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Don Garcia Takes Don Sancho Prisoner

Robert Southey

A sorrowful defeat was that for King Don Sancho, and he put himself at the head of his army and hastened through Portugal to besiege his brother in Santarem.

The Portugueze and Galegos took counsel together what they should do. Don Rodrigo Frojaz said unto the king that it behoved him above all things to put his kingdom upon the hazard of a battle; for his brother being a greater lord of lands than he, and richer in money and more powerful in vassals, could maintain the war longer than he could, who peradventure would find it difficult another year to gather together so good an army as he had now ready. For this cause he advised him to put his trust in God first, and then in the hidalgos who were with him, and without fear give battle to the king his brother, over whom God and his good cause would give him glorious victory. Now when the two hosts were ready to join battle, Alvar Fanez came to King Don Sancho and said to him, Sir, I have played away my horse and arms; I beseech you give me others for this battle, and I will be a right good one for you this day; if I do not for you the service of six knights, hold me for a traitor. And the king ordered that horse and arms should be given him. So the armies joined battle bravely on both sides, and it was a sharp onset; many were the heavy blows which were given on both sides, and many were the horses that were slain at that encounter, and many the men. Now my Cid had not yet come up into the field.

Now Don Rodrigo Frojaz and his brethren and the knights who were with them had resolved to make straight for the banner of the King of Castille. And they broke through the ranks of the Castillians, and made their way into the middle of the enemy's host, doing marvellous feats of arms. Then was the fight at the hottest, for they did their best to win the banner, and the others to defend it; the remembrance of what they had formerly done, and the hope of gaining more honours, heartened them; and with the Castillians there was their king, giving them brave example as well as brave words. The press of the battle was here, and the banner of King Don Sancho was beaten down, and the king himself also, and Don Rodrigo made way through the press and laid hands on him and took him. But in the struggle he lost much blood, and perceiving that his strength was failing, he sent to call the King Don Garcia with all speed. And as the king came, the Count Don Pedro Frojaz met him and said, An honourable gift, sir, hath my brother Don Rodrigo to give you, but you lose him in gaining it. And tears fell from the eyes of the king, and he made answer and said, It may indeed be that

Don Rodrigo may lose his life in serving me, but the good name which he hath gained, and the honour which he leaveth to his descendants, death cannot take away. Saying this, he came to the place where Don Rodrigo was, and Don Rodrigo gave into his hands the King Don Sancho his brother, and asked him three times if he was discharged of his prisoner; and when the king had answered Yes, Don Rodrigo said, For me, sir, the joy which I have in your victory is enough; give the rewards to these good Portugueze, who with so good a will have put their lives upon the hazard to serve you, and in all things follow their counsel, and you will not err therein. Having said this he kissed the king's hand, and lying upon his shield, for he felt his breath fail him, with his helmet for a pillow, he kissed the cross of his sword in remembrance of that on which the Son of God had died for him, and rendered up his soul into the hands of his Creator. This was the death of one of the worthy knights of the world, Don Rodrigo Frojaz. In all the conquests which King Don Ferrando had made from the Moors of Portugal, great part had he borne, insomuch that that king was wont to say that other princes might have more dominions than he, but two such knights as his two Rodrigos, meaning my Cid and this good knight, there was none but himself who had for vassals.



King Don Garcia being desirous to be in the pursuit himself, delivered his brother into the hands of six knights that they should guard him, which he ought not to have done. And when he was gone King Don Sancho said unto the knights, Let me go and I will depart out of your country and never enter it again; and I will reward ye well as long as ye live; but they answered him, that for no reward would they commit such disloyalty, but would guard him well, not offering him any injury, till they had delivered him to his brother the King Don Garcia. While they were parleying Alvar Fanez came up, he to whom the king had given horse and arms before the battle; and he seeing the king held prisoner, cried out with a loud voice, Let loose my lord the king: and he spurred his horse and made at them; and before his lance was broken he overthrew two of them, and so

