

François Rabelais

*The Fourth
Book*

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Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066467067

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To the most Illustrious Prince and most Reverend Lord Odet, Cardinal de Chastillon.

You know, most illustrious prince, how often I have been, and am daily pressed and required by great numbers of eminent persons, to proceed in the Pantagruelian fables; they tell me that many languishing, sick, and disconsolate persons, perusing them, have deceived their grief, passed their time merrily, and been inspired with new joy and comfort. I commonly answer that I aimed not at glory and applause when I diverted myself with writing, but only designed to give by my pen, to the absent who labour under affliction, that little help which at all times I willingly strive to give to the present that stand in need of my art and service. Sometimes I at large relate to them how Hippocrates in several places, and particularly in lib. 6. Epidem., describing the institution of the physician his disciple, and also Soranus of Ephesus, Oribasius, Galen, Hali Abbas, and other authors, have descended to particulars, in the prescription of his motions, deportment, looks, countenance, gracefulness, civility, cleanliness of face, clothes, beard, hair, hands, mouth, even his very nails; as if he were to play the part of a lover in some comedy, or enter the lists to fight some enemy. And indeed the practice of physic is properly enough compared by Hippocrates to a fight, and also to a farce acted between three persons, the patient, the physician, and the disease. Which passage has sometimes put me in mind of Julia's saying to Augustus her

father. One day she came before him in a very gorgeous, loose, lascivious dress, which very much displeased him, though he did not much discover his discontent. The next day she put on another, and in a modest garb, such as the chaste Roman ladies wore, came into his presence. The kind father could not then forbear expressing the pleasure which he took to see her so much altered, and said to her: Oh! how much more this garb becomes and is commendable in the daughter of Augustus. But she, having her excuse ready, answered: This day, sir, I dressed myself to please my father's eye; yesterday, to gratify that of my husband. Thus disguised in looks and garb, nay even, as formerly was the fashion, with a rich and pleasant gown with four sleeves, which was called *philonium* according to Petrus Alexandrinus in 6. Epidem., a physician might answer to such as might find the metamorphosis indecent: Thus have I accoutred myself, not that I am proud of appearing in such a dress, but for the sake of my patient, whom alone I wholly design to please, and no wise offend or dissatisfy. There is also a passage in our father Hippocrates, in the book I have named, which causes some to sweat, dispute, and labour; not indeed to know whether the physician's frowning, discontented, and morose Catonian look render the patient sad, and his joyful, serene, and pleasing countenance rejoice him; for experience teaches us that this is most certain; but whether such sensations of grief or pleasure are produced by the apprehension of the patient observing his motions and qualities in his physician, and drawing from thence conjectures of the end and catastrophe of his disease; as, by his pleasing look, joyful and desirable

events, and by his sorrowful and unpleasing air, sad and dismal consequences; or whether those sensations be produced by a transfusion of the serene or gloomy, aerial or terrestrial, joyful or melancholic spirits of the physician into the person of the patient, as is the opinion of Plato, Averroes, and others.

Above all things, the forecited authors have given particular directions to physicians about the words, discourse, and converse which they ought to have with their patients; everyone aiming at one point, that is, to rejoice them without offending God, and in no wise whatsoever to vex or displease them. Which causes Herophilus much to blame the physician Callianax, who, being asked by a patient of his, Shall I die? impudently made him this answer:

Patroclus died, whom all allow
By much a better man than you.

Another, who had a mind to know the state of his distemper, asking him, after our merry Patelin's way: Well, doctor, does not my water tell you I shall die? He foolishly answered, No; if Latona, the mother of those lovely twins, Phoebus and Diana, begot thee. Galen, lib. 4, Comment. 6. Epidem., blames much also Quintus his tutor, who, a certain nobleman of Rome, his patient, saying to him, You have been at breakfast, my master, your breath smells of wine; answered arrogantly, Yours smells of fever; which is the better smell of the two, wine or a putrid fever? But the calumny of certain cannibals, misanthropes, perpetual eavesdroppers, has been so foul and excessive against me, that it had conquered my patience, and I had resolved not

