

Young Folks Treasury:
Classic Tales And Old-Fashioned Stories

by

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Don Quixote

By MIGUEL CERVANTES
ADAPTED BY JOHN LANG

I HOW DON QUIXOTE WAS KNIGHTED

Some three or four hundred years ago, there lived in sunny Spain an old gentleman named Quixada, who owned a house and a small property near a village in La Mancha.

With him lived his niece, a housekeeper, and a man who looked after Quixada's farm and his one old white horse, which, though its master imagined it to be an animal of great strength and beauty, was really as lean as Quixada himself and as broken down as any old cab horse.

Quixada had nothing in the world to do in the shape of work, and so, his whole time was taken up in reading old books about knights and giants, and ladies shut up in enchanted castles by wicked ogres. In time, so fond did he become of such tales that he passed his days, and even the best part of his nights, in reading them. His mind was so wholly taken up in this way that at last he came to believe that he himself lived in a land of giants and of ogres, and that it was his duty to ride forth on his noble steed, to the rescue of unhappy Princesses.

In the lumber-room of Quixada's house there had lain, ever since he was born, a rusty old suit of armor, which had belonged to his great-grandfather. This was now got out, and Quixada spent many days in polishing and putting it in order.

Unfortunately, there was no more than half of the helmet to be found, and a knight cannot ride forth without a helmet.

So Quixada made the other half of strong pasteboard; and to prove that it was strong enough, when finished, he drew his sword and gave the helmet a great slash. Alas! a whole week's work was ruined by that one stroke; the pasteboard flew into pieces. This troubled Quixada sadly, but he set to work at once and made another helmet of pasteboard, lining it with thin sheets of iron, and it looked so well that, this time, he put it to no test with his sword.

Now that his armor was complete, it occurred to him that he must give his horse a name—every knight's horse should have a good name—and after four days thought he decided that "Rozinante" would best suit the animal.

Then, for himself, after eight days of puzzling, he resolved that he should be called Don Quixote de la Mancha.

There was but one thing more. Every knight of olden time had a lady, whom he called the Mistress of his Heart, whose glove he wore in his helmet; and if anybody dared to deny that this lady was the most beautiful woman in the whole world, then the knight made him prove his words by fighting.

So it was necessary that Don Quixote should select some lady as the Mistress of his Heart.

Near La Mancha there lived a stout country lass, for whom some years before Don Quixote had had a kind of liking. Who, therefore, could better take the place of Mistress of his Heart? To whom could he better send the defeated knights and ogres whom he was going out to fight? It was true that her name, Aldonza Lorenzo, did not sound like that of a Princess or lady of high birth; so he determined in future to call her Dulcinea del Toboso. No Princess could have a sweeter name!

All being now ready, one morning Don Quixote got up before daylight, and without saying a word to anybody, put on his armor, took his sword, and spear, and shield, saddled "Rozinante," and started on his search for adventures.

But before he had gone very far, a dreadful thought struck him. He had not been knighted! Moreover, he had read in his books that until a knight had done some great deed, he must wear white armor, and be without any device or coat of arms on his shield. What was to be done? He was so staggered by this thought that he almost felt that he must turn back. But then he remembered that he had read how adventurers were sometimes knighted by persons whom they happened to meet on the road. And as to his armor, why, he thought he might scour and polish that till nothing could be whiter. So he rode on, letting "Rozinante" take which road he pleased, that being, he supposed, as good a way as any of looking for adventures.

All day he rode, to his sorrow without finding anything worth calling an adventure.

At last as evening began to fall, and when he and his horse were both very weary, they came in sight of an inn. Don Quixote no sooner saw the inn than he fancied it to be a great castle, and he halted at some distance from it, expecting that, as in days of old, a dwarf would certainly appear on the battlements, and, by sounding a trumpet, give notice of the arrival of a knight. But no dwarf appeared, and as "Rozinante" showed great haste to reach the stable, Don Quixote began to move towards the inn.