bestirred himself that he put the others to flight; and he took the horses of the two whom he had smote down, and gave one to the king, and mounted upon the other himself, for his own was hurt in the rescue; and they went together to a little rising ground where there was yet a small body of the knights of their party, and Alvar Fanez cried out to them aloud, Ye see here the king our lord, who is free; now then remember the good name of the Castillians, and let us not lose it this day. And about four hundred knights gathered about him. And while they stood there they saw the Cid Ruydiez coming up with three hundred knights, for he had not been in the battle, and they knew his green pennon. And when King Don Sancho beheld it his heart rejoiced, and he said, Now let us descend into the plain, for he of good fortune cometh: and he said, Be of good heart, for it is the will of God that I should recover my kingdom, for I have escaped from captivity, and seen the death of Don Rodrigo Frojaz who took me, and Ruydiez the fortunate one cometh. And the king went down to him and welcomed him right joyfully, saying, In happy time are you come, my fortunate Cid; never vassal succoured his lord in such season as you now succour me, for the king my brother had overcome me. And the Cid answered, Sir, be sure that you shall recover the day, or I will die; for wheresoever you go, either you shall be victorious or I will meet my death.

By this time King Don Garcia returned from the pursuit, singing as he came full joyfully, for he thought that the king his brother was a prisoner, and his great power overthrown. But there came one and told him that Don Sancho was rescued and in the field again, ready to give him battle a second time. Bravely was that second battle fought on both sides; and if it had not been for the great prowess of the Cid, the end would not have been as it was: in the end the Galegos and Portugueze were discomfited, and the King Don Garcia taken in his turn. And the King Don Sancho put his brother in better ward than his brother three hours before had put him, for he put him in chains and sent him to the strong castle of Luna.

When King Don Sancho had done this he took unto himself the kingdom of Galicia and of Portugal, and without delay sent to his brother King Don Alfonso, commanding him to yield up to him the kingdom of Leon, for it was his by right. At this was the King of Leon troubled at heart; howbeit he answered that he would not yield up his kingdom, but do his utmost to defend it. Then King Don Sancho entered Leon, slaying and laying waste before him, as an army of infidels would have done; and King Don Alfonso sent to him to bid him cease from this, for it was inhuman work to kill and plunder the innocent: and he defied him to a pitched battle, saying that to whichsoever God should give the victory, to him also would he give the kingdom of Leon: and the King of Castille accepted the defiance, and a day was fixed for the battle. Both kings were in the field that day, and full hardily was the battle contested, and great was the mortality on

either side, for the hatred which used to be between Moors and Christians was then between brethren.

Nevertheless the power of King Don Alfonso was not yet destroyed, and he would not yield up his kingdom: and he sent to his brother a second time to bid him battle, saying that whosoever conquered should then certainly remain King of Leon. The two armies met and joined battle, and they of Leon had the victory, for my Cid was not in the field. And King Don Alfonso had pity upon the Castillians because they were Christians, and gave orders not to slay them; and his brother King Don Sancho fled. Now as he was flying, my Cid came up with his green pennon; and when he saw that the king his lord had been conquered it grieved him sorely: howbeit he encouraged him saying, This is nothing, sir! to fail or to prosper is as God pleases. But do you gather together your people who are discomfited, and bid them take heart. The Leonese and Galegos are with the king your brother, secure as they think themselves in their lodging, and taking no thought of you; for it is their custom to extol themselves when their fortune is fair, and to mock at others, and in this boastfulness will they spend the night, so that we shall find them sleeping at break of day, and will fall upon them. And it came to pass as he had said. The Leonese lodged themselves in Vulpegera, taking no thought of their enemies, and setting no watch; and Ruydiez arose betimes in the morning and fell upon them, and subdued them before they could take their arms. King Don Alfonso fled to the town of Carrion, which was three leagues distant, and would have fortified himself there in the Church of St. Mary, but he was surrounded and constrained to yield.

