

## CHAPTER LV.

### OF WHAT BEFELL SANCHO ON THE ROAD, AND OTHER THINGS THAT CANNOT BE SURPASSED

The length of time he delayed with Ricote prevented Sancho from reaching the duke's castle that day, though he was within half a league of it when night, somewhat dark and cloudy, overtook him. This, however, as it was summer time, did not give him much uneasiness, and he turned aside out of the road intending to wait for morning; but his ill luck and hard fate so willed it that as he was searching about for a place to make himself as comfortable as possible, he and Dapple fell into a deep dark hole that lay among some very old buildings. As he fell he commended himself with all his heart to God, fancying he was not going to stop until he reached the depths of the bottomless pit; but it did not turn out so, for at little more than thrice a man's height Dapple touched bottom, and he found himself sitting on him without having received any hurt or damage whatever. He felt himself all over and held his breath to try whether he was quite sound or had a hole made in him anywhere, and finding himself all right and whole and in perfect health he was profuse in his thanks to God our Lord for the mercy that had been shown him, for he made sure he had been broken into a thousand pieces. He also felt along the sides of the pit with his hands to see if it were possible to get out of it without help, but he found they were quite smooth and afforded no hold anywhere, at which he was greatly distressed, especially when he heard

how pathetically and dolefully Dapple was bemoaning himself, and no wonder he complained, nor was it from ill-temper, for in truth he was not in a very good case. "Alas," said Sancho, "what unexpected accidents happen at every step to those who live in this miserable world! Who would have said that one who saw himself yesterday sitting on a throne, governor of an island, giving orders to his servants and his vassals, would see himself to-day buried in a pit without a soul to help him, or servant or vassal to come to his relief? Here must we perish with hunger, my ass and myself, if indeed we don't die first, he of his bruises and injuries, and I of grief and sorrow. At any rate I'll not be as lucky as my master Don Quixote of La Mancha, when he went down into the cave of that enchanted Montesinos, where he found people to make more of him than if he had been in his own house; for it seems he came in for a table laid out and a bed ready made. There he saw fair and pleasant visions, but here I'll see, I imagine, toads and adders. Unlucky wretch that I am, what an end my follies and fancies have come to! They'll take up my bones out of this, when it is heaven's will that I'm found, picked clean, white and polished, and my good Dapple's with them, and by that, perhaps, it will be found out who we are, at least by such as have heard that Sancho Panza never separated from his ass, nor his ass from Sancho Panza. Unlucky wretches, I say again, that our hard fate should not let us die in our own country and among our own people, where if there was no help for our misfortune, at any rate there would be some one to grieve for it and to close our eyes as we passed away! O comrade and friend, how ill have I repaid thy faithful services! Forgive me, and entreat Fortune, as well as thou canst, to deliver us out of this miserable strait we are

both in; and I promise to put a crown of laurel on thy head, and make thee look like a poet laureate, and give thee double feeds."

In this strain did Sancho bewail himself, and his ass listened to him, but answered him never a word, such was the distress and anguish the poor beast found himself in. At length, after a night spent in bitter moanings and lamentations, day came, and by its light Sancho perceived that it was wholly impossible to escape out of that pit without help, and he fell to bemoaning his fate and uttering loud shouts to find out if there was anyone within hearing; but all his shouting was only crying in the wilderness, for there was not a soul anywhere in the neighbourhood to hear him, and then at last he gave himself up for dead. Dapple was lying on his back, and Sancho helped him to his feet, which he was scarcely able to keep; and then taking a piece of bread out of his alforjas which had shared their fortunes in the fall, he gave it to the ass, to whom it was not unwelcome, saying to him as if he understood him, "With bread all sorrows are less."

