

# *Gargantua, Godson of the Fairies*

Once upon a time, there was a man and a woman who had no children and who were very upset that they did not. One day, an old fairy went to see them and told them not to despair, that they were to have a boy so big that no one would have ever seen one equal, and she advised them to tell her when he was born. They did not forget her, and they invited other fairies as well to the baptism, who each gave the boy a gift. The old fairy named him Gargantua, and she said that he would pass over the sea like over land, without drowning.

Gargantua grew up, and, when he was sixteen years old, he had a desire to travel. He was as tall as an oak tree, and, as he searched for a cane, he saw a great stone pillar that was planted in the earth:

“Here,” he said, “is a cane that’s good for me.”

He took it in his hand, and, when he found pathways too narrow, he broke the trees with his cane like children who break brambles with their sticks.

He went to Jersey and he did not stay there for long; each of his paces was ten miles wide, and, to not get his breeches wet, it was enough for him to pull him up to his knees. When he did this, all the inhabitants were drawn to him to see him; never had they seen anyone of his size, but they laughed at him. This displeased Gargantua, who said to them:

“Do you believe that I’ve come here to serve as the world’s laughingstock?”

He began to strike the earth with his foot, and the inhabitants of Jersey cried out:

“Don’t hurt us, Gargantua; we will give you everything you want.”

He said that he wanted them to bring him a hundred and fifty bulls, two hundred sheep, and a hundred casks of wine for his dinner. He took the casks between his thumb and his fingers and he emptied them through their plugholes; he impaled one bull at a time with his fork and ate it in one or two bites. The inhabitants of Jersey were amazed, for never had they seen anyone eat with such a big appetite, and, when he left their island, they were very happy.

He returned to Brittany, and, as he went there quietly, he saw a good woman who was gathering dead branches:

“You are stupid,” he said to her, “to amuse yourself by gathering up little branches. If I were in your place, I would take trees for my fire.”

“I can only gather small branches,” replied the good woman.

“Let me do it,” Gargantua said.

He began to strike the trees with his cane, and they flew in pieces, but the branches fell next to the good woman who was afraid of being squished, and who exclaimed:

“Stop, you’re going to kill me! Enough!”

Gargantua saw the mass of trees that he had knocked down, and carried them to the good woman’s house, and, as it was hot, she said to him:

“Now, go drink a cup of cider. Hold on, here is a glass; go refresh yourself in our cellar.”

But, instead of filling the glass using the little tap, Gargantua took the cask of cider and emptied it from the plughole, then he left. When he left, the good woman herself was thirsty, but, when she went to get some cider, not one drop remained in the barrel.

“What was become of my cider?” she said to herself. “Oh! That scoundrel<sup>1</sup>! He drank it all!”

While walking, Gargantua went to Saint-Cast. Having arrived at Bé, he felt something in his shoe that bothered him; he removed a bit of gravel that is the rock of Bé. He went back on the road, and, while passing by the bay of l’Isle, his stomach hurt; he squat down, and, at the place where he stopped, he left the rock of Becrond.

He was sick the whole day, for he was also nauseous and he vomited the rock of Canevet. Because it was hot, he took off his hat to wipe his forehead, and he let two rocks that he had collected because he considered them beautiful fall into the sea. They are still there today, and they are the Grande and the Petite Feillâtre.

When he arrived at the peak of l’Isle, he saw a barnacle that was flying over the sea; he took a stone to kill it; but he did not throw it far enough, since it fell to the bank at Chiambrée, where it is today. He threw a second, which did not reach the barnacle either – that is, the Petit-Bourdineau – then a third, which is the rock of Grand-Bourdineau<sup>2</sup>.

One day, he wished to return to Jersey to feast; he put one foot on the château of La Latte and the other on Saint-Malo. He leaned out to drink and he swallowed a warship. The passengers on the ship, not knowing where they were, began to fire their cannon. Hearing this noise, Gargantua said to himself:

“What are these little *guibettes*<sup>3</sup> that are buzzing around my stomach?”

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<sup>1</sup> The gourmand.

<sup>2</sup> All of these rocks are near Saint-Cast; in another one of his voyages, he threw another rock to kill a barnacle, and that one was the Ile Agot.

<sup>3</sup> Gnats.

But, a little before arriving in Jersey, the ship got on his nerves, and he ejected it in a very bad state.

After having feasted in Jersey, he went back to Plévenon, and, as he had money, he bought a carriage for two horses; but that was for his parents, because he could not fit inside.

When the fellow and his wife wanted to go to Mass, he put one in each of his pockets, and he went to gently drop them off at the porch of the church.

He left one of his clogs, which was slightly split open, at Plévenon, and the inhabitants used pieces of it to warm themselves for the next thirty years.

He stuck his cane into the earth next to the château of La Latte, saying:

“As long as this world is this world, it shall remain there.”

And, indeed, you can still see it today.

Told in 1880 by François Marquier from Saint-Cast, ship boy, age 13.  
Paul Sébillot. *Gargantua dans les traditions populaires*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie, 1883.

Translated by Michelle Collins.