

MIGUEL DE SAAVEDRA

THE HISTORY OF DON
QUIXOTE, VOLUME 2,
PART 31

Miguel Cervantes
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Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

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CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW SANCHO PANZA WAS CONDUCTED TO HIS GOVERNMENT, AND OF THE STRANGE ADVENTURE THAT BEFELL DON QUIXOTE IN THE CASTLE

It is stated, they say, in the true original of this history, that when Cide Hamete came to write this chapter, his interpreter did not translate it as he wrote it – that is, as a kind of complaint the Moor made against himself for having taken in hand a story so dry and of so little variety as this of Don Quixote, for he found himself forced to speak perpetually of him and Sancho, without venturing to indulge in digressions and episodes more serious and more interesting. He said, too, that to go on,

mind, hand, pen always restricted to writing upon one single subject, and speaking through the mouths of a few characters, was intolerable drudgery, the result of which was never equal to the author's labour, and that to avoid this he had in the First Part availed himself of the device of novels, like "The Ill-advised Curiosity," and "The Captive Captain," which stand, as it were, apart from the story; the others are given there being incidents which occurred to Don Quixote himself and could not be omitted. He also thought, he says, that many, engrossed by the interest attaching to the exploits of Don Quixote, would take none in the novels, and pass them over hastily or impatiently without noticing the elegance and art of their composition, which would be very manifest were they published by themselves and not as mere adjuncts to the crazes of Don Quixote or the simplicities of Sancho. Therefore in this Second Part he thought it best not to insert novels, either separate or interwoven, but only episodes, something like them, arising out of the circumstances the facts present; and even these sparingly, and with no more words than suffice to make them plain; and as he confines and restricts himself to the narrow limits of the narrative, though he has ability; capacity, and brains enough to deal with the whole universe, he requests that his labours may not be despised, and that credit be given him, not alone for what he writes, but for what he has refrained from writing.

And so he goes on with his story, saying that the day Don Quixote gave the counsels to Sancho, the same afternoon after

dinner he handed them to him in writing so that he might get some one to read them to him. They had scarcely, however, been given to him when he let them drop, and they fell into the hands of the duke, who showed them to the duchess and they were both amazed afresh at the madness and wit of Don Quixote. To carry on the joke, then, the same evening they despatched Sancho with a large following to the village that was to serve him for an island. It happened that the person who had him in charge was a majordomo of the duke's, a man of great discretion and humour – and there can be no humour without discretion – and the same who played the part of the Countess Trifaldi in the comical way that has been already described; and thus qualified, and instructed by his master and mistress as to how to deal with Sancho, he carried out their scheme admirably. Now it came to pass that as soon as Sancho saw this majordomo he seemed in his features to recognise those of the Trifaldi, and turning to his master, he said to him, "Senor, either the devil will carry me off, here on this spot, righteous and believing, or your worship will own to me that the face of this majordomo of the duke's here is the very face of the Distressed One."

Don Quixote regarded the majordomo attentively, and having done so, said to Sancho, "There is no reason why the devil should carry thee off, Sancho, either righteous or believing – and what thou meanest by that I know not; the face of the Distressed One is that of the majordomo, but for all that the majordomo is not the Distressed One; for his being so would

involve a mighty contradiction; but this is not the time for going into questions of the sort, which would be involving ourselves in an inextricable labyrinth. Believe me, my friend, we must pray earnestly to our Lord that he deliver us both from wicked wizards and enchanters."

"It is no joke, senor," said Sancho, "for before this I heard him speak, and it seemed exactly as if the voice of the Trifaldi was sounding in my ears. Well, I'll hold my peace; but I'll take care to be on the look-out henceforth for any sign that may be seen to confirm or do away with this suspicion."

"Thou wilt do well, Sancho," said Don Quixote, "and thou wilt let me know all thou discoverest, and all that befalls thee in thy government."

Sancho at last set out attended by a great number of people. He was dressed in the garb of a lawyer, with a gaban of tawny watered camlet over all and a montera cap of the same material, and mounted a la gineta upon a mule. Behind him, in accordance with the duke's orders, followed Dapple with brand new ass-trappings and ornaments of silk, and from time to time Sancho turned round to look at his ass, so well pleased to have him with him that he would not have changed places with the emperor of Germany. On taking leave he kissed the hands of the duke and duchess and got his master's blessing, which Don Quixote gave him with tears, and he received blubbering.

Let worthy Sancho go in peace, and good luck to him, Gentle Reader; and look out for two bushels of laughter, which the

account of how he behaved himself in office will give thee. In the meantime turn thy attention to what happened his master the same night, and if thou dost not laugh thereat, at any rate thou wilt stretch thy mouth with a grin; for Don Quixote's adventures must be honoured either with wonder or with laughter.

It is recorded, then, that as soon as Sancho had gone, Don Quixote felt his loneliness, and had it been possible for him to revoke the mandate and take away the government from him he would have done so. The duchess observed his dejection and asked him why he was melancholy; because, she said, if it was for the loss of Sancho, there were squires, duennas, and damsels in her house who would wait upon him to his full satisfaction.

"The truth is, senora," replied Don Quixote, "that I do feel the loss of Sancho; but that is not the main cause of my looking sad; and of all the offers your excellence makes me, I accept only the good-will with which they are made, and as to the remainder I entreat of your excellence to permit and allow me alone to wait upon myself in my chamber."

"Indeed, Senor Don Quixote," said the duchess, "that must not be; four of my damsels, as beautiful as flowers, shall wait upon you."

"To me," said Don Quixote, "they will not be flowers, but thorns to pierce my heart. They, or anything like them, shall as soon enter my chamber as fly. If your highness wishes to gratify me still further, though I deserve it not, permit me to please myself, and wait upon myself in my own room; for I place

a barrier between my inclinations and my virtue, and I do not wish to break this rule through the generosity your highness is disposed to display towards me; and, in short, I will sleep in my clothes, sooner than allow anyone to undress me."

"Say no more, Senor Don Quixote, say no more," said the duchess; "I assure you I will give orders that not even a fly, not to say a damsel, shall enter your room. I am not the one to undermine the propriety of Senor Don Quixote, for it strikes me that among his many virtues the one that is pre-eminent is that of modesty. Your worship may undress and dress in private and in your own way, as you please and when you please, for there will be no one to hinder you; and in your chamber you will find all the utensils requisite to supply the wants of one who sleeps with his door locked, to the end that no natural needs compel you to open it. May the great Dulcinea del Toboso live a thousand years, and may her fame extend all over the surface of the globe, for she deserves to be loved by a knight so valiant and so virtuous; and may kind heaven infuse zeal into the heart of our governor Sancho Panza to finish off his discipline speedily, so that the world may once more enjoy the beauty of so grand a lady."

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