At this moment it happened that a swineherd in a field near at hand sounded his horn to bring his herd of pigs home to be fed. Don Quixote, imagining that this must be the dwarf at last giving notice of his coming, rode quickly up to the inn door, beside which it chanced that there stood two very impudent young women, whom the Knight imagined to be two beautiful ladies taking the air at the castle gate.

Astonished at the sight of so strange a figure, and a little frightened, the girls turned to run away. But Don Quixote stopped them.

"I beseech ye, ladies, do not fly," he said. "I will harm no one, least of all maidens of rank so high as yours."

And much more he said, whereat the young women laughed so loud and so long that Don Quixote became very angry, and there is no saying what he might not have done had not the innkeeper at that moment come out. This innkeeper was very fat and good-natured, and anxious not to offend anybody, but even he could hardly help laughing when he saw Don Quixote. ...

However, he very civilly asked the Knight to dismount and offered him everything that the inn could provide.

Don Quixote being by this time both tired and hungry, with some difficulty got off his horse and handed it to the innkeeper (to whom he spoke as governor of the castle), asking him to take the greatest care of "Rozinante," for in the whole world there was no better steed.

When the landlord returned from the stable, he found Don Quixote in a room, where, with the help of the two young women, he was trying to get rid of his armor. His back and breastplates had been taken off, but by no means could his helmet be removed without cutting the green ribbons with which he had tied it on, and this the Knight would not allow.

There was nothing for it, therefore, but to keep his helmet on all night, and to eat and drink in it, which was more than he could do without help. However, one of the young women fed him, and the innkeeper having made a kind of funnel, through it poured the wine into his mouth, and Don Quixote ate his supper in great peace of mind.

There was but one thing that still vexed him. He had not yet been knighted.

On this subject he thought long and deeply, and at last he asked the innkeeper to come with him to the stable. Having shut the door, Don Quixote threw himself at the landlord's feet, saying, "I will never rise from this place, most valorous Knight, until you grant me a boon."

The innkeeper was amazed, but as he could not by any means make Don Quixote rise, he promised to do whatever was asked.

"Then, noble sir," said Don Quixote, "the boon which I crave is that to-morrow you will be pleased to grant me the honor of knighthood."

The landlord, when he heard such talk, thought that the wisest thing he could do was to humor his guest, and he readily promised. Thereupon Don Quixote very happily rose to his feet, and after some further talk he said to the innkeeper that this night he would "watch his armor" in the chapel of the castle, it being the duty of any one on whom the honor of knighthood was to be conferred, to stand on his feet in the chapel, praying, until the morning. The innkeeper, thinking that great sport might come of this, encouraged Don Quixote, but as his own chapel had lately—so he said—been pulled down in order that a better might be built, he advised Don Quixote to watch that night in the courtyard. This was "lawful in a case where a chapel was not at hand. And in the morning," he said, "I will knight you."

"Have you any money?" then asked the innkeeper.

"Not a penny," said Don Quixote, "for I never yet read of any knight who carried money with him."

"You are greatly mistaken," answered the innkeeper. "Most knights had squires, who carried their money and clean shirts and other things. But when a knight had no squire, he always carried his money and his shirts, and salve for his wounds, in a little bag behind his saddle. I must therefore advise you never in future to go anywhere without money."

Don Quixote promised to remember this. Then taking his armor, he went into the inn yard and laid it in a horse-trough.

Backwards and forwards, spear in hand, he marched in the moonlight, very solemnly keeping his eyes on his armor, while the innkeeper's other guests, laughing, looked on from a distance.

Now it happened that a carrier who lodged at the inn came into the yard to water his mules, and this he could not do while the armor lay in the horse-trough. As Don Quixote saw the man come up, "Take heed, rash Knight," he cried. "Defile not by a touch the armor of the most brave knight-errant that ever wore a sword."

But the mule-driver took no notice of Don Quixote. He picked up the armor and threw it away.

