

TRAVELS OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN

CHAPTER XXIX

The Baron's retinue is opposed in a heroic style by Don Quixote, who in his turn is attacked by Gog and Magog—Lord Whittington, with the Lord Mayor's show, comes to the assistance of Don Quixote—Gog and Magog assail his Lordship—Lord Whittington makes a speech, and deludes Gog and Magog to his party—A general scene of uproar and battle among the company, until the Baron, with great presence of mind, appeases the tumult.

“What art thou?” exclaimed Don Quixote on his potent steed. “Who art thou? Speak! or, by the eternal vengeance of mine arm, thy whole machinery shall perish at sound of this my trumpet!”

Astonished at so rude a salutation, the great Sphinx stopped short, and bridling up herself, drew in her head, like a snail when it touches something that it does not like: the bulls set up a horrid bellowing, the crickets sounded an alarm, and Gog and Magog advanced before the rest. One of these powerful brothers had in his hand a great pole, to the extremity of which was fastened a cord of about two feet in length, and to the end of the cord was fastened a ball of iron, with spikes shooting from it like the rays of a star; with this weapon he prepared to encounter, and advancing thus he spoke:—

“Audacious wight! that thus, in complete steel arrayed, doth dare to venture cross my way, to stop the great Munchausen. Know then, proud knight, that thou shalt instant perish 'neath my potent arm.”

When Quixote, Mancha's knight, responded firm:—

“Gigantic monster! leader of witches, crickets, and chimeras dire! know thou, that here before yon azure heaven the cause of truth, of valour, and of faith right pure shall ordeal counter try it!”

Thus he spoke, and brandishing his mighty spear, would instant prodigies sublime perform, had not some wight placed 'neath the tail of dark Rosinante furze all thorny base; at which, quadrupedanting, plunged the steed, and instant on the earth the knight roared *credo* for his life.

At that same moment ten thousand frogs started from the morions of Gog and Magog, and furiously assailed the knight on every side. In vain he roared, and invoked fair Dulcinea del Toboso: for frogs' wild croaking seemed more loud, more sonorous than all his invocations. And thus in battle vile the knight was overcome, and spawn all swarmed upon his glittering helmet.

“Detested miscreants!” roared the knight; “avaunt! Enchanters dire and goblins could alone this arduous task perform; to rout the knight of Mancha, foul defeat, and war, even such as ne'er was known before. Then hear, O del Toboso! hear my vows, that thus in anguish of my soul I urge, midst frogs, Gridalbin, Hecaton, Kai, Talon, and the Rove! [for such the names and definitions of their qualities, their separate powers.] For Merlin plumed their airy flight, and then in watery moonbeam dyed his rod eccentric. At the touch ten thousand frogs, strange metamorphosed, croaked even thus: And here they come, on high behest, to vilify the knight that erst defended famed virginity, and matrons all bewronged, and pilgrims hoar, and courteous guise of all! But the age of chivalry is gone, and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever?”

He spake, and sudden good Lord Whittington, at head of all his raree-show, came forth, armour

antique of chivalry, and helmets old, and troops, all streamers, flags and banners glittering gay, red, gold, and purple; and in every hand a square of gingerbread, all gilded nice, was brandished awful. At a word, ten thousand thousand Naples biscuits, crackers, buns, and flannel-cakes, and hats of gingerbread encountered in mid air in glorious exaltation, like some huge storm of mill-stones, or when it rains whole clouds of dogs and cats.

The frogs, astonished, thunderstruck, forgot their notes and music, that before had seemed so terrible, and drowned the cries of knight renown, and mute in wonder heard the words of Whittington, pronouncing solemn:—"Goblins, chimeras dire, or frogs, or whatsoe'er enchantment thus presents in antique shape, attend and hear the words of peace; and thou, good herald, read aloud the Riot Act!"

