Ririro
READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

How Don Diego Fought The Three Brothers

Robert Southey

When the day appointed was come, Don Arias Gonzalo early in the morning armed his sons, and they armed him. As they rode through the gates of their house, Donya Urraca with a company of dames met them, and said to Don Arias, weeping, Remember now how my father, King Don Ferrando, left me to your care, and you swore between his hands that you would never forsake me; and lo! now you are forsaking me. I beseech you remain with me. And she took hold on him, and would not let him go, and made him be disarmed. Then came many knights around him, to demand arms of him, and request that they might do battle in his stead; nevertheless he would give them to none. And he called for his son Pedro Arias, who was a right brave knight, though but of green years, and Don Arias armed him completely with his own hands, and instructed him how to demean himself, and gave him his blessing with his right hand. Then went they into the field, where Don Diego Ordonez was awaiting them, and Pedro Arias entered the lists, and the judges placed them each in his place, and divided the sun between them, and went out, leaving them in the lists.

Then they turned their horses one against the other, and ran at each other full bravely, like good knights. Five times they encountered, and at the sixth encounter their spears brake, and they laid hand upon their swords, and dealt each other such heavy blows that the helmets failed; and in this manner the combat between them continued till noon. And when Don Diego Ordonez saw that it lasted so long, and he could not yet conquer him, he called to mind that he was there fighting to revenge his lord, who had been slain by a foul treason, and he collected together all his strength. And he lifted up his sword and smote Pedro Arias upon the helmet, so that he cut through it, and through the hood of the mail also, and made a wound in the head. And Pedro Arias with the agony of death bowed down to the neck of the horse; yet with all this he neither lost his stirrups, nor let go his sword. And Don Diego Ordonez seeing him thus, thought that he was dead, and would not strike him again; and he called aloud, saying, Don Arias, send me another son, for this one will never fulfil your bidding. When Pedro Arias heard this, grievously wounded as he was, he went fiercely against him: and he took the sword in both hands, and thought to give it him upon his head; but the blow missed, and fell upon the horse, and the horse immediately ran away because of the great wound which he had received. And Don Diego

had no reins wherewith to stop him, and perceiving that he should else be carried out of the lists, he threw himself off. And while he did this, Pedro Arias fell down dead, just without the mark. And Don Diego Ordonez laid hand on the bar, and said, Praised be the name of God, one is conquered. And incontinently the judges came and took him by the hand, and led him to a tent and disarmed him, and gave him three sops, and he drank of the wine and rested awhile. And afterwards they gave him other arms, and a horse that was a right good one, and went with him to the lists.



Then Don Arias Gonzalo called for another son, whose name was Diego Arias, gave him his blessing and went with him to the lists. And the judges took the reins of the two champions and led them each to his place, and went out and left them in the lists. And they ran against each other with such force that both shields failed, and in another career they brake their lances. Then laid they hand on their good swords, and delivered such blows that their helmets were cut away, and the sleeves of the mail. And at length Diego Arias received such a blow near the heart that he fell dead. And Don Diego Ordonez went to the bar and laid hold on it, and cried out to Don Arias Gonzalo, Send me another son, for I have conquered two, thanks be to God. Then the judges came and said that the dead knight was not yet out of the lists, and that he must alight and cast him out. Don Diego Ordonez did as they had directed him, and then went and laid hand upon the bar again. And then the judges came to him, and led him to the tent, and disarmed him, and gave him the three sops and the wine, as they had done before.

Then Don Arias Gonzalo, in great rage called for his son Rodrigo Arias, who was a good knight, right hardy and valiant, the elder of all the brethren. And Don Arias said unto him, Son, go now and do battle with Diego Ordonez, to save Donya Urraca your lady, and yourself, and the Council of Zamora; and if you do this, in happy hour were you born. Then Rodrigo Arias kissed his hand and answered,

