

MIGUEL DE SAAVEDRA

THE HISTORY OF DON
QUIXOTE, VOLUME 2,
PART 22

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CHAPTER XV.

WHEREIN IT IS TOLD AND KNOWN WHO THE KNIGHT OF THE MIRRORS AND HIS SQUIRE WERE

Don Quixote went off satisfied, elated, and vain-glorious in the highest degree at having won a victory over such a valiant knight as he fancied him of the Mirrors to be, and one from whose knightly word he expected to learn whether the enchantment of his lady still continued; inasmuch as the said vanquished knight was bound, under the penalty of ceasing to be one, to return and render him an account of what took place between him and her. But Don Quixote was of one mind, he of the Mirrors of another, for he just then had no thought of anything but finding some village where he could plaster himself, as has been said already. The history goes on to say, then, that

when the bachelor Samson Carrasco recommended Don Quixote to resume his knight-errantry which he had laid aside, it was in consequence of having been previously in conclave with the curate and the barber on the means to be adopted to induce Don Quixote to stay at home in peace and quiet without worrying himself with his ill-starred adventures; at which consultation it was decided by the unanimous vote of all, and on the special advice of Carrasco, that Don Quixote should be allowed to go, as it seemed impossible to restrain him, and that Samson should sally forth to meet him as a knight-errant, and do battle with him, for there would be no difficulty about a cause, and vanquish him, that being looked upon as an easy matter; and that it should be agreed and settled that the vanquished was to be at the mercy of the victor. Then, Don Quixote being vanquished, the bachelor knight was to command him to return to his village and his house, and not quit it for two years, or until he received further orders from him; all which it was clear Don Quixote would unhesitatingly obey, rather than contravene or fail to observe the laws of chivalry; and during the period of his seclusion he might perhaps forget his folly, or there might be an opportunity of discovering some ready remedy for his madness. Carrasco undertook the task, and Tom Cecial, a gossip and neighbour of Sancho Panza's, a lively, feather-headed fellow, offered himself as his squire. Carrasco armed himself in the fashion described, and Tom Cecial, that he might not be known by his gossip when they met, fitted on over his own natural nose the false

masquerade one that has been mentioned; and so they followed the same route Don Quixote took, and almost came up with him in time to be present at the adventure of the cart of Death and finally encountered them in the grove, where all that the sagacious reader has been reading about took place; and had it not been for the extraordinary fancies of Don Quixote, and his conviction that the bachelor was not the bachelor, senior bachelor would have been incapacitated for ever from taking his degree of licentiate, all through not finding nests where he thought to find birds.

Tom Cecial, seeing how ill they had succeeded, and what a sorry end their expedition had come to, said to the bachelor, "Sure enough, Senior Samson Carrasco, we are served right; it is easy enough to plan and set about an enterprise, but it is often a difficult matter to come well out of it. Don Quixote a madman, and we sane; he goes off laughing, safe, and sound, and you are left sore and sorry! I'd like to know now which is the madder, he who is so because he cannot help it, or he who is so of his own choice?"

To which Samson replied, "The difference between the two sorts of madmen is, that he who is so will he nil he, will be one always, while he who is so of his own accord can leave off being one whenever he likes."

"In that case," said Tom Cecial, "I was a madman of my own accord when I volunteered to become your squire, and, of my own accord, I'll leave off being one and go home."

"That's your affair," returned Samson, "but to suppose that I am going home until I have given Don Quixote a thrashing is absurd; and it is not any wish that he may recover his senses that will make me hunt him out now, but a wish for the sore pain I am in with my ribs won't let me entertain more charitable thoughts."

Thus discoursing, the pair proceeded until they reached a town where it was their good luck to find a bone-setter, with whose help the unfortunate Samson was cured. Tom Cecial left him and went home, while he stayed behind meditating vengeance; and the history will return to him again at the proper time, so as not to omit making merry with Don Quixote now.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF WHAT BEFELL DON QUIXOTE WITH A DISCREET GENTLEMAN OF LA MANCHA

Don Quixote pursued his journey in the high spirits, satisfaction, and self-complacency already described, fancying himself the most valorous knight-errant of the age in the world because of his late victory. All the adventures that could befall him from that time forth he regarded as already done and brought to a happy issue; he made light of enchantments and enchanters; he thought no more of the countless drubbings that had been administered to him in the course of his knight-errantry, nor of the volley of stones that had levelled half his teeth, nor of the ingratitude of the galley slaves, nor of the audacity of the Yanguesans and the shower of stakes that fell upon him; in short, he said to himself that could he discover any means, mode, or way of disenchanting his lady Dulcinea, he would not envy the highest fortune that the most fortunate knight-errant of yore ever reached or could reach.

