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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Don Quixote: The Adventure Of The Two Armies (8/19)

Whilst they were riding on their way, Don Quixote saw a large, dense cloud of dust rolling towards them, and turning to Sancho said: "This is the day on which shall be shown the might of my arm and on which I am to do deeds which shall be written in the books of fame. Dost thou see the dust which arises there? Know then that it is caused by a mighty army composed of various and numberless nations that are marching this way." "If that be so," replied Sancho, "then must there be two armies, for on this other side there is as great a dust." Don Quixote turned round to behold it, and seeing that it was so, he was marvellous glad, for he imagined that there were indeed two armies coming to fight each other in the midst of that spacious plain. For at every hour and moment his fancy was full of battles, enchantments, and adventures, such as are related in the books of knighthood, and all his thoughts and wishes were turned towards such things.

As for the clouds he had seen, they were raised by two large flocks of sheep which were being driven along the same road from two opposite sides, and these by reason of the dust could not be seen until they came near.

Don Quixote was so much in earnest when he called them armies that Sancho at once believed it, asking: "What then shall we do, good master?"

"What!" cried Don Quixote. "Why, favour and help those who are in distress and need. Thou must know, Sancho, that this which comes on our front is led by the mighty Emperor Alifanfaron, lord of the great island of Trapobana. This other which is marching at our back is the army of his foe, the King of the Garamantes, Pentapolin of the Naked Arm, for he always goes into battle with his right arm bare."

"But why do these two princes hate each other so much?" asked Sancho.

"They are enemies," replied Don Quixote, "because Alifanfaron is a furious pagan and is deeply in love with Pentapolin's daughter, who is a beautiful and gracious princess and a Christian. Her father refuses to give her to the pagan king until he abandons Mahomet's false religion and becomes a convert to his own."

"By my beard," said Sancho, "Pentapolin does right well, and I will help him all I can."

"Then thou wilt but do thy duty," said Don Quixote, "for it is not necessary to be a dubbed knight to engage in battles such as these."

"Right!" replied Sancho, "but where shall we stow this ass that we may be sure of finding him after the fight is over, for I think it is not the custom to enter into battle mounted on such a beast."

"That is true," said Don Quixote; "but thou mayest safely leave it to chance whether he be lost or found,

for after this battle we shall have so many horses that even Rozinante runs a risk of being changed for another. And now let us withdraw to that hillock yonder that we may get a better view of both those great armies."

They did so, and standing on the top of a hill gazed at the two great clouds of dust which the imagination of Don Quixote had turned into armies. And then Don Quixote, with all the eloquence he could muster, described to Sancho the names of the different knights in the two armies, with their colours and devices and mottoes, and the numbers of their squadrons, and the countries and provinces from which they came.

But though Sancho stood and listened in wonder he could see nothing as yet of knights or armies, and at last he cried out: "Where are all these grand knights, good my master? For myself, I can see none of them. But perhaps it is all enchantment, as so many things have been."

"How! Sayest them so?" said Don Quixote. "Dost thou not hear the horses neigh and the trumpets sound and the noise of the drums?"

"I hear nothing else," said Sancho, "but the great bleating of sheep."

And so it was, indeed, for by this time the two flocks were approaching very near to them.



"The fear thou art in," said Don Quixote, "permits thee neither to see nor hear aright, for one of the effects of fear is to disturb the senses and make things seem different from what they are. If thou art afraid, stand to one side and leave me to myself, for I alone can give the victory to the side which I assist."

So saying he clapped spurs to Rozinante, and, setting his lance in rest, rode down the hillside like a thunderbolt.

Sancho shouted after him as loud as he could: "Return, good Sir Don Quixote! Return! For verily all those you go to charge are but sheep and muttons. Return, I say! Alas that ever I was born! What madness is this? Look, there are neither knights, nor arms, nor shields, nor soldiers, nor emperors, but only sheep. What is it you do, Wretch that I am?"

For all this Don Quixote did not turn back, but rode on, shouting in a loud voice: "So ho! knights! Ye that serve and fight under the banner of Pentapolin of the Naked Arm, follow me, all of you. Ye shall see how easily I will revenge him on his enemy Alifamfaron of Trapobana!"

With these words he dashed into the midst of the flock of sheep, and began to spear them with as much courage and fury as if he were fighting his mortal enemies.

The shepherds that came with the flock cried to him to leave off, but seeing their words had no effect, they unloosed their slings and began to salute his head with stones as big as one's fist.

