

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### WHICH TREATS OF MANY AND GREAT MATTERS

Supreme was the satisfaction that Sancho felt at seeing himself, as it seemed, an established favourite with the duchess, for he looked forward to finding in her castle what he had found in Don Diego's house and in Basilio's; he was always fond of good living, and always seized by the forelock any opportunity of feasting himself whenever it presented itself. The history informs us, then, that before they reached the country house or castle, the duke went on in advance and instructed all his servants how they were to treat Don Quixote; and so the instant he came up to the castle gates with the duchess, two lackeys or equerries, clad in what they call morning gowns of fine crimson satin reaching to their feet, hastened out, and catching Don Quixote in their arms before he saw or heard them, said to him, "Your highness should go and take my lady the duchess off her horse."

Don Quixote obeyed, and great bandying of compliments followed between the two over the matter; but in the end the duchess's determination carried the day, and she refused to get down or dismount from her palfrey except in the arms of the duke, saying she did not consider herself worthy to impose so unnecessary a burden on so great a knight. At length the duke came out to take her down, and as they entered a spacious court two fair damsels came forward and threw over Don Quixote's shoulders a

large mantle of the finest scarlet cloth, and at the same instant all the galleries of the court were lined with the men-servants and women-servants of the household, crying, "Welcome, flower and cream of knight-errantry!" while all or most of them flung pellets filled with scented water over Don Quixote and the duke and duchess; at all which Don Quixote was greatly astonished, and this was the first time that he thoroughly felt and believed himself to be a knight-errant in reality and not merely in fancy, now that he saw himself treated in the same way as he had read of such knights being treated in days of yore.

Sancho, deserting Dapple, hung on to the duchess and entered the castle, but feeling some twinges of conscience at having left the ass alone, he approached a respectable duenna who had come out with the rest to receive the duchess, and in a low voice he said to her, "Senora Gonzalez, or however your grace may be called-

"I am called Dona Rodriguez de Grijalba," replied the duenna; "what is your will, brother?" To which Sancho made answer, "I should be glad if your worship would do me the favour to go out to the castle gate, where you will find a grey ass of mine; make them, if you please, put him in the stable, or put him there yourself, for the poor little beast is rather easily frightened, and cannot bear being alone at all."

"If the master is as wise as the man," said the duenna, "we have got a fine bargain. Be off with you, brother, and bad luck to you and him who brought you here; go, look after your ass, for we, the duennas of this

house, are not used to work of that sort."

"Well then, in troth," returned Sancho, "I have heard my master, who is the very treasure-finder of stories, telling the story of Lancelot when he came from Britain, say that ladies waited upon him and duennas upon his hack; and, if it comes to my ass, I wouldn't change him for Senor Lancelot's hack."

"If you are a jester, brother," said the duenna, "keep your drolleries for some place where they'll pass muster and be paid for; for you'll get nothing from me but a fig."

"At any rate, it will be a very ripe one," said Sancho, "for you won't lose the trick in years by a point too little."

"Son of a bitch," said the duenna, all aglow with anger, "whether I'm old or not, it's with God I have to reckon, not with you, you garlic-stuffed scoundrel!" and she said it so loud, that the duchess heard it, and turning round and seeing the duenna in such a state of excitement, and her eyes flaming so, asked whom she was wrangling with.

"With this good fellow here," said the duenna, "who has particularly requested me to go and put an ass of his that is at the castle gate into the stable, holding it up to me as an example that they did the same I don't know where--that some ladies waited on one Lancelot, and duennas on his hack; and what is more, to wind up with, he called me old."

"That," said the duchess, "I should have considered the greatest affront that could be offered me;" and addressing Sancho, she said to him, "You must know, friend Sancho, that Dona Rodriguez is very youthful, and that she wears that hood more for authority and custom sake than because of her years."

"May all the rest of mine be unlucky," said Sancho, "if I meant it that way; I only spoke because the affection I have for my ass is so great, and I thought I could not commend him to a more kind-hearted person than the lady Dona Rodriguez."

Don Quixote, who was listening, said to him, "Is this proper conversation for the place, Sancho?"

"Senor," replied Sancho, "every one must mention what he wants wherever he may be; I thought of Dapple here, and I spoke of him here; if I had thought of him in the stable I would have spoken there."

On which the duke observed, "Sancho is quite right, and there is no reason at all to find fault with him; Dapple shall be fed to his heart's content, and Sancho may rest easy, for he shall be treated like himself."

