger,
Coldness cannot make it cold.

If it be that love is gentle,
In thy gentleness I see
Something holding out assurance
To the hope of winning thee.

If it be that in devotion
Lies a power hearts to move,
That which every day I show thee,
Helpful to my suit should prove.

Many a time thou must have noticed--
If to notice thou dost care--
How I go about on Monday
Dressed in all my Sunday wear.

Love's eyes love to look on brightness;
Love loves what is gaily drest;
Sunday, Monday, all I care is
Thou shouldst see me in my best.

No account I make of dances,

Or of strains that pleased thee so,
Keeping thee awake from midnight
Till the cocks began to crow;

Or of how I roundly swore it
That there's none so fair as thou;
True it is, but as I said it,
By the girls I'm hated now.

For Teresa of the hillside
At my praise of thee was sore;
Said, "You think you love an angel;
It's a monkey you adore;

"Caught by all her glittering trinkets,
And her borrowed braids of hair,
And a host of made-up beauties
That would Love himself ensnare."

'T was a lie, and so I told her,
And her cousin at the word
Gave me his defiance for it;
And what followed thou hast heard.

Mine is no high-flown affection,
Mine no passion par amours--
As they call it--what I offer

Is an honest love, and pure.

Cunning cords the holy Church has,

Cords of softest silk they be;

Put thy neck beneath the yoke, dear;

Mine will follow, thou wilt see.

Else--and once for all I swear it

By the saint of most renown--

If I ever quit the mountains,

'T will be in a friar's gown.

Here the goatherd brought his song to an end, and though Don Quixote entreated him to sing more, Sancho had no mind that way, being more inclined for sleep than for listening to songs; so said he to his master, "Your worship will do well to settle at once where you mean to pass the night, for the labour these good men are at all day does not allow them to spend the night in singing."

"I understand thee, Sancho," replied Don Quixote; "I perceive clearly that those visits to the wine-skin demand compensation in sleep rather than in music."

"It's sweet to us all, blessed be God," said Sancho.

"I do not deny it," replied Don Quixote; "but settle thyself where thou wilt; those of my calling are more becomingly employed in watching than

in sleeping; still it would be as well if thou wert to dress this ear for me again, for it is giving me more pain than it need."

Sancho did as he bade him, but one of the goatherds, seeing the wound, told him not to be uneasy, as he would apply a remedy with which it would be soon healed; and gathering some leaves of rosemary, of which there was a great quantity there, he chewed them and mixed them with a little salt, and applying them to the ear he secured them firmly with a bandage, assuring him that no other treatment would be required, and so it proved.