But Don Quixote made no account of their stones, and galloping to and fro everywhere cried out: "Where art thou, proud Alifanfaron? Where art thou? Come to me, for I am but one knight alone, who desires to prove my strength with thee, man to man, and make thee yield thy life for the wrong thou hast done to the valorous Pentapolin."

At that instant a stone gave him such a blow that it buried two of his ribs in his body. Finding himself so ill-treated he thought for certain that he was killed or sorely wounded, and recollecting his balsam, he drew out his oil pot and set it to his mouth to drink. But before he could take as much as he wanted, another stone struck him full on the hand, broke the oil pot into pieces, and carried away with it three or four teeth out of his mouth, and sorely crushed two fingers of his hand. So badly was he wounded by these two blows that he now fell off his horse on to the ground.

The shepherds ran up, and believing that they had killed him, they collected their flocks in great haste, and carrying away their dead muttons, of which there were seven, they went away without caring to inquire into things any further.

Sancho was all this time standing on the hill looking at the mad pranks his master was performing, and tearing his beard and cursing the hour when they had first met. Seeing, however, that he was fallen on the ground, and the shepherds had gone away, he came down the hill and went up to his master, and found him in a very bad way, although not quite insensible.

"Did I not tell you, Sir Don Quixote," said Sancho mournfully, "did I not tell you to come back, for those you went to attack were not armies but sheep?"

"That thief of an enchanter, my enemy, can alter things and make men vanish away as he pleases. Know, Sancho, that it is very easy for those kind of men to make us seem what they please, and this malicious being who persecutes me, envious of the glory that I was to reap from this battle, hath changed the squadrons of the foe into flocks of sheep. If thou dost not believe me, Sancho, get on thine ass and follow them fair and softly, and thou shalt see that when they have gone a little way off they will return to their original shapes, and, ceasing to be sheep, become men as right and straight as I painted them to you at first."

At this moment the balsam that Don Quixote had swallowed began to make him very sick, and Sancho Panza ran off to search in his wallet for something that might cure him. But when he found that his wallet was not upon his ass, and remembered for the first time that it was left at the inn, he was on the point of losing his wits. He cursed himself anew, and resolved in his heart to leave his master and return to his house, even though he should lose his wages and the government of the promised island.

Don Quixote had now risen, and with his left hand to his mouth that the rest of his teeth might not fall out, with the other he took Rozinante by the bridle, and went up to where his squire stood leaning against his

ass with his head in his hand, looking the picture of misery.

Don Quixote, seeing him look so miserable, said to him: "Learn, Sancho, not to be so easily downcast, for these storms that befall us are signs that the weather will soon be fair. Therefore thou shouldst not vex thyself about my misfortunes, for sure thou dost not share in them."

"How not?" replied Sancho; "mayhap he they tossed in a blanket yesterday was not my father's son? And the wallet which is missing to-day with all my chattels, is not that my misfortune?"

"What, is the wallet missing, Sancho?" said Don Quixote, "Yes, it is missing," answered Sancho.

"In that case we have nothing to eat to-day," said Don Quixote.

"It would be so," said Sancho, "should the herbs of the field fail us, which your worship says you know of, and with which you have told me knights-errant must supply their wants."

"Nevertheless," answered Don Quixote, "I would rather just now have a hunch of bread, or a cottage loaf and a couple of pilchards' heads, than all the herbs that Dioscorides has described. But before thou mountest thine ass, lend me here thy hand and see how many teeth are lacking on this right side of my upper jaw, for there I feel the pain."

Sancho put his fingers in, and, feeling about, asked:

"How many teeth did your worship have before, on this side?"

"Four," replied Don Quixote, "besides the wisdom tooth, all whole and sound."

"Mind well what you say, sir," answered Sancho.

"Four, say I, if not five," said Don Quixote, "for in all my life I never had tooth drawn from my mouth, nor has any fallen out or been destroyed by decay."

"Well, then, in this lower part," said Sancho, "your worship has but two teeth and a half, and in the upper, neither a half nor any, for all is as smooth as the palm of my hand."

"Unfortunate I!" exclaimed Don Quixote, "for I would rather they had deprived me of my arm, as long as it were not my sword arm. Know, Sancho, that a mouth without teeth is like a mill without a grindstone, and a tooth is more to be prized than a millstone. But all this must we suffer who profess the stern rule of knights-errant. Mount, friend, and lead the way, for I will follow thee what pace thou pleasest."