Father, I thank you much for what you have said, and be sure that I will save them, or take my death. And he took his arms and mounted, and his father gave him his blessing, and went with him to the lists; and the judges took his reins and led him in. And when the judges were gone out, they twain ran at each other, and Don Diego missed his blow, but Rodrigo Arias, did not miss, for he gave him so great a stroke with the lance that it pierced through the shield, and broke the saddle-bow behind, and made him lose his stirrups, and he embraced the neck of his horse. But albeit that Don Diego was sorely bested with that stroke, he took heart presently, and went bravely against him, and dealt him so great a blow that he broke the lance in him; for it went through the shield and all his other arms, and great part of the lance remained in his flesh. After this they laid hand to sword, and gave each to the other great blows, and great wounds with them. And Rodrigo Arias gave so great a wound to Diego Ordonez, that he cut his left arm through to the bone. And Don Diego Ordonez, when he felt himself so sorely wounded, went against Rodrigo Arias and delivered him a blow upon the head which cut through the helmet and the hood of the mail, and entered into his head. When Rodrigo Arias felt himself wounded to death, he let go the reins and took his sword in both hands, and gave so great a blow to the horse of Don Diego that the horse ran out of the lists, and carried Don Diego out also, and there died. And Rodrigo Arias fell dead as he was following him. Then Don Diego Ordonez would have returned into the field to do battle with the other two, but the judges would not permit this, neither did they think good to decide whether they of Zamora were overcome in this third duel or not. And in this manner the thing was left undecided. Nevertheless, though no sentence was given, there remained no infamy upon the people of Zamora. Better had it been for Don Arias Gonzalo if he had given up Vellido to the Castillians, that he might have died the death of a traitor; he would not then have lost these three sons, who died like good men, in their duty. Now what was the end of Vellido the history sayeth not, but it is to be believed, that because the impeachment was not made within three days, Don Arias Gonzalo thrust him out of the town as Donya Urraca had requested, and that he fled into other lands, peradventure among the Moors.

In the meantime the Infanta Donya Urraca wrote letters secretly and sent messengers with them to Toledo to King Don Alfonso, telling him that King Don Sancho his brother was dead, and had left no heir, and that he should come as speedily as he could to receive the kingdoms.

As soon as King Don Alfonso arrived at Zamora, he took counsel with his sister. And the Infanta Donya Urraca, who was a right prudent lady and a wise, sent letters throughout the land, that a cortes should assemble and receive him for their lord. And when the Leonese and the Gallegos knew that their lord King Don Alfonso was come, they were full joyful, and they came to Zamora and received

him for their lord and king. And afterwards the Castillians arrived, and they of Navarre, and they also received him for their lord and king, but upon this condition, that he should swear that he had not taken counsel for the death of his brother King Don Sancho. Howbeit they did not come forward to receive the oath, and they kissed his hands in homage, all, save only Ruydiez, my Cid. And when King Don Alfonso saw that the Cid did not do homage and kiss his hand, he said, Since now ye have all received me for your lord, and given me authority over ye, I would know of the Cid Ruydiez why he will not kiss my hand and acknowledge me. And the Cid arose and said, Sir, all whom you see here present, suspect that by your counsel the King Don Sancho your brother came to his death; and therefore, I say unto you that, unless you clear yourself of this, as by right you should do, I will never kiss your hand, nor receive you for my lord. Then said the king, Cid, what you say pleases me well; and here I swear to God and to St. Mary, that I never slew him, nor took counsel for his death, neither did it please me, though he had taken my kingdom from me. And I beseech ye therefore all, as friends and true vassals, that ye tell me how I may clear myself. And the chiefs who were present said, that he and twelve of the knights who came with him from Toledo, should make this oath in the church at St. Gadea at Burgos, and that so he should be cleared.

So the king and all his company took horse and went to Burgos. And when the day appointed for the oath was come, the king went to hear mass in the church of Gadea. And the king came forward upon a high stage that all the people might see him, and my Cid came to him to receive the oath; and my Cid took the book of the Gospels and opened it, and laid it upon the altar, and the king laid his hands upon it, and the Cid said unto him, King Don Alfonso, you come here to swear concerning the death of King Don Sancho your brother, that you neither slew him nor took counsel for his death; say now you and these hidalgos, if ye swear this. And the king and the hidalgos answered and said, Yea, we swear it. And the Cid said, If ye knew of this thing, or gave command that it should be done, may you die even such a death as your brother the King Don Sancho, by the hand of a villain whom you trust; one who is not a hidalgo, from another land, not a Castillian; and the king and the knights who were with him said Amen. And the king's colour changed; and the Cid repeated the oath unto him a second time, and the king and the twelve knights said Amen to it in like manner, and in like manner the countenance of the king was changed again. And my Cid repeated the oath unto him a third time, and the king and the knights said Amen; but the wrath of the king was exceeding great, and he said to the Cid, Ruydiez, why dost thou thus press me, man? To-day thou swearest me, and to-morrow thou wilt kiss my hand. And from that day forward there was no love towards my Cid in the heart of the king.

After this was King Don Alfonso crowned King of Castille, and Leon, and Galicia,

and Portugal; and he called himself King and Emperor of all Spain, even as his father had done before him.

Stories help us explore cultures, learn moral lessons, connect with nature — or simply have fun. That's why ririro.com offers 3,000+ free stories — fairy tales, fables, bedtime stories, myths and more — for every age, in 13 languages, with free printable PDFs and often audio. Reading should be a right, not a privilege. Share ririro.com and spread the joy of reading.
Instagram: @ririro_reading · Pinterest: pinterest.com/ririrocom