

# **Gargantua and Pantagruel, Book IV**

**MASTER FRANCIS RABELAIS**

**FIVE BOOKS OF THE LIVES,  
HEROIC DEEDS AND SAYINGS OF**

**GARGANTUA AND HIS SON  
PANTAGRUEL**

**Book IV.**



“My so good wife is dead, who was the most *this*, the most *that*, that ever was in the world.’ With these words he did cry like a cow.”

THE WORKS OF  
RABELAIS

FAITHFULLY TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

WITH

VARIORUM NOTES, AND



NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

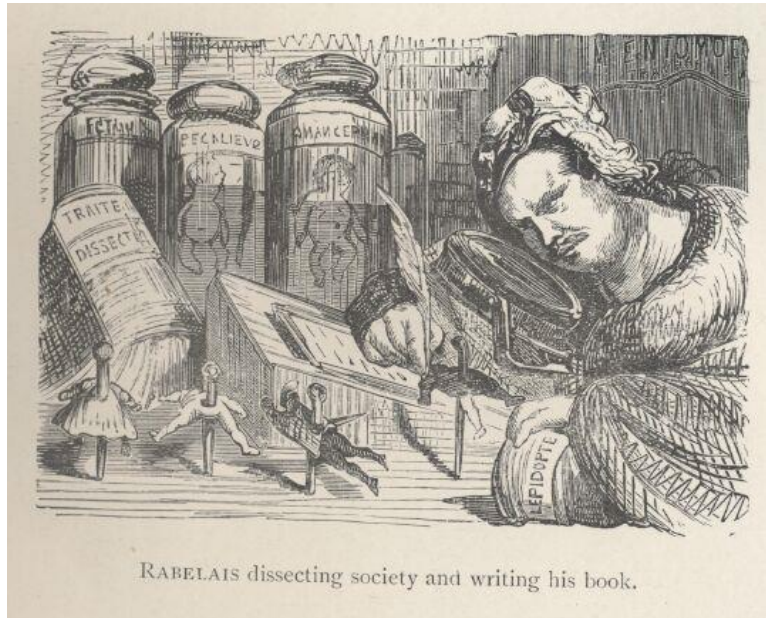
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**Translated into English by  
Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty  
and  
Peter Antony Motteux**

The text of the first Two Books of Rabelais has been reprinted from the first edition (1653) of Urquhart's translation. Footnotes initialled 'M.' are drawn from the Maitland Club edition (1838); other footnotes are by the translator. Urquhart's translation of Book III. appeared posthumously in 1693, with a new edition of Books I. and II., under Motteux's editorship. Motteux's rendering of Books IV. and V. followed in 1708. Occasionally (as the footnotes indicate) passages omitted by Motteux have been restored from the 1738 copy edited by Ozell.



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# **THE FOURTH BOOK**

## The Translator's Preface.

Reader,—I don't know what kind of a preface I must write to find thee courteous, an epithet too often bestowed without a cause. The author of this work has been as sparing of what we call good nature, as most readers are nowadays. So I am afraid his translator and commentator is not to expect much more than has been showed them. What's worse, there are but two sorts of taking prefaces, as there are but two kinds of prologues to plays; for Mr. Bays was doubtless in the right when he said that if thunder and lightning could not fright an audience into complaisance, the sight of the poet with a rope about his neck might work them into pity. Some, indeed, have bullied many of you into applause, and railed at your faults that you might think them without any; and others, more safely, have spoken kindly of you, that you might think, or at least speak, as favourably of them, and be flattered into patience. Now, I fancy, there's nothing less difficult to attempt than the first method; for, in this blessed age, 'tis as easy to find a bully without courage, as a whore without beauty, or a writer without wit; though those qualifications are so necessary in their respective professions. The mischief is, that you seldom allow any to rail besides yourselves, and cannot bear a pride which shocks your own. As for wheedling you into a liking of a work, I must confess it seems the safest way; but though flattery pleases you well when it is particular, you hate it, as little concerning you, when it is general. Then we knights of the quill are a stiff-necked generation, who as seldom care to seem to doubt the worth of our writings, and their being liked, as we love to flatter more than one at a time; and had rather draw our pens, and stand up for the beauty of our works (as some arrant fools use to do for that of their mistresses) to the last drop of our ink. And truly this submission, which sometimes wheedles you into pity, as seldom decoys you into love, as the awkward cringing of an antiquated fop, as moneyless as he is ugly, affects an experienced fair one. Now we as little value your pity as a lover his mistress's, well satisfied that it is only a less uncivil way