to write one jot more. For the least of their detractions were that my books are all stuffed with various heresies, of which, nevertheless, they could not show one single instance; much, indeed, of comical and facetious fooleries, neither offending God nor the king (and truly I own they are the only subject and only theme of these books), but of heresy not a word, unless they interpreted wrong, and against all use of reason and common language, what I had rather suffer a thousand deaths, if it were possible, than have thought; as who should make bread to be stone, a fish to be a serpent, and an egg to be a scorpion. This, my lord, emboldened me once to tell you, as I was complaining of it in your presence, that if I did not esteem myself a better Christian than they show themselves towards me, and if my life, writings, words, nay thoughts, betrayed to me one single spark of heresy, or I should in a detestable manner fall into the snares of the spirit of detraction, Diabolos, who, by their means, raises such crimes against me; I would then, like the phoenix, gather dry wood, kindle a fire, and burn myself in the midst of it. You were then pleased to say to me that King Francis, of eternal memory, had been made sensible of those false accusations; and that having caused my books (mine, I say, because several, false and infamous, have been wickedly laid to me) to be carefully and distinctly read to him by the most learned and faithful anagnost in this kingdom, he had not found any passage suspicious; and that he abhorred a certain envious, ignorant, hypocritical informer, who grounded a mortal heresy on an n put instead of an m by the carelessness of the printers.

As much was done by his son, our most gracious, virtuous, and blessed sovereign, Henry, whom Heaven long preserve! so that he granted you his royal privilege and particular protection for me against my slandering adversaries.

You kindly condescended since to confirm me these happy news at Paris; and also lately, when you visited my Lord Cardinal du Bellay, who, for the benefit of his health, after a lingering distemper, was retired to St. Maur, that place (or rather paradise) of salubrity, serenity, conveniency, and all desirable country pleasures.

Thus, my lord, under so glorious a patronage, I am emboldened once more to draw my pen, undaunted now and secure; with hopes that you will still prove to me, against the power of detraction, a second Gallic Hercules in learning, prudence, and eloquence; an Alexicacos in virtue, power, and authority; you, of whom I may truly say what the wise monarch Solomon saith of Moses, that great prophet and captain of Israel, Ecclesiast. 45: A man fearing and loving God, who found favour in the sight of all flesh, well-beloved both of God and man; whose memorial is blessed. God made him like to the glorious saints, and magnified him so, that his enemies stood in fear of him; and for him made wonders; made him glorious in the sight of kings, gave him a commandment for his people, and by him showed his light; he sanctified him in his faithfulness and meekness, and chose him out of all men. By him he made us to hear his voice, and caused by him the law of life and knowledge to be given.

Accordingly, if I shall be so happy as to hear anyone commend those merry composures, they shall be adjured by me to be obliged and pay their thanks to you alone, as also to offer their prayers to Heaven for the continuance and increase of your greatness; and to attribute no more to me than my humble and ready obedience to your commands; for by your most honourable encouragement you at once have inspired me with spirit and with invention; and without you my heart had failed me, and the fountain-head of my animal spirits had been dry. May the Lord keep you in his blessed mercy!

My Lord,

Your most humble, and most devoted Servant,

Francis Rabelais, Physician.

Paris, this 28th of January, MDLII.

The Author's Prologue

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Good people, God save and keep you! Where are you? I can't see you: stay--I'll saddle my nose with spectacles--oh, oh! 'twill be fair anon: I see you. Well, you have had a good vintage, they say: this is no bad news to Frank, you may swear. You have got an infallible cure against thirst: rarely performed of you, my friends! You, your wives, children, friends, and families are in as good case as hearts can wish; it is well, it is as I would have it: God be praised for it, and if such be his will, may you long be so. For my part, I am thereabouts, thanks to his blessed goodness; and by the means of a little Pantagruelism (which you know is a certain jollity of mind, pickled in the scorn of fortune), you see me now hale and cheery, as sound as a bell, and ready to drink, if you will. Would you know why I'm thus, good people? I will even give you a positive answer --Such is the Lord's will, which I obey and revere; it being said in his word, in great derision to the physician neglectful of his own health, Physician, heal thyself.

Galen had some knowledge of the Bible, and had conversed with the Christians of his time, as appears lib. 11. De Usu Partium; lib. 2. De Differentiis Pulsuum, cap. 3, and ibid. lib. 3. cap. 2. and lib. De Rerum Affectibus (if it be Galen's). Yet 'twas not for any such veneration of holy writ that he took care of his own health. No, it was for fear of being twitted with the saying so well known among physicians:

latros allon autos elkesi bruon.

He boasts of healing poor and rich,
Yet is himself all over itch.

This made him boldly say, that he did not desire to be esteemed a physician, if from his twenty-eighth year to his old age he had not lived in perfect health, except some ephemeral fevers, of which he soon rid himself; yet he was not naturally of the soundest temper, his stomach being evidently bad. Indeed, as he saith, lib. 5, De Sanitate tuenda, that physician will hardly be thought very careful of the health of others who neglects his own. Asclepiades boasted yet more than this; for he said that he had artiled with fortune not to be reputed a physician if he could be said to have been sick since he began to practise physic to his latter age, which he reached, lusty in all his members and victorious over fortune; till at last the old gentleman unluckily tumbled down from the top of a certain ill-propped and rotten staircase, and so there was an end of him.

