

Chapter 28

HOW BROTHER GORENFLOT TRAVELED UPON AN ASS, NAMED PANURGE, AND LEARNED MANY THINGS HE DID NOT KNOW BEFORE.

What made Chicot so indifferent to his own repast was, that he had already breakfasted plentifully. Therefore, he sat Gorenflot down to eggs and bacon, while he went among the peasants to look for an ass. He found a pacific creature, four years old, and something between an ass and a horse; gave twenty-two livres for it, and brought it to Gorenflot, who was enchanted at the sight of it, and christened it Panurge. Chicot, seeing by the look of the table that there would be no cruelty in staying his companion's repast, said,--

"Come, now we must go on; at Mélnun we will lunch."

Gorenflot got up, merely saying, "At Mélnun, at Mélnun."

They went on for about four leagues, then Gorenflot lay down on the grass to sleep, while Chicot began to calculate.

"One hundred and twenty leagues, at ten leagues a day, would take twelve days." It was as much as he could reasonably expect from the combined forces of a monk and an ass. But Chicot shook his head. "It will not do," he said, "if he wants to follow me, he must do fifteen."

He pushed the monk to wake him, who, opening his eyes, said, "Are we at Mélnun? I am hungry."

"Not yet, compère, and that is why I woke you; we must get on; we go too slow, ventre de biche!"

"Oh, no, dear M. Chicot; it is so fatiguing to go fast. Besides, there is no hurry: am I not traveling for the propagation of the faith, and you for pleasure? Well, the slower we go, the better the faith will be propagated, and the more you will amuse yourself. My advice is to stay some days at Méhun, where they make excellent eel-pies. What do you say, M. Chicot?"

"I say, that my opinion is to go as fast as possible; not to lunch at Méhun, but only to sup at Monterau, to make up for lost time."

Gorenflot looked at his companion as if he did not understand.

"Come, let us get on," said Chicot.

The monk sat still and groaned.

"If you wish to stay behind and travel at your ease, you are welcome."

"No, no!" cried Gorenflot, in terror; "no, no, M. Chicot; I love you too much to leave you!"

"Then to your saddle at once."

Gorenflot got on his ass this time sideways, as a lady sits, saying it was more comfortable; but the fact was that, fearing they were to go faster, he wished to be able to hold on both by mane and tail.

Chicot began to trot, and the ass followed. The first moments were terrible for Gorenflot, but he managed to keep his seat. From time to time Chicot stood up in his stirrups and looked forward, then, not seeing what he looked for, redoubled his speed.

"What are you looking for, dear M. Chicot?"

"Nothing; but we are not getting on."

"Not getting on! we are trotting all the way."

"Gallop then!" and he began to canter.

Panurge again followed; Gorenflot was in agonies.

"Oh, M. Chicot!" said he, as soon as he could speak, "do you call this traveling for pleasure? It does not amuse me at all."

"On! on!"

"It is dreadful!"

"Stay behind then!"

"Panurge can do no more; he is stopping."

"Then adieu, compère!"

Gorenflot felt half inclined to reply in the same manner, but he remembered that the horse, whom he felt ready to curse, bore on his back a man with a hundred and fifty pistoles in his pocket, so he resigned himself, and beat his ass to make him gallop once more.

"I shall kill my poor Panurge!" cried he dolefully, thinking to move Chicot.

"Well, kill him," said Chicot quietly, "and we will buy another."

All at once Chicot, on arriving at the top of a hill, reined in his horse suddenly. But the ass, having once taken it into his head to gallop, was not so easily stopped, and Gorenflot was forced to let himself slide off and hang on to the donkey with all his weight before he could stop him.

"Ah, M. Chicot!" cried he, "what does it all mean? First we must gallop fit to break our necks, and then we must stop short here!"

Chicot had hidden himself behind a rock, and was eagerly watching three men who, about two hundred yards in advance, were traveling on quietly on their mules, and he did not reply.

"I am tired and hungry!" continued Gorenflot angrily.

"And so am I," said Chicot; "and at the first hotel we come to we will order a couple of fricasseed chickens, some ham, and a jug of their best wine."

"Really, is it true this time?"

"I promise you, compère."

"Well, then, let us go and seek it. Come, Panurge, you shall have some dinner."

Chicot remounted his horse, and Gorenflot led his ass. The much-desired inn soon appeared, but, to the surprise of Gorenflot, Chicot caused him to make a detour and pass round the back. At the front door were standing the three travelers.