Now the knights of Leon gathered together in their flight, and when they could not find their king they were greatly ashamed, and they turned back and smote the Castillians; and as it befell, they encountered King Don Sancho alone and took him prisoner, for his people considered the victory as their own, and all was in confusion. And thirteen knights took him in their ward and were leading him away,—but my Cid beheld them and galloped after them: he was alone, and had no lance, having broken his in the battle. And he came up to them and said, Knights, give me my lord and I will give unto you yours. They knew him by his arms, and they made answer, Ruydiez, return in peace and seek not to contend with us, otherwise we will carry you away prisoner with him. And he waxed wroth and said, Give me but a lance and I will, single as I am, rescue my lord from all of ye: by God's help I will do it. And they held him as nothing because he was but one, and gave him a lance. But he attacked them therewith so bravely that he slew eleven of the thirteen, leaving two only alive, on whom he had mercy; and thus did he rescue the king. And the Castillians rejoiced greatly at the king's deliverance: and King Don Sancho went to Burgos, and took with him his brother prisoner.

Great was the love which the Infanta Donya Urraca bore to her brother King Don

Alfonso, and when she heard that he was made prisoner, she feared lest he should be put to death: and she took with her the Count Don Peransures, and went to Burgos. And they spake with the Cid, and besought him that he would join with them and intercede with the king that he should release his brother from prison, and let him become a monk. Full willing was the Cid to serve in any thing the Infanta Donya Urraca, and he went with her before the king. And she knelt down before the king her brother, and besought him that he would let their brother Don Alfonso take the habit of St. Benedict, in the royal Monastery of Sahagun. And the king took my Cid aside, and asked counsel of him what he should do; and the Cid said, that if Don Alfonso were willing to become a monk, he would do well to set him free upon that condition, and he besought him so to do. Then King Don Sancho, at my Cid's request, granted to Donya Urraca what she had asked. And Don Alfonso became a monk in the Monastery at Sahagun, more by force than of free will. And being in the monastery he spake with Don Peransures, and took counsel with him, and fled away by night from the monks, and went among the Moors to King Alimaymon of Toledo. And the Moorish king welcomed him with a good will, and did great honour to him, and gave him great possessions and many gifts.

But when King Don Sancho heard how his brother had fled from the monastery, he drew out his host and went against the city of Leon. The Leonese would fain have maintained the city against him, but they could not, and he took the city of Leon, and all the towns and castles which had been under the dominion of his brother King Don Alfonso. And then he put the crown upon his head, and called himself king of the three kingdoms. He was a fair knight and of marvellous courage, so that both Moors and Christians were dismayed at what they saw him do, for they saw that nothing which he willed to take by force could stand against him. And he went forth with his army, and took from the Infanta Donya Elvira the half of the Infantazgo [Footnote: Inherited land] which she possessed, and also from Donya Urraca the other half. And he went against Toro, the city of Donya Elvira, and took it, and then he went to Zamora to Donya Urraca, bidding her yield him up the city, and saying that he would give her lands as much as she required in the plain country. But she returned for answer, that she would in no manner yield unto him that which the king her father had given her; and she besought him that he would suffer her to continue to dwell peaceably therein, saying that no disservice should ever be done against him on her part.

Then King Don Sancho went to Burgos, because it was the season for besieging a town, being winter. And he sent his letters through all the land, calling upon his vassals to assemble together upon the first day of March in Sahagun, upon pain of forfeiting his favour. And they assembled together in Sahagun on the day appointed; and when the king heard in what readiness they were, it gladdened him, and he lifted up his hands to God and said, Blessed be thy name, O Lord,

because thou hast given me all the kingdoms of my father. And when he had said this he ordered proclamation to be made through the streets of Burgos, that all should go forth to protect the host and the body of the king their lord. They made such speed that in five days they arrived before Zamora, and pitched their tents upon the banks of the Douro. And he mounted on horseback with his bidalgos and rode round the town, and beheld how strongly it was situated upon a rock, with strong walls, and many and strong towers, and the river Douro running at the foot thereof; and he said unto his knights, Ye see how strong it is, neither Moor nor Christian can prevail against it; if I could have it from my sister either for money or exchange, I should be Lord of Spain.