While this conversation, amusing to all except Don Quixote, was proceeding, they ascended the staircase and ushered Don Quixote into a chamber hung with rich cloth of gold and brocade; six damsels relieved

him of his armour and waited on him like pages, all of them prepared and instructed by the duke and duchess as to what they were to do, and how they were to treat Don Quixote, so that he might see and believe they were treating him like a knight-errant. When his armour was removed, there stood Don Quixote in his tight-fitting breeches and chamois doublet, lean, lanky, and long, with cheeks that seemed to be kissing each other inside; such a figure, that if the damsels waiting on him had not taken care to check their merriment (which was one of the particular directions their master and mistress had given them), they would have burst with laughter. They asked him to let himself be stripped that they might put a shirt on him, but he would not on any account, saying that modesty became knights-errant just as much as valour. However, he said they might give the shirt to Sancho; and shutting himself in with him in a room where there was a sumptuous bed, he undressed and put on the shirt; and then, finding himself alone with Sancho, he said to him, "Tell me, thou new-fledged buffoon and old booby, dost thou think it right to offend and insult a duenna so deserving of reverence and respect as that one just now? Was that a time to bethink thee of thy Dapple, or are these noble personages likely to let the beasts fare badly when they treat their owners in such elegant style? For God's sake, Sancho, restrain thyself, and don't show the thread so as to let them see what a coarse, boorish texture thou art of. Remember, sinner that thou art, the master is the more esteemed the more respectable and well-bred his servants are; and that one of the greatest advantages that princes have over other men is that they have servants as good as themselves to wait on them. Dost thou not see--shortsighted being that thou art, and unlucky mortal that I

am!--that if they perceive thee to be a coarse clown or a dull blockhead, they will suspect me to be some impostor or swindler? Nay, nay, Sancho friend, keep clear, oh, keep clear of these stumbling-blocks; for he who falls into the way of being a chatterbox and droll, drops into a wretched buffoon the first time he trips; bridle thy tongue, consider and weigh thy words before they escape thy mouth, and bear in mind we are now in quarters whence, by God's help, and the strength of my arm, we shall come forth mightily advanced in fame and fortune."

Sancho promised him with much earnestness to keep his mouth shut, and to bite off his tongue before he uttered a word that was not altogether to the purpose and well considered, and told him he might make his mind easy on that point, for it should never be discovered through him what they were.

Don Quixote dressed himself, put on his baldric with his sword, threw the scarlet mantle over his shoulders, placed on his head a montera of green satin that the damsels had given him, and thus arrayed passed out into the large room, where he found the damsels drawn up in double file, the same number on each side, all with the appliances for washing the hands, which they presented to him with profuse obeisances and ceremonies. Then came twelve pages, together with the seneschal, to lead him to dinner, as his hosts were already waiting for him. They placed him in the midst of them, and with much pomp and stateliness they conducted him into another room, where there was a sumptuous table laid with but four covers. The duchess and the duke came out to the door of the room to receive him, and

with them a grave ecclesiastic, one of those who rule noblemen's houses; one of those who, not being born magnates themselves, never know how to teach those who are how to behave as such; one of those who would have the greatness of great folk measured by their own narrowness of mind; one of those who, when they try to introduce economy into the household they rule, lead it into meanness. One of this sort, I say, must have been the grave churchman who came out with the duke and duchess to receive Don Quixote.

A vast number of polite speeches were exchanged, and at length, taking Don Quixote between them, they proceeded to sit down to table. The duke pressed Don Quixote to take the head of the table, and, though he refused, the entreaties of the duke were so urgent that he had to accept it.

The ecclesiastic took his seat opposite to him, and the duke and duchess those at the sides. All this time Sancho stood by, gaping with amazement at the honour he saw shown to his master by these illustrious persons; and observing all the ceremonious pressing that had passed between the duke and Don Quixote to induce him to take his seat at the head of the table, he said, "If your worship will give me leave I will tell you a story of what happened in my village about this matter of seats."

The moment Sancho said this Don Quixote trembled, making sure that he was about to say something foolish. Sancho glanced at him, and guessing his thoughts, said, "Don't be afraid of my going astray, senor, or saying

anything that won't be pat to the purpose; I haven't forgotten the advice your worship gave me just now about talking much or little, well or ill."

"I have no recollection of anything, Sancho," said Don Quixote; "say what thou wilt, only say it quickly."

"Well then," said Sancho, "what I am going to say is so true that my master Don Quixote, who is here present, will keep me from lying."

"Lie as much as thou wilt for all I care, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "for I am not going to stop thee, but consider what thou art going to say."

"I have so considered and reconsidered," said Sancho, "that the bell-ringer's in a safe berth; as will be seen by what follows."

"It would be well," said Don Quixote, "if your highnesses would order them to turn out this idiot, for he will talk a heap of nonsense."

"By the life of the duke, Sancho shall not be taken away from me for a moment," said the duchess; "I am very fond of him, for I know he is very discreet."