of dismissing us. But what if neither of these two ways will work upon you, of which doleful truth some of our playwrights stand so many living monuments? Why, then, truly I think on no other way at present but blending the two into one; and, from this marriage of huffing and cringing, there will result a new kind of careless medley, which, perhaps, will work upon both sorts of readers, those who are to be hectored, and those whom we must creep to. At least, it is like to please by its novelty; and it will not be the first monster that has pleased you when regular nature could not do it.

If uncommon worth, lively wit, and deep learning, wove into wholesome satire, a bold, good, and vast design admirably pursued, truth set out in its true light, and a method how to arrive to its oracle, can recommend a work, I am sure this has enough to please any reasonable man. The three books published some time since, which are in a manner an entire work, were kindly received; yet, in the French, they come far short of these two, which are also entire pieces; for the satire is all general here, much more obvious, and consequently more entertaining. Even my long explanatory preface was not thought improper. Though I was so far from being allowed time to make it methodical, that at first only a few pages were intended; yet as fast as they were printed I wrote on, till it proved at last like one of those towns built little at first, then enlarged, where you see promiscuously an odd variety of all sorts of irregular buildings. I hope the remarks I give now will not please less; for, as I have translated the work which they explain, I had more time to make them, though as little to write them. It would be needless to give here a large account of my performance; for, after all, you readers care no more for this or that apology, or pretence of Mr. Translator, if the version does not please you, than we do for a blundering cook's excuse after he has spoiled a good dish in the dressing. Nor can the first pretend to much praise, besides that of giving his author's sense in its full extent, and copying his style, if it is to be copied; since he has no share in the invention or disposition of what he translates. Yet there was no small difficulty in doing Rabelais justice in that double respect; the obsolete words and turns of phrase, and dark subjects, often

as darkly treated, make the sense hard to be understood even by a Frenchman, and it cannot be easy to give it the free easy air of an original; for even what seems most common talk in one language, is what is often the most difficult to be made so in another; and Horace's thoughts of comedy may be well applied to this:

Creditur, ex medio quia res arcessit, habere  
Sudoris minimum; sed habet commoedia tantum  
Plus oneris, quanto veniae minus.

Far be it from me, for all this, to value myself upon hitting the words of cant in which my drolling author is so luxuriant; for though such words have stood me in good stead, I scarce can forbear thinking myself unhappy in having insensibly hoarded up so much gibberish and Billingsgate trash in my memory; nor could I forbear asking of myself, as an Italian cardinal said on another account, D'onde hai tu pigliato tante coglionerie? Where the devil didst thou rake up all these fripperies?

It was not less difficult to come up to the author's sublime expressions. Nor would I have attempted such a task, but that I was ambitious of giving a view of the most valuable work of the greatest genius of his age, to the Mecaenas and best genius of this. For I am not overfond of so ungrateful a task as translating, and would rejoice to see less versions and more originals; so the latter were not as bad as many of the first are, through want of encouragement. Some indeed have deservedly gained esteem by translating; yet not many condescend to translate, but such as cannot invent; though to do the first well requires often as much genius as to do the latter.

