

Chapter 27

HOW BROTHER GORENFLOT REMAINED CONVINCED THAT HE WAS A SOMNAMBULIST, AND BITTERLY DEPLORED THIS INFIRMITY.

Until the day when this unmerited persecution fell on Brother Gorenflot, he had led a contemplative and easy life, diverting himself on occasions at the Corne d'Abondance, when he had gained a little money from the faithful. He was one of those monks for whom the world began at the prior of the convent, and finished at the cook. And now he was sent forth to seek for adventures. He had no money; so that when out of Paris and he heard eleven o'clock (the time for dinner at the convent) strike, he sat down in dejection. His first idea was to return to the convent, and ask to be put in confinement, instead of being sent in to exile, and even to submit to the discipline, provided they would insure him his repasts. His next was more reasonable. He would go to the Corne d'Abondance, send for Chicot, explain to him the lamentable situation into which he had helped to bring him, and obtain aid from this generous friend. He was sitting absorbed in these reflections, when he heard the sound of a horse's feet approaching. In great fear, he hid behind a tree until the traveler should have passed; but a new idea struck him. He would endeavor to obtain some money for his dinner. So he approached tremblingly, and said, "Monsieur, if five patera, and five aves for the success of your projects would be agreeable to you----"

"Gorenflot!" cried the cavalier.

"M. Chicot!"

"Where the devil are you going?"

"I do not know. And you?"

"Oh! I am going straight before me."

"Very far?"

"Till I stop. But you--what are you doing outside the barriers?"

"Alas! M. Chicot! I am proscribed," said Gorenflot, with an enormous sigh.

"What?"

"Proscribed, I tell you. My brothers reject me from their bosom: I am anathematized, excommunicated."

"Bah! what for?"

"Listen, M. Chicot; you will not believe me, perhaps, but I do not know."

"Perhaps you were met last night gadding about."

"Do not joke; you know quite well what I was doing last night."

"Yes, from eight till ten, but not from ten till three."

"How, from ten till three?"

"Yes, at ten you went out."

"I?"

"Yes, and I asked you where you were going."

"And what did I say?"

"That you were going to pronounce a discourse."

"There was some truth in that," murmured Gorenflot.

"Yes, and you even told me part of it; it was very long, and there were terrible things against the king in it."

"Bah!"

"So terrible, that I should not wonder if you were arrested for them."

"M. Chicot, you open my eyes; did I seem quite awake when I spoke?"

"I must say you seemed very strange; you looked like a man who talks in his sleep."

"Yet, I feel sure I awoke this morning at the Corne d'Abondance."

"Well, of course; you came in again at three o'clock. I know; you left the door open, and made me cold."

"It is true, then?"

"True! ask M. Boutromet."

"M. Boutromet?"

"Yes, he opened to you on your return. And you were so full of pride when you came in, that I said to you,--'Fie, compère; pride does not become mortals, more especially monks.'"

"And of what was I proud?"

"Of the success your discourse had met with, and the compliments paid to you by the Duc de Guise and M. de Mayenne."

"Now I understand all."

"That is lucky. Then you confess you went to the assembly; what did you call it? Oh! the Holy Union."

Gorenflot groaned. "I am a somnambulist," he said.

"What does that mean?"

"It means, that with me mind is stronger than matter; so that while the body sleeps, the spirit wakes, and sometimes is so powerful that it forces the body to obey."

"Ah! compère, that sounds much like magic; if you are possessed, tell me so frankly; for, really a man who walks and makes discourses in his sleep in which he attacks the king is not natural. Vade retro, Satanas!"

"Then," cried Gorenflot, "you abandon me also. Ah! I could not have believed that of you."

Chicot took pity on him. "What did you tell me just now?" said he.

"I do not know; I feel half mad, and my stomach is empty."

"You spoke of traveling."

"Yes, the holy prior sends me."

"Where to?"

"Wherever I like."

"I also am traveling, and will take you with me."

Gorenflot looked bewildered.

"Well! do you accept?" continued Chicot.

"Accept! I should think so. But have you money to travel with?"

"Look," said Chicot, drawing out his purse.

Gorenflot jumped for joy.

"How much?" said he.

"One hundred and fifty pistoles."

"And where are we going?"

"You shall see."

"When shall we breakfast?"

"Immediately."

"What shall I ride?"

"Not my horse; you would kill it."

"Then what must I do?"

"Nothing more simple; I will buy you an ass."

"You are my benefactor, M. Chicot. Let the ass be strong. Now, where do we breakfast?"

"Here; look over this door and read."

Gorenflot looked up, and saw, "Here eggs, ham, eel-pies, and white wine may be had!" At this sight, Gorenflot's whole face expanded with joy.

"Now," said Chicot, "go and get your breakfast, while I go and look for an ass for you."