Don Quixote no sooner saw this than, raising his eyes to heaven, and calling on his Lady Dulcinea del Toboso, he lifted up his spear with both hands and gave the mule-driver such a whack over the head that the man fell down senseless. Then, picking up his armor and putting it back in the horse-trough, he went on with his march, taking no further notice of the poor mule-driver.

Soon up came another carrier who also wanted to water his mules.

Not a word did Don Quixote say this time, but he lifted up his spear and smote so heavily that he broke the man's head in three or four places. The poor wretch made such an outcry that all the people in the inn came running, and the friends of the two carriers began to pelt Don Quixote with stones. But drawing his sword, and holding his shield in front of him, he defied them all, crying, "Come on, base knaves! Draw nearer if you dare!"

The landlord now came hurrying up and stopped the stone-throwing; then, having calmed Don Quixote, he said that there was no need for him to watch his armor any longer; to finish the ceremony it would now be enough if he were touched on the neck and shoulders with a sword. Don Quixote was quite satisfied, and prayed the innkeeper to get the business over as quickly as possible, "for," said he, "if I were but knighted, and should see myself attacked, I believe that I should not leave a man alive in this castle."

The innkeeper, a good deal alarmed at this, and anxious to get rid of him, hurried off and got the book in which he kept his accounts, which he pretended was a kind of book of prayer. Having also brought the two young women, and a boy to hold a candle, he ordered Don Quixote to kneel. Then muttering from his book, as if he were reading, he finished by giving Don Quixote a good blow on the neck, and a slap on the back, with the flat of a sword. After this, one of the young women belted the sword round the newly made knight's waist, while the other buckled on his spurs, and having at once saddled "Rozinante." Don Quixote was ready to set out.

The innkeeper was only too glad to see him go, even without paying for his supper.

II

HOW DON QUIXOTE RESCUED ANDRES; AND HOW HE RETURNED HOME

As he rode along in the early morning light, Don Quixote began to think that it would be well that he should return home for a little, there to lay in a stock of money and of clean shirts, .. and he turned his willing horse's head in the direction of his village.

But ere he had gone far on his way, coming from a thicket he fancied that he heard cries of distress.

"Certainly these are the moans of some poor creature in want of help," thought Don Quixote. "I thank Heaven for so soon giving me the chance to perform my duty as a knight."

And he rode quickly towards the sounds. No sooner had he reached the wood than he saw a horse tied to a tree, and bound to another was a lad of fifteen, all naked above the waist. By his side stood a countryman beating him with a strap, and with every blow calling out, "I'll teach you to keep your eyes open, you young scamp. I'll teach you to keep your mouth shut."

The boy howled with pain. Quickly Don Quixote rode up to the man.

"Sir Knight," said he angrily, "I would have thee to know that it is an unworthy act to strike one who cannot defend himself. Mount thy steed, therefore, take thy spear, and I will teach thee that thou art a coward."

The countryman gave himself up for lost, and he gasped out very humbly that the boy was his servant, through whose carelessness many of the sheep that he should have watched had been lost, and that therefore he was giving him a sound beating. "And," said he, "because I beat him for his carelessness, he says I do it to cheat him out of his wages."

"What!" shouted Don Quixote, "do you dare to lie to me? By the sun above us, I have a mind to run you through with my spear. Pay the boy this instant, and let him go free. What does he owe you, boy?"

The boy said that the man owed him nine months' wages.

"Pay at once, you scoundrel, unless you want to be killed," roared Don Quixote.

The poor man, trembling with fear, said that there was a mistake; he did not owe nearly so much, and besides, he had no money with him. But if Andres would go home with him he would pay every penny.

"Go home with him!" cried the boy. "I know a trick .. worth two of that. No sooner will he have me home than he'll take the skin off me. No, no, not I!"

"He will not dare to touch you," said the Knight. "I command him, and that is enough. If he swears by his order of knighthood to do this thing, I will let him go, and he will pay you your wages."

"Of course I will," said the man. "Come along with me. Andres, and I swear I'll give you all I owe."

"Remember, then, what you have promised, for I am Don Quixote de la Mancha, the righter of wrongs, and it is at your peril to disobey me."