He was going along entirely absorbed in these fancies, when Sancho said to him, "Isn't it odd, senor, that I have still before my eyes that monstrous enormous nose of my gossip, Tom Cecial?"

"And dost thou, then, believe, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "that the Knight of the Mirrors was the bachelor Carrasco, and his squire Tom CECIAL thy gossip?"

"I don't know what to say to that," replied Sancho; "all I know is that the tokens he gave me about my own house, wife and children, nobody else but himself could have given me; and the face, once the nose was off, was the very face of Tom CECIAL, as I have seen it many a time in my town and next door to my own house; and the sound of the voice was just the same."

"Let us reason the matter, Sancho," said Don Quixote. "Come now, by what process of thinking can it be supposed that the bachelor Samson Carrasco would come as a knight-errant, in arms offensive and defensive, to fight with me? Have I ever been by any chance his enemy? Have I ever given him any occasion to owe me a grudge? Am I his rival, or does he profess arms, that he should envy the fame I have acquired in them?"

"Well, but what are we to say, senor," returned Sancho, "about that knight, whoever he is, being so like the bachelor Carrasco, and his squire so like my gossip, Tom CECIAL? And if that be enchantment, as your worship says, was there no other pair in the world for them to take the likeness of?"

"It is all," said Don Quixote, "a scheme and plot of the malignant magicians that persecute me, who, foreseeing that I was to be victorious in the conflict, arranged that the vanquished knight should display the countenance of my friend the bachelor, in order that the friendship I bear him should interpose to stay

the edge of my sword and might of my arm, and temper the just wrath of my heart; so that he who sought to take my life by fraud and falsehood should save his own. And to prove it, thou knowest already, Sancho, by experience which cannot lie or deceive, how easy it is for enchanters to change one countenance into another, turning fair into foul, and foul into fair; for it is not two days since thou sawest with thine own eyes the beauty and elegance of the peerless Dulcinea in all its perfection and natural harmony, while I saw her in the repulsive and mean form of a coarse country wench, with cataracts in her eyes and a foul smell in her mouth; and when the perverse enchanter ventured to effect so wicked a transformation, it is no wonder if he effected that of Samson Carrasco and thy gossip in order to snatch the glory of victory out of my grasp. For all that, however, I console myself, because, after all, in whatever shape he may have been, I have victorious over my enemy."

"God knows what's the truth of it all," said Sancho; and knowing as he did that the transformation of Dulcinea had been a device and imposition of his own, his master's illusions were not satisfactory to him; but he did not like to reply lest he should say something that might disclose his trickery.

As they were engaged in this conversation they were overtaken by a man who was following the same road behind them, mounted on a very handsome flea-bitten mare, and dressed in a gaban of fine green cloth, with tawny velvet facings, and a montera of the same velvet. The trappings of the mare were of

the field and jineta fashion, and of mulberry colour and green. He carried a Moorish cutlass hanging from a broad green and gold baldric; the buskins were of the same make as the baldric; the spurs were not gilt, but lacquered green, and so brightly polished that, matching as they did the rest of his apparel, they looked better than if they had been of pure gold.

When the traveller came up with them he saluted them courteously, and spurring his mare was passing them without stopping, but Don Quixote called out to him, "Gallant sir, if so be your worship is going our road, and has no occasion for speed, it would be a pleasure to me if we were to join company."

"In truth," replied he on the mare, "I would not pass you so hastily but for fear that horse might turn restive in the company of my mare."

"You may safely hold in your mare, senor," said Sancho in reply to this, "for our horse is the most virtuous and well-behaved horse in the world; he never does anything wrong on such occasions, and the only time he misbehaved, my master and I suffered for it sevenfold; I say again your worship may pull up if you like; for if she was offered to him between two plates the horse would not hanker after her."

The traveller drew rein, amazed at the trim and features of Don Quixote, who rode without his helmet, which Sancho carried like a valise in front of Dapple's pack-saddle; and if the man in green examined Don Quixote closely, still more closely did Don Quixote examine the man in green, who struck him as

being a man of intelligence. In appearance he was about fifty years of age, with but few grey hairs, an aquiline cast of features, and an expression between grave and gay; and his dress and accoutrements showed him to be a man of good condition. What he in green thought of Don Quixote of La Mancha was that a man of that sort and shape he had never yet seen; he marvelled at the length of his hair, his lofty stature, the lankness and sallowness of his countenance, his armour, his bearing and his gravity – a figure and picture such as had not been seen in those regions for many a long day.