And now he perceived on one side of the pit a hole large enough to admit a person if he stooped and squeezed himself into a small compass. Sancho made for it, and entered it by creeping, and found it wide and spacious on the inside, which he was able to see as a ray of sunlight that penetrated what might be called the roof showed it all plainly. He observed too that it opened and widened out into another spacious cavity; seeing which he made his way back to where the ass was, and with a stone began to pick away the clay from the hole until in a short time he had

made room for the beast to pass easily, and this accomplished, taking him by the halter, he proceeded to traverse the cavern to see if there was any outlet at the other end. He advanced, sometimes in the dark, sometimes without light, but never without fear; "God Almighty help me!" said he to himself; "this that is a misadventure to me would make a good adventure for my master Don Quixote. He would have been sure to take these depths and dungeons for flowery gardens or the palaces of Galiana, and would have counted upon issuing out of this darkness and imprisonment into some blooming meadow; but I, unlucky that I am, hopeless and spiritless, expect at every step another pit deeper than the first to open under my feet and swallow me up for good; 'welcome evil, if thou comest alone.'"

In this way and with these reflections he seemed to himself to have travelled rather more than half a league, when at last he perceived a dim light that looked like daylight and found its way in on one side, showing that this road, which appeared to him the road to the other world, led to some opening.

Here Cide Hamete leaves him, and returns to Don Quixote, who in high spirits and satisfaction was looking forward to the day fixed for the battle he was to fight with him who had robbed Dona Rodriguez's daughter of her honour, for whom he hoped to obtain satisfaction for the wrong and injury shamefully done to her. It came to pass, then, that having sallied forth one morning to practise and exercise himself in what he would have to do in the encounter he expected to find himself engaged in the next

day, as he was putting Rocinante through his paces or pressing him to the charge, he brought his feet so close to a pit that but for reining him in tightly it would have been impossible for him to avoid falling into it. He pulled him up, however, without a fall, and coming a little closer examined the hole without dismounting; but as he was looking at it he heard loud cries proceeding from it, and by listening attentively was able to make out that he who uttered them was saying, "Ho, above there! is there any Christian that hears me, or any charitable gentleman that will take pity on a sinner buried alive, on an unfortunate disgraced governor?"

It struck Don Quixote that it was the voice of Sancho Panza he heard, whereat he was taken aback and amazed, and raising his own voice as much as he could, he cried out, "Who is below there? Who is that complaining?"

"Who should be here, or who should complain," was the answer, "but the forlorn Sancho Panza, for his sins and for his ill-luck governor of the island of Baratania, squire that was to the famous knight Don Quixote of La Mancha?"

When Don Quixote heard this his amazement was redoubled and his perturbation grew greater than ever, for it suggested itself to his mind that Sancho must be dead, and that his soul was in torment down there; and carried away by this idea he exclaimed, "I conjure thee by everything that as a Catholic Christian I can conjure thee by, tell me who thou art; and if thou art a soul in torment, tell me what thou wouldst have me do

for thee; for as my profession is to give aid and succour to those that need it in this world, it will also extend to aiding and succouring the distressed of the other, who cannot help themselves."

"In that case," answered the voice, "your worship who speaks to me must be my master Don Quixote of La Mancha; nay, from the tone of the voice it is plain it can be nobody else."

"Don Quixote I am," replied Don Quixote, "he whose profession it is to aid and succour the living and the dead in their necessities; wherefore tell me who thou art, for thou art keeping me in suspense; because, if thou art my squire Sancho Panza, and art dead, since the devils have not carried thee off, and thou art by God's mercy in purgatory, our holy mother the Roman Catholic Church has intercessory means sufficient to release thee from the pains thou art in; and I for my part will plead with her to that end, so far as my substance will go; without further delay, therefore, declare thyself, and tell me who thou art."

"By all that's good," was the answer, "and by the birth of whomsoever your worship chooses, I swear, Senor Don Quixote of La Mancha, that I am your squire Sancho Panza, and that I have never died all my life; but that, having given up my government for reasons that would require more time to explain, I fell last night into this pit where I am now, and Dapple is witness and won't let me lie, for more by token he is here with me."

Nor was this all; one would have fancied the ass understood what Sancho said, because that moment he began to bray so loudly that the whole cave rang again.

"Famous testimony!" exclaimed Don Quixote; "I know that bray as well as if I was its mother, and thy voice too, my Sancho. Wait while I go to the duke's castle, which is close by, and I will bring some one to take thee out of this pit into which thy sins no doubt have brought thee."

"Go, your worship," said Sancho, "and come back quick for God's sake; for I cannot bear being buried alive any longer, and I'm dying of fear."