So saying, Don Quixote clapped spurs to his horse, and galloped off through the trees.

The countryman watched till the Knight was out of sight. Then, turning, he said "Come, my lad, and I'll pay thee what I owe, and more."

"Ay," answered the boy, "see that you do, for if you do not, that brave man will come back and make you."

"I dare swear that," said the man. "And just to show how much I love you, I am going to increase the debt, so that I may pay you more. Come here!"

And with that he caught the boy by the arm, tied him again to the tree, and belted him till his arm was tired.

"Now go," he said, "and tell your righter of wrongs. I wish I had flayed you alive, you young whelp."

And so ended Don Quixote's first attempt to right wrongs.

As the Knight cantered along, very well pleased with himself, about two miles from where he had freed the boy he saw riding towards him six men, each shading himself under a large umbrella. With them were four mounted servants, and three on foot.

No sooner did Don Quixote see this party than it struck him that here was the chance for which, above all others, he had been longing.

Posting himself in the middle of the road, he waited till the men were at no great distance. Then, "Halt!" shouted he. "Let all know that no man shall pass further till he owns that in the whole world there is no damsel more beautiful than the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso."

"But," said the men (who were merchants of Toledo, on their way to buy silks), "we do not know the lady. We have never seen her. How then can we say that she is beautiful?"

"What!" roared Don Quixote in a terrible rage, "not know the beautiful Lady Dulcinea del Toboso! That only makes matters worse. Do you dare to argue?"

And with that he couched his spear, drove his spurs into "Rozinante," and rode furiously at the nearest merchant.

What he would have done it is not possible to say. But as he galloped, it chanced that "Rozinante" stumbled and fell heavily, rolling Don Quixote over and over. There the Knight lay

helpless, the weight of his armor preventing him from rising to his feet. But as he lay, he continued to cry out at the top of his voice, "Stop, you rascals! Do not fly. It is my horse's fault that I lie here, you cowards!"

One of the grooms, hearing his master called a rascal and a coward, thereupon ran up and snatched away Don Quixote's spear, which he broke in pieces. Then with each piece he belabored the poor Knight till the broken lance flew into splinters. The merchants then rode away, leaving Don Quixote lying where he fell, still shouting threats, but quite unable to rise.

There he was found by a man who knew him well, and who with great difficulty mounted him on his donkey and took him home. When at last they reached Don Quixote's house, the poor Knight was put to bed, where he lay for many days, raving, and very ill.

During this time the Curate of the village and the Barber came and burned nearly all the books which Don Quixote had so loved.

"For," said they, "it is by reading these books that the poor gentleman has lost his mind, and if he reads them again he will never get better."

So a bonfire was made of the books, and the door of Don Quixote's study was bricked up.

When the Knight was again able to go about, he made at once for his study and his beloved books. Up and down the house he searched without saying a word, and often he would stand where the door of the study used to be, feeling with his hands and gazing about. At last he asked his housekeeper to show him the study.

"Study!" cried the woman, "what study? There is no study in this house now, nor any books."

"No," said his niece. "When you were away, a famous enchanter came along, mounted on a dragon, and he went into your study. What he did there we know not. But after a time he flew out of the roof, leaving the house full of smoke, and ever since then we have not been able to find either books or study."

"Ha!" said Don Quixote. "That must have been Freston. He is a famous enchanter, and my bitter enemy. But when I am again well I shall get the better of him."

III

HOW DON QUIXOTE AND SANCHE PANZA STARTED ON THEIR SEARCH FOR ADVENTURES; AND HOW DON QUIXOTE FOUGHT WITH THE WINDMILLS

For some weeks the poor Knight stayed very quietly at home. But he had not forgotten the things for which he had come back to his village.

There was a farm laborer who lived near by, a fat, good-natured, simple man. To him Don Quixote talked long and often, and made many promises; among others that if he would but come with him as squire, he should be made governor of any island which the Knight might happen to conquer during his search after adventures.

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