

CHAPTER XXXIX.

IN WHICH THE TRIFALDI CONTINUES HER MARVELLOUS AND MEMORABLE STORY

By every word that Sancho uttered, the duchess was as much delighted as Don Quixote was driven to desperation. He bade him hold his tongue, and the Distressed One went on to say: "At length, after much questioning and answering, as the princess held to her story, without changing or varying her previous declaration, the Vicar gave his decision in favour of Don Clavijo, and she was delivered over to him as his lawful wife; which the Queen Dona Maguncia, the Princess Antonomasia's mother, so took to heart, that within the space of three days we buried her."

"She died, no doubt," said Sancho.

"Of course," said Trifaldin; "they don't bury living people in Kandy, only the dead."

"Senor Squire," said Sancho, "a man in a swoon has been known to be buried before now, in the belief that he was dead; and it struck me that Queen Maguncia ought to have swooned rather than died; because with life a great many things come right, and the princess's folly was not so great that she need feel it so keenly. If the lady had married some page of hers, or some other servant of the house, as many another has done, so I

have heard say, then the mischief would have been past curing. But to marry such an elegant accomplished gentleman as has been just now described to us--indeed, indeed, though it was a folly, it was not such a great one as you think; for according to the rules of my master here--and he won't allow me to lie--as of men of letters bishops are made, so of gentlemen knights, specially if they be errant, kings and emperors may be made."

"Thou art right, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "for with a knight-errant, if he has but two fingers' breadth of good fortune, it is on the cards to become the mightiest lord on earth. But let senora the Distressed One proceed; for I suspect she has got yet to tell us the bitter part of this so far sweet story."

"The bitter is indeed to come," said the countess; "and such bitter that colocynth is sweet and oleander toothsome in comparison. The queen, then, being dead, and not in a swoon, we buried her; and hardly had we covered her with earth, hardly had we said our last farewells, when, *quis talia fando temperet a lachrymis?* over the queen's grave there appeared, mounted upon a wooden horse, the giant Malambruno, Maguncia's first cousin, who besides being cruel is an enchanter; and he, to revenge the death of his cousin, punish the audacity of Don Clavijo, and in wrath at the contumacy of Antonomasia, left them both enchanted by his art on the grave itself; she being changed into an ape of brass, and he into a horrible crocodile of some unknown metal; while between the two there stands a pillar, also of metal, with certain characters in the Syriac

language inscribed upon it, which, being translated into Kandian, and now into Castilian, contain the following sentence: 'These two rash lovers shall not recover their former shape until the valiant Manchegan comes to do battle with me in single combat; for the Fates reserve this unexampled adventure for his mighty valour alone.' This done, he drew from its sheath a huge broad scimitar, and seizing me by the hair he made as though he meant to cut my throat and shear my head clean off. I was terror-stricken, my voice stuck in my throat, and I was in the deepest distress; nevertheless I summoned up my strength as well as I could, and in a trembling and piteous voice I addressed such words to him as induced him to stay the infliction of a punishment so severe. He then caused all the duennas of the palace, those that are here present, to be brought before him; and after having dwelt upon the enormity of our offence, and denounced duennas, their characters, their evil ways and worse intrigues, laying to the charge of all what I alone was guilty of, he said he would not visit us with capital punishment, but with others of a slow nature which would be in effect civil death for ever; and the very instant he ceased speaking we all felt the pores of our faces opening, and pricking us, as if with the points of needles. We at once put our hands up to our faces and found ourselves in the state you now see."

Here the Distressed One and the other duennas raised the veils with which they were covered, and disclosed countenances all bristling with beards, some red, some black, some white, and some grizzled, at which spectacle the duke and duchess made a show of being filled with wonder. Don Quixote and Sancho were overwhelmed with amazement, and the bystanders lost in

astonishment, while the Trifaldi went on to say: "Thus did that malevolent villain Malambruno punish us, covering the tenderness and softness of our faces with these rough bristles! Would to heaven that he had swept off our heads with his enormous scimitar instead of obscuring the light of our countenances with these wool-combings that cover us! For if we look into the matter, sirs (and what I am now going to say I would say with eyes flowing like fountains, only that the thought of our misfortune and the oceans they have already wept, keep them as dry as barley spears, and so I say it without tears), where, I ask, can a duenna with a beard to to? What father or mother will feel pity for her? Who will help her? For, if even when she has a smooth skin, and a face tortured by a thousand kinds of washes and cosmetics, she can hardly get anybody to love her, what will she do when she shows a countenance turned into a thicket? Oh duennas, companions mine! it was an unlucky moment when we were born and an ill-starred hour when our fathers begot us!" And as she said this she showed signs of being about to faint.