If by some disaster health is fled from your worships to the right or to the left, above or below, before or behind, within or without, far or near, on this side or the other side, wheresoever it be, may you presently, with the help of the Lord, meet with it. Having found it, may you immediately claim it, seize it, and secure it. The law allows it; the king would have it so; nay, you have my advice for it. Neither more nor less than the law-makers of old did fully empower a master to claim and seize his runaway servant wherever he might be found. Odds-bodikins, is it not written and warranted by the ancient customs of this noble, so rich, so

flourishing realm of France, that the dead seizes the quick? See what has been declared very lately in that point by that learned, wise, courteous, humane and just civilian, Andrew Tiraqueau, one of the judges in the most honourable court of Parliament at Paris. Health is our life, as Aripbron the Sicyonian wisely has it; without health life is not life, it is not living life: abios bios, bios abiotos. Without health life is only a languishment and an image of death. Therefore, you that want your health, that is to say, that are dead, seize the quick; secure life to yourselves, that is to say, health.

I have this hope in the Lord, that he will hear our supplications, considering with what faith and zeal we pray, and that he will grant this our wish because it is moderate and mean. Mediocrity was held by the ancient sages to be golden, that is to say, precious, praised by all men, and pleasing in all places. Read the sacred Bible, you will find the prayers of those who asked moderately were never unanswered. For example, little dapper Zaccheus, whose body and relics the monks of St. Garlick, near Orleans, boast of having, and nickname him St. Sylvanus; he only wished to see our blessed Saviour near Jerusalem. It was but a small request, and no more than anybody then might pretend to. But alas! he was but low-built; and one of so diminutive a size, among the crowd, could not so much as get a glimpse of him. Well then he struts, stands on tiptoes, bustles, and bestirs his stumps, shoves and makes way, and with much ado clambers up a sycamore. Upon this, the Lord, who knew his sincere affection, presented himself to his sight, and was not only seen by him, but heard also; nay, what is more, he came to his house and blessed his family.

One of the sons of the prophets in Israel felling wood near the river Jordan, his hatchet forsook the helve and fell to the bottom of the river; so he prayed to have it again ('twas but a small request, mark ye me), and having a strong faith, he did not throw the hatchet after the helve, as some spirits of contradiction say by way of scandalous blunder, but the helve after the hatchet, as you all properly have it. Presently two great miracles were seen: up springs the hatchet from the bottom of the water, and fixes itself to its old acquaintance the helve. Now had he wished to coach it to heaven in a fiery chariot like Elias, to multiply in seed like Abraham, be as rich as Job, strong as Samson, and beautiful as Absalom, would he have obtained it, d'ye think? I' troth, my friends, I question it very much.

Now I talk of moderate wishes in point of hatchet (but harkee me, be sure you don't forget when we ought to drink), I will tell you what is written among the apologues of wise Aesop the Frenchman. I mean the Phrygian and Trojan, as Max. Planudes makes him; from which people, according to the most faithful chroniclers, the noble French are descended. Aelian writes that he was of Thrace and Agathias, after Herodotus, that he was of Samos; 'tis all one to Frank.

In his time lived a poor honest country fellow of Gravot, Tom Wellhung by name, a wood-cleaver by trade, who in that low drudgery made shift so to pick up a sorry livelihood. It happened that he lost his hatchet. Now tell me who ever had more cause to be vexed than poor Tom? Alas, his whole estate and life depended on his hatchet; by his hatchet he earned many a fair penny of the best woodmongers or log-

merchants among whom he went a-jobbing; for want of his hatchet he was like to starve; and had death but met with him six days after without a hatchet, the grim fiend would have mowed him down in the twinkling of a bedstaff. In this sad case he began to be in a heavy taking, and called upon Jupiter with the most eloquent prayers--for you know necessity was the mother of eloquence. With the whites of his eyes turned up towards heaven, down on his marrow-bones, his arms reared high, his fingers stretched wide, and his head bare, the poor wretch without ceasing was roaring out, by way of litany, at every repetition of his supplications, My hatchet, Lord Jupiter, my hatchet! my hatchet! only my hatchet, O Jupiter, or money to buy another, and nothing else! alas, my poor hatchet!