Don Quixote left him, and hastened to the castle to tell the duke and duchess what had happened Sancho, and they were not a little astonished at it; they could easily understand his having fallen, from the confirmatory circumstance of the cave which had been in existence there from time immemorial; but they could not imagine how he had quitted the government without their receiving any intimation of his coming. To be brief, they fetched ropes and tackle, as the saying is, and by dint of many hands and much labour they drew up Dapple and Sancho Panza out of the darkness into the light of day. A student who saw him remarked, "That's the way all bad governors should come out of their governments, as this sinner comes out of the depths of the pit, dead with hunger, pale, and I suppose without a farthing."

Sancho overheard him and said, "It is eight or ten days, brother growler,

since I entered upon the government of the island they gave me, and all that time I never had a bellyful of victuals, no not for an hour; doctors persecuted me and enemies crushed my bones; nor had I any opportunity of taking bribes or levying taxes; and if that be the case, as it is, I don't deserve, I think, to come out in this fashion; but 'man proposes and God disposes;' and God knows what is best, and what suits each one best; and 'as the occasion, so the behaviour;' and 'let nobody say "I won't drink of this water;"' and 'where one thinks there are fitches, there are no pegs;' God knows my meaning and that's enough; I say no more, though I could."

"Be not angry or annoyed at what thou hearest, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "or there will never be an end of it; keep a safe conscience and let them say what they like; for trying to stop slanderers' tongues is like trying to put gates to the open plain. If a governor comes out of his government rich, they say he has been a thief; and if he comes out poor, that he has been a noodle and a blockhead."

"They'll be pretty sure this time," said Sancho, "to set me down for a fool rather than a thief."

Thus talking, and surrounded by boys and a crowd of people, they reached the castle, where in one of the corridors the duke and duchess stood waiting for them; but Sancho would not go up to see the duke until he had first put up Dapple in the stable, for he said he had passed a very bad night in his last quarters; then he went upstairs to see his lord and



lady, and kneeling before them he said, "Because it was your highnesses' pleasure, not because of any desert of my own, I went to govern your island of Barataria, which 'I entered naked, and naked I find myself; I neither lose nor gain.' Whether I have governed well or ill, I have had witnesses who will say what they think fit. I have answered questions, I have decided causes, and always dying of hunger, for Doctor Pedro Recio of Tirteafuera, the island and governor doctor, would have it so. Enemies attacked us by night and put us in a great quandary, but the people of the island say they came off safe and victorious by the might of my arm; and may God give them as much health as there's truth in what they say. In short, during that time I have weighed the cares and responsibilities governing brings with it, and by my reckoning I find my shoulders can't bear them, nor are they a load for my loins or arrows for my quiver; and so, before the government threw me over I preferred to throw the government over; and yesterday morning I left the island as I found it, with the same streets, houses, and roofs it had when I entered it. I asked no loan of anybody, nor did I try to fill my pocket; and though I meant to make some useful laws, I made hardly any, as I was afraid they would not be kept; for in that case it comes to the same thing to make them or not to make them. I quitted the island, as I said, without any escort except my ass; I fell into a pit, I pushed on through it, until this morning by the light of the sun I saw an outlet, but not so easy a one but that, had not heaven sent me my master Don Quixote, I'd have stayed there till the end of the world. So now my lord and lady duke and duchess, here is your governor Sancho Panza, who in the bare ten days he has held the government has come by the knowledge that he would not give

anything to be governor, not to say of an island, but of the whole world; and that point being settled, kissing your worships' feet, and imitating the game of the boys when they say, 'leap thou, and give me one,' I take a leap out of the government and pass into the service of my master Don Quixote; for after all, though in it I eat my bread in fear and trembling, at any rate I take my fill; and for my part, so long as I'm full, it's all alike to me whether it's with carrots or with partridges."

Here Sancho brought his long speech to an end, Don Quixote having been the whole time in dread of his uttering a host of absurdities; and when he found him leave off with so few, he thanked heaven in his heart. The duke embraced Sancho and told him he was heartily sorry he had given up the government so soon, but that he would see that he was provided with some other post on his estate less onerous and more profitable. The duchess also embraced him, and gave orders that he should be taken good care of, as it was plain to see he had been badly treated and worse bruised.