He ceased, and dismal was the tone that softly breathed from all the frogs in chorus, who quick had petrified with fright, unless redoubted Gog and Magog, both with poles, high topped with airy bladders by a string dependent, had not stormed against his lordship. Ever and anon the bladders, loud resounding on his chaps, proclaimed their fury against all potent law, coercive mayoralty; when he, submissive, thus in cunning guile addressed the knights assailant:—"Gog, Magog, renowned and famous! what, my sons, shall you assail your father, friend, and chief confessed? Shall you, thus armed with bladders vile, attack my title, eminence, and pomp sublime? Subside, vile discord, and again return to your true 'legiance. Think, my friends, how oft your gorgeous pouch I've crammed, all calapash, green fat, and calapee. Remember how you've feasted, stood inert for ages, until size immense you've gained. And think, how different is the service of Munchausen, where you o'er seas, cold, briny, float along the tide, eternal toiling like to slaves of Algiers and Tripoli. And ev'n on high, balloon like, through the heavens have journeyed late, upon a rainbow or some awful bridge stretched eminent, as if on earth he had not work sufficient to distress your potent servitudes, but he should also seek in heaven dire cause of labour! Recollect, my friends, even why or wherefore should you thus assail your lawful magistrate, or why desert his livery? or for what or wherefore serve this German Lord Munchausen, who for all your labour shall alone bestow some fudge and heroic blows in war? Then cease, and thus in amity return to friendship aldermanic, bungy, brown, and sober."

Ceased he then, right worshipful, when both the warring champions instant stemmed their battle, and in sign of peace and unity returning, 'neath their feet reclined their weapons. Sudden at a signal either stamped his foot sinistrine, and the loud report of bursten bladder stunned each ear surrounding, like the roar of thunder from on high convulsing heaven and earth.

'Twas now upon the saddle once again the knight of Mancha rose, and in his hand far balancing his lance, full tilt against the troops of bulls opposing run. And thou, shrill Crillitrikiril, than whom no cricket e'er on hob of rural cottage, or chimney black, more gladsome turned his merry note, e'en thou didst perish, shrieking gave the ghost in empty air, the sport of every wind; for e'en that heart so jocund and so gay was pierced, harsh spitted by the lance of Mancha, while undaunted thou didst sit between the horns that crowned Mowmowsky. And now Whittington advanced, 'midst armour antique and the powers Magog and Gog, and with his rod enchanting touched the head of every frog, long mute and thunderstruck, at which, in universal chorus and salute, they sung blithe jocund, and amain advanced rebellious 'gainst my troop.

While Sphinx, though great, gigantic, seemed instinctive base and cowardly, and at the sight of storming gingerbread, and powers, Magog and Gog, and Quixote, all against her, started fierce, o'erturning boat, balloons, and all; loud roared the bulls, hideous, and the crash of wheels, and chaos of confusion drear, resounded far from earth to heaven. And still more fierce in charge the great Lord Whittington, from poke of ermine his famed Grimalkin took. She screamed, and harsh attacked my bulls confounded; lightning-like she darted, and from half the troop their eyes devouring tore. Nor could the riders, crickets throned sublime, escape from rage, from fury less averse than cannons

murder o'er the stormy sea. The great Mowmowsky roared amain and plunged in anguish, shunning every dart of fire-eyed fierce Grimalkin. Dire the rage of warfare and contending crickets, Quixote and great Magog; when Whittington advancing—"Good, my friends and warriors, headlong on the foe bear down impetuous." He spoke, and waving high the mighty rod, tipped wonderful each bull, at which more fierce the creatures bellowed, while enchantment drear devoured their vitals. And all had gone to wreck in more than mortal strife, unless, like Neptune orient from the stormy deep, I rose, e'en towering o'er the ruins of my fighting troops. Serene and calm I stood, and gazed around undaunted; nor did aught oppose against my foes impetuous. But sudden from chariot purses plentiful of fudge poured forth, and scattered it amain o'er all the crowd contending. As when old Catherine or the careful Joan doth scatter to the chickens bits of bread and crumbs fragmented, while rejoiced they gobble fast the proffered scraps in general plenty and fraternal peace, and "hush," she cries, "hush! hush!"

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Last update: **2005/11/22 18:01**