"Discreet be the days of your holiness," said Sancho, "for the good opinion you have of my wit, though there's none in me; but the story I want to tell is this. There was an invitation given by a gentleman of my town, a very rich one, and one of quality, for he was one of the Alamos



of Medina del Campo, and married to Dona Mencia de Quinones, the daughter of Don Alonso de Maranon, Knight of the Order of Santiago, that was drowned at the Herradura--him there was that quarrel about years ago in our village, that my master Don Quixote was mixed up in, to the best of my belief, that Tomasillo the scapegrace, the son of Balbastro the smith, was wounded in.--Isn't all this true, master mine? As you live, say so, that these gentlefolk may not take me for some lying chatterer."

"So far," said the ecclesiastic, "I take you to be more a chatterer than a liar; but I don't know what I shall take you for by-and-by."

"Thou citest so many witnesses and proofs, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "that I have no choice but to say thou must be telling the truth; go on, and cut the story short, for thou art taking the way not to make an end for two days to come."

"He is not to cut it short," said the duchess; "on the contrary, for my gratification, he is to tell it as he knows it, though he should not finish it these six days; and if he took so many they would be to me the pleasantest I ever spent."

"Well then, sirs, I say," continued Sancho, "that this same gentleman, whom I know as well as I do my own hands, for it's not a bowshot from my house to his, invited a poor but respectable labourer--"

"Get on, brother," said the churchman; "at the rate you are going you

will not stop with your story short of the next world."

"I'll stop less than half-way, please God," said Sancho; "and so I say this labourer, coming to the house of the gentleman I spoke of that invited him--rest his soul, he is now dead; and more by token he died the death of an angel, so they say; for I was not there, for just at that time I had gone to reap at Tembleque--"

"As you live, my son," said the churchman, "make haste back from Tembleque, and finish your story without burying the gentleman, unless you want to make more funerals."

"Well then, it so happened," said Sancho, "that as the pair of them were going to sit down to table--and I think I can see them now plainer than ever--"

Great was the enjoyment the duke and duchess derived from the irritation the worthy churchman showed at the long-winded, halting way Sancho had of telling his story, while Don Quixote was chafing with rage and vexation.

"So, as I was saying," continued Sancho, "as the pair of them were going to sit down to table, as I said, the labourer insisted upon the gentleman's taking the head of the table, and the gentleman insisted upon the labourer's taking it, as his orders should be obeyed in his house; but the labourer, who plumed himself on his politeness and good breeding, would not on any account, until the gentleman, out of patience, putting

his hands on his shoulders, compelled him by force to sit down, saying, 'Sit down, you stupid lout, for wherever I sit will be the head to you; and that's the story, and, troth, I think it hasn't been brought in amiss here.'

Don Quixote turned all colours, which, on his sunburnt face, mottled it till it looked like jasper. The duke and duchess suppressed their laughter so as not altogether to mortify Don Quixote, for they saw through Sancho's impertinence; and to change the conversation, and keep Sancho from uttering more absurdities, the duchess asked Don Quixote what news he had of the lady Dulcinea, and if he had sent her any presents of giants or miscreants lately, for he could not but have vanquished a good many.

To which Don Quixote replied, "Senora, my misfortunes, though they had a beginning, will never have an end. I have vanquished giants and I have sent her caitiffs and miscreants; but where are they to find her if she is enchanted and turned into the most ill-favoured peasant wench that can be imagined?"

"I don't know," said Sancho Panza; "to me she seems the fairest creature in the world; at any rate, in nimbleness and jumping she won't give in to a tumbler; by my faith, senora duchess, she leaps from the ground on to the back of an ass like a cat."

"Have you seen her enchanted, Sancho?" asked the duke.

"What, seen her!" said Sancho; "why, who the devil was it but myself that first thought of the enchantment business? She is as much enchanted as my father."

The ecclesiastic, when he heard them talking of giants and caitiffs and enchantments, began to suspect that this must be Don Quixote of La Mancha, whose story the duke was always reading; and he had himself often reproved him for it, telling him it was foolish to read such fooleries; and becoming convinced that his suspicion was correct, addressing the duke, he said very angrily to him, "Senor, your excellence will have to give account to God for what this good man does. This Don Quixote, or Don Simpleton, or whatever his name is, cannot, I imagine, be such a blockhead as your excellence would have him, holding out encouragement to him to go on with his vagaries and follies." Then turning to address Don Quixote he said, "And you, num-skull, who put it into your head that you are a knight-errant, and vanquish giants and capture miscreants? Go your ways in a good hour, and in a good hour be it said to you. Go home and bring up your children if you have any, and attend to your business, and give over going wandering about the world, gaping and making a laughing-stock of yourself to all who know you and all who don't. Where, in heaven's name, have you discovered that there are or ever were knights-errant? Where are there giants in Spain or miscreants in La Mancha, or enchanted Dulcineas, or all the rest of the silly things they tell about you?"

Don Quixote listened attentively to the reverend gentleman's words, and as soon as he perceived he had done speaking, regardless of the presence of the duke and duchess, he sprang to his feet with angry looks and an agitated countenance, and said--But the reply deserves a chapter to itself.