I wish, reader, thou mayest be as willing to do my author justice, as I have strove to do him right. Yet, if thou art a brother of the quill, it is ten to one thou art too much in love with thy own dear productions to admire those of one of thy trade. However, I know three or four who have not such a mighty opinion of themselves; but I'll not name them, lest I should be obliged to place myself among them. If thou art one of those who, though they never write, criticise everyone that does; avaunt!—Thou art a

professed enemy of mankind and of thyself, who wilt never be pleased nor let anybody be so, and knowest no better way to fame than by striving to lessen that of others; though wouldst thou write thou mightst be soon known, even by the butterwomen, and fly through the world in bandboxes. If thou art of the dissembling tribe, it is thy office to rail at those books which thou huggest in a corner. If thou art one of those eavesdroppers, who would have their moroseness be counted gravity, thou wilt condemn a mirth which thou art past relishing; and I know no other way to quit the score than by writing (as like enough I may) something as dull, or duller than thyself, if possible. If thou art one of those critics in dressing, those extempores of fortune, who, having lost a relation and got an estate, in an instant set up for wit and every extravagance, thou'lt either praise or discommend this book, according to the dictates of some less foolish than thyself, perhaps of one of those who, being lodged at the sign of the box and dice, will know better things than to recommend to thee a work which bids thee beware of his tricks. This book might teach thee to leave thy follies; but some will say it does not signify much to some fools whether they are so or not; for when was there a fool that thought himself one? If thou art one of those who would put themselves upon us for learned men in Greek and Hebrew, yet are mere blockheads in English, and patch together old pieces of the ancients to get themselves clothes out of them, thou art too severely mauled in this work to like it. Who then will? some will cry. Nay, besides these, many societies that make a great figure in the world are reflected on in this book; which caused Rabelais to study to be dark, and even bedaub it with many loose expressions, that he might not be thought to have any other design than to droll; in a manner bewraying his book that his enemies might not bite it. Truly, though now the riddle is expounded, I would advise those who read it not to reflect on the author, lest he be thought to have been beforehand with them, and they be ranked among those who have nothing to show for their honesty but their money, nothing for their religion but their dissembling, or a fat benefice, nothing for their wit but their dressing, for their nobility but their title, for their gentility but their sword, for their courage but their huffing, for their



preferment but their assurance, for their learning but their degrees, or for their gravity but their wrinkles or dulness. They had better laugh at one another here, as it is the custom of the world. Laughing is of all professions; the miser may hoard, the spendthrift squander, the politician plot, the lawyer wrangle, and the gamester cheat; still their main design is to be able to laugh at one another; and here they may do it at a cheap and easy rate. After all, should this work fail to please the greater number of readers, I am sure it cannot miss being liked by those who are for witty mirth and a chirping bottle; though not by those solid sots who seem to have drudged all their youth long only that they might enjoy the sweet blessing of getting drunk every night in their old age. But those men of sense and honour who love truth and the good of mankind in general above all other things will undoubtedly countenance this work. I will not gravely insist upon its usefulness, having said enough of it in the preface (Motteux' Preface to vol. I of Rabelais, ed. 1694.) to the first part. I will only add, that as Homer in his Odyssey makes his hero wander ten years through most parts of the then known world, so Rabelais, in a three months' voyage, makes Pantagruel take a view of almost all sorts of people and professions; with this difference, however, between the ancient mythologist and the modern, that while the Odyssey has been compared to a setting sun in respect to the Iliads, Rabelais' last work, which is this Voyage to the Oracle of the Bottle (by which he means truth) is justly thought his masterpiece, being wrote with more spirit, salt, and flame, than the first part of his works. At near seventy years of age, his genius, far from being drained, seemed to have acquired fresh vigour and new graces the more it exerted itself; like those rivers which grow more deep, large, majestic, and useful by their course. Those who accuse the French of being as sparing of their wit as lavish of their words will find an Englishman in our author. I must confess indeed that my countrymen and other southern nations temper the one with the other in a manner as they do their wine with water, often just dashing the latter with a little of the first. Now here men love to drink their wine pure; nay, sometimes it will not satisfy unless in its very quintessence, as in brandies; though an excess of

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