Don Quixote saw very plainly the attention with which the traveller was regarding him, and read his curiosity in his astonishment; and courteous as he was and ready to please everybody, before the other could ask him any question he anticipated him by saying, "The appearance I present to your worship being so strange and so out of the common, I should not be surprised if it filled you with wonder; but you will cease to wonder when I tell you, as I do, that I am one of those knights who, as people say, go seeking adventures. I have left my home, I have mortgaged my estate, I have given up my comforts, and committed myself to the arms of Fortune, to bear me whithersoever she may please. My desire was to bring to life again knight-errantry, now dead, and for some time past, stumbling here, falling there, now coming down headlong, now raising myself up again, I have carried out a great portion of my design, succouring widows, protecting maidens, and giving

aid to wives, orphans, and minors, the proper and natural duty of knights-errant; and, therefore, because of my many valiant and Christian achievements, I have been already found worthy to make my way in print to well-nigh all, or most, of the nations of the earth. Thirty thousand volumes of my history have been printed, and it is on the high-road to be printed thirty thousand thousands of times, if heaven does not put a stop to it. In short, to sum up all in a few words, or in a single one, I may tell you I am Don Quixote of La Mancha, otherwise called 'The Knight of the Rueful Countenance;' for though self-praise is degrading, I must perforce sound my own sometimes, that is to say, when there is no one at hand to do it for me. So that, gentle sir, neither this horse, nor this lance, nor this shield, nor this squire, nor all these arms put together, nor the sallowness of my countenance, nor my gaunt leanness, will henceforth astonish you, now that you know who I am and what profession I follow."

With these words Don Quixote held his peace, and, from the time he took to answer, the man in green seemed to be at a loss for a reply; after a long pause, however, he said to him, "You were right when you saw curiosity in my amazement, sir knight; but you have not succeeded in removing the astonishment I feel at seeing you; for although you say, senor, that knowing who you are ought to remove it, it has not done so; on the contrary, now that I know, I am left more amazed and astonished than before. What! is it possible that there are knights-errant in the world in these days, and histories of real chivalry printed? I cannot

realise the fact that there can be anyone on earth now-a-days who aids widows, or protects maidens, or defends wives, or succours orphans; nor should I believe it had I not seen it in your worship with my own eyes. Blessed be heaven! for by means of this history of your noble and genuine chivalrous deeds, which you say has been printed, the countless stories of fictitious knights-errant with which the world is filled, so much to the injury of morality and the prejudice and discredit of good histories, will have been driven into oblivion."

"There is a good deal to be said on that point," said Don Quixote, "as to whether the histories of the knights-errant are fiction or not."

"Why, is there anyone who doubts that those histories are false?" said the man in green.

"I doubt it," said Don Quixote, "but never mind that just now; if our journey lasts long enough, I trust in God I shall show your worship that you do wrong in going with the stream of those who regard it as a matter of certainty that they are not true."

From this last observation of Don Quixote's, the traveller began to have a suspicion that he was some crazy being, and was waiting him to confirm it by something further; but before they could turn to any new subject Don Quixote begged him to tell him who he was, since he himself had rendered account of his station and life. To this, he in the green gaban replied "I, Sir Knight of the Rueful Countenance, am a gentleman by birth, native of the village where, please God, we are going to dine

today; I am more than fairly well off, and my name is Don Diego de Miranda. I pass my life with my wife, children, and friends; my pursuits are hunting and fishing, but I keep neither hawks nor greyhounds, nothing but a tame partridge or a bold ferret or two; I have six dozen or so of books, some in our mother tongue, some Latin, some of them history, others devotional; those of chivalry have not as yet crossed the threshold of my door; I am more given to turning over the profane than the devotional, so long as they are books of honest entertainment that charm by their style and attract and interest by the invention they display, though of these there are very few in Spain. Sometimes I dine with my neighbours and friends, and often invite them; my entertainments are neat and well served without stint of anything. I have no taste for tattle, nor do I allow tattling in my presence; I pry not into my neighbours' lives, nor have I lynx-eyes for what others do. I hear mass every day; I share my substance with the poor, making no display of good works, lest I let hypocrisy and vainglory, those enemies that subtly take possession of the most watchful heart, find an entrance into mine. I strive to make peace between those whom I know to be at variance; I am the devoted servant of Our Lady, and my trust is ever in the infinite mercy of God our Lord."

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