

Chapter 29

HOW BROTHER GORENFLOT CHANGED HIS ASS FOR A MULE, AND HIS MULE FOR A HORSE.

However, Gorenflot's troubles were near their end for that day, for after the detour they went on a mile, and then stopped at a rival hotel. Chicot took a room which looked on to the high-road, and ordered supper. But even while he was eating he was constantly on the watch. However, at ten o'clock, as he had seen nothing, he went to bed, first, however, ordering that the horse and the ass should be ready at daybreak.

"At daybreak?" uttered Gorenflot, with a deep sigh.

"Yes; you must be used to getting up at that time."

"Why so?"

"For matins."

"I had an exemption from the superior." Chicot ordered Gorenflot's bed to be placed in his room. With daylight he was up and at the window, and before very long he saw three mules coming along. He ran to Gorenflot and shook him.

"Can I not have a moment's rest?" cried the monk, who had been sleeping for ten hours.

"Be quick; get up and dress, for we are going."

"But the breakfast?"

"Is on the road to Monterau."

"Where is Monterau?"

"It is the city where we breakfast, that is enough for you. Now, I am going down to pay the bill, and if you are not ready in five minutes, I go without you."

A monk's toilet takes not long; however, Gorenflot took six minutes, and when he came down Chicot was starting. This day passed much like the former one, and by the third, Gorenflot was beginning to get accustomed to it, when towards the evening, Chicot lost all his gaiety. Since noon he had seen nothing of the three travelers; therefore he was in a very bad humor. They were off at daybreak and galloped till noon, but all in vain; no mules were visible. Chicot stopped at a turnpike, and asked the man if he had seen three travelers pass on mules.

"Not to-day," was the reply, "yesterday evening about seven."

"What were they like?"

"They looked like a master and two servants!"

"It was them," said Chicot; "ventre de biche! they have twelve hours' start of me. But courage!"

"Listen, M. Chicot!" said Gorenflot, "my ass can do no more, even your horse is almost exhausted." Chicot looked, and saw, indeed, that the poor animals were trembling from head to foot.

"Well! brother," said he, "we must take a resolution. You must leave me."

"Leave you; why?"

"You go too slow."

"Slow! why, we have galloped for five hours this morning."

"That is not enough."

"Well, then, let us go on; the quicker we go, the sooner we shall arrive, for I suppose we shall stop at last."

"But our animals are exhausted."

"What shall we do then?"

"Leave them here, and take them as we come back."

"Then how are we to proceed?"

"We will buy mules."

"Very well," said Gorenflot with a sigh. Two mules were soon found, and they went so well that in the evening Chicot saw with joy those of the three travelers, standing at the door of a farrier's. But they were without harness, and both master and lackeys had disappeared. Chicot trembled. "Go," said he, to Gorenflot, "and ask if those mules are for sale, and where their

owners are." Gorenflot went, and soon returned, saying that a gentleman had sold them, and had afterwards taken the road to Avignon.

"Alone?"

"No, with a lackey."

"And where is the other lackey?"

"He went towards Lyons."

"And how did they go on?"

"On horses which they bought."

"Of whom?"

"Of a captain of troopers who was here, and they sold their mules to a dealer, who is trying to sell them again to those Franciscan monks whom you see there."

"Well, take our two mules and go and offer them to the monks instead; they ought to give you the preference."

"But, then, how shall we go on?"

"On horseback, morbleu."

"Diable!"

"Oh! a good rider like you. You will find me again on the Grand Place."
Chicot was bargaining for some horses, when he saw the monk reappear, carrying the saddles and bridles of the mules.

"Oh! you have kept the harness?"

"Yes."

"And sold the mules?"

"For ten pistoles each."

"Which they paid you?"

"Here is the money."

"Ventre de biche! you are a great man, let us go on."

"But I am thirsty."

"Well, drink while I saddle the beasts, but not too much."

"A bottle."

"Very well."

Gorenflot drank two, and came to give the rest of the money back to Chicot, who felt half inclined to give it to him, but reflecting that if Gorenflot had money he would no longer be obedient, he refrained. They rode on, and the next evening Chicot came up with Nicolas David, still disguised as a lackey, and kept him in sight all the way to Lyons, whose gates they all three entered on the eighth day after their departure from Paris.