Then the king returned to his tents, and sent for the Cid, and said unto him, Cid, you well know how manifoldly you are bound unto me. I have ever shown favour unto you, and you have ever served me as the loyalest vassal that ever did service to his lord. Now therefore I beseech you as my friend and true vassal, that you go to Zamora to my sister Donya Urraca, and say unto her again, that I beseech her to give me the town either for a price, or in exchange, and I will give to her Medina de Rioseco, with the whole Infantazgo, from Villalpando to Valladolid, and Tiedra also, which is a good Castle; and I will swear unto her, with twelve knights of my vassals, never to break this covenant between us; but if she refuseth to do this I will take away the town from her by force. And my Cid kissed the hand of the king and said unto him, This bidding, sir, should be for other messenger, for it is a heavy thing for me to deliver it; for I was brought up in Zamora by your father's command, with Donya Urraca and with his sons, and it is not fitting that I should be the bearer of such bidding. And the king persisted in requiring of him that he should go, insomuch that he was constrained to obey his will. And he took with him fifteen of his knights and rode towards Zamora, and when he drew nigh he called unto those who kept guard in the towers not to shoot their arrows at him, for he was Ruydiez of Bivar, who came to Donya Urraca with the bidding of her brother King Don Sancho. With that there came down a knight who had the keeping of the gate, and he bade the Cid enter. It pleased the Infanta well that he should be the messenger, and she bade him come before her that she might know what was his bidding. When the Cid entered the palace Donya Urraca advanced to meet him, and greeted him full well, and they seated themselves both upon the Estrado. And Donya Urraca said unto him, Cid, you well know that you were brought up with me here in Zamora, and when my father was at the point of death he charged you that you should always counsel his sons the best you could. Now tell me I beseech you what is it which my brother goes about to do, now that he has called up all Spain in arms, and to what lands he thinks to go, whether against Moors or Christians. Then the Cid answered and said, Lady, give me safe assurance and I will tell unto you that which the king your brother hath sent me to say. And she said she would do as Don Arias Gonzalo should advise her. And Don Arias answered that it was well to

hear what the king her brother had sent to say. Donya Urraca then said to the Cid, that he might speak his bidding safely. Then said my Cid, The king your brother sends to greet you, and beseeches you to give him this town of Zamora, either for a price or in exchange; and he will give to you Medina de Rio-seco, with the whole Infantazgo, from Villalpando to Valladolid, and the good castle of Tiedra, and he will swear unto you, with twelve knights his vassals, never to do you hurt or harm; but if you will not give him the town, he will take it against your will.

When Donya Urraca heard this she lamented aloud, saying, Wretch that I am, many are the evil messages which I have heard since my father's death! He hath disherited my brother King Don Garcia of his kingdom, and taken him, and now holds him in irons as if he were a thief or a Moor: and he hath taken his lands from my brother King Don Alfonso, and forced him to go among the Moors, and live there exiled as if he had been a traitor; and he hath taken her lands from my sister Donya Elvira against her will, and now would he take Zamora from me also! Now then let the earth open and swallow me, that I may not see so many troubles! I am a woman, and well know that I cannot strive with him in battle; but I will have him slain either secretly or openly. Then Don Arias Gonzalo stood up and said, Lady, give order that all the men of Zamora assemble in St. Salvador's and know of them whether they will hold with you, seeing that your father gave them to you to be your vassals. If they will hold with you, then give not up the town, neither for a price, nor in exchange; but if they will not, let us then go to Toledo among the Moors, where your brother King Don Alfonso abideth.

And she did as her foster-father had advised, and it was proclaimed through the streets that the men of Zamora should meet in council at St. Salvador's. When they were all assembled, Donya Urraca arose and said, Don Sancho bids me give him Zamora, either for a price or in exchange. Now concerning this I would know whereunto ye advise me. Then by command of the Council there rose up a knight who was called Don Nuno, a man of worth, aged, and of fair speech; and he said, We beseech you give not up Zamora, neither for price nor for exchange, for he who besieges you upon the rock would soon drive you from the plain. The Council of Zamora will do your bidding, and will not desert you. Sooner, lady, will we expend all our possessions, and eat our mules and horses, than give up Zamora, unless by your command. And they all with one accord confirmed what Don Nuno had said. When the Infanta Donya Urraca heard this she was well pleased, and praised them greatly; and she turned to the Cid and said unto him, I beseech you help me now against my brother, and intreat him that he will not seek to disherit me; but if he will go on with what he hath begun, say to him that I will rather die with the men of Zamora and they with me, than give him up the town, either for price or exchange. And with this answer did the Cid return unto

the king.

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