Jupiter happened then to be holding a grand council about certain urgent affairs, and old gammer Cybele was just giving her opinion, or, if you would rather have it so, it was young Phoebus the beau; but, in short, Tom's outcries and lamentations were so loud that they were heard with no small amazement at the council-board, by the whole consistory of the gods. What a devil have we below, quoth Jupiter, that howls so horridly? By the mud of Styx, have not we had all along, and have not we here still enough to do, to set to rights a world of damned puzzling businesses of consequence? We made an end of the fray between Presthan, King of Persia, and Soliman the Turkish emperor, we have stopped up the passages between the Tartars and the Muscovites; answered the Xeriff's petition; done the same to that of Golgots Rays; the state of Parma's despatched; so is that of Maidenburg, that of Mirandola, and

that of Africa, that town on the Mediterranean which we call Aphrodisium; Tripoli by carelessness has got a new master; her hour was come.

Here are the Gascons cursing and damning, demanding the restitution of their bells.

In yonder corner are the Saxons, Easterlings, Ostrogoths, and Germans, nations formerly invincible, but now aberkeids, bridled, curbed, and brought under a paltry diminutive crippled fellow; they ask us revenge, relief, restitution of their former good sense and ancient liberty.

But what shall we do with this same Ramus and this Galland, with a pox to them, who, surrounded with a swarm of their scullions, blackguard ragamuffins, sizars, vouchers, and stipulators, set together by the ears the whole university of Paris? I am in a sad quandary about it, and for the heart's blood of me cannot tell yet with whom of the two to side.

Both seem to me notable fellows, and as true cods as ever pissed. The one has rose-nobles, I say fine and weighty ones; the other would gladly have some too. The one knows something; the other's no dunce. The one loves the better sort of men; the other's beloved by 'em. The one is an old cunning fox; the other with tongue and pen, tooth and nail, falls foul on the ancient orators and philosophers, and barks at them like a cur.

What thinkest thou of it, say, thou bawdy Priapus? I have found thy counsel just before now, et habet tua mentula mentem.

King Jupiter, answered Priapus, standing up and taking off his cowl, his snout uncased and reared up, fiery and

stiffly propped, since you compare the one to a yelping snarling cur and the other to sly Reynard the fox, my advice is, with submission, that without fretting or puzzling your brains any further about 'em, without any more ado, even serve 'em both as, in the days of yore, you did the dog and the fox. How? asked Jupiter; when? who were they? where was it? You have a rare memory, for aught I see! returned Priapus. This right worshipful father Bacchus, whom we have here nodding with his crimson phiz, to be revenged on the Thebans had got a fairy fox, who, whatever mischief he did, was never to be caught or wronged by any beast that wore a head.

The noble Vulcan here present had framed a dog of Monesian brass, and with long puffing and blowing put the spirit of life into him; he gave it to you, you gave it your Miss Europa, Miss Europa gave it Minos, Minos gave it Procris, Procris gave it Cephalus. He was also of the fairy kind; so that, like the lawyers of our age, he was too hard for all other sorts of creatures; nothing could scape the dog. Now who should happen to meet but these two? What do you think they did? Dog by his destiny was to take fox, and fox by his fate was not to be taken.

The case was brought before your council: you protested that you would not act against the fates; and the fates were contradictory. In short, the end and result of the matter was, that to reconcile two contradictions was an impossibility in nature. The very pang put you into a sweat; some drops of which happening to light on the earth, produced what the mortals call cauliflowers. All our noble consistory, for want of a categorical resolution, were seized with such a horrid

thirst, that above seventy-eight hogsheads of nectar were swilled down at that sitting. At last you took my advice, and transmogrified them into stones; and immediately got rid of your perplexity, and a truce with thirst was proclaimed through this vast Olympus. This was the year of flabby cods, near Teumessus, between Thebes and Chalcis.

After this manner, it is my opinion that you should petrify this dog and this fox. The metamorphosis will not be incongruous; for they both bear the name of Peter. And because, according to the Limosin proverb, to make an oven's mouth there must be three stones, you may associate them with Master Peter du Coignet, whom you formerly petrified for the same cause. Then those three dead pieces shall be put in an equilateral trigone somewhere in the great temple at Paris--in the middle of the porch, if you will--there to perform the office of extinguishers, and with their noses put out the lighted candles, torches, tapers, and flambeaux; since, while they lived, they still lighted, ballock-like, the fire of faction, division, ballock sects, and wrangling among those idle bearded boys, the students. And this will be an everlasting monument to show that those puny self-conceited pedants, ballock-framers, were rather contemned than condemned by you. Dixi, I have said my say.

You deal too kindly by them, said Jupiter, for aught I see, Monsieur Priapus. You do not use to be so kind to everybody, let me tell you; for as they seek to eternize their names, it would be much better for them to be thus changed into hard stones than to return to earth and putrefaction. But now to other matters. Yonder behind us,