

RONDELET,* THE HUGUENOT NATURALIST.†

“APOLLO, god of medicine, exiled from the rest of the earth, was straying once across the Narbonnaise in Gaul, seeking to fix his abode there. Driven from Asia, from Africa, and from the rest of Europe, he wandered through all the towns of the province in search of a place propitious for him and for his disciples. At last he perceived a new city, constructed from the ruins of Maguelonne, of Lattes, and of Substantion. He contemplated long its site, its aspect, its neighbourhood, and resolved to establish on this hill of Montpellier a temple for himself and his priests. All smiled on his desires. By the genius of the soil, by the character of the inhabitants, no town is more fit for the culture of letters, and above all of medicine. What site is more delicious and more lovely? A heaven

* A Life of Rondelet, by his pupil Laurent Joubert, is to be found appended to his works; and with an account of his illness and death, by his cousin, Claude Formy, which is well worth the perusal of any man, wise or foolish. Many interesting details beside, I owe to the courtesy of Professor Planchon, of Montpellier, author of a discourse on “Rondelet et ses Disciples,” which appeared, with a learned and curious Appendix, in the “Montpellier Médical” for 1866.

† This lecture was given at Cambridge in 1869.

pure and smiling; a city built with magnificence; men born for all the labours of the intellect. All around vast horizons and enchanting sites—meadows, vines, olives, green champaigns; mountains and hills, rivers, brooks, lagoons, and the sea. Everywhere a luxuriant vegetation—everywhere the richest production of the land and the water. Hail to thee, sweet and dear city! Hail, happy abode of Apollo, who spreadest afar the light of the glory of thy name!”

“This fine tirade,” says Dr. Maurice Raynaud—from whose charming book on the “Doctors of the Time of Molière” I quote—“is not, as one might think, the translation of a piece of poetry. It is simply part of a public oration by François Fanchon, one of the most illustrious chancellors of the faculty of medicine of Montpellier in the seventeenth century.” “From time immemorial,” he says, “‘the faculty’ of Montpellier had made itself remarkable by a singular mixture of the sacred and the profane. The theses which were sustained there began by an invocation to God, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Luke, and ended by these words: ‘This thesis will be sustained in the sacred Temple of Apollo.’”

But however extravagant Chancellor Fanchon’s praises of his native city may seem, they are really not exaggerated. The Narbonnaise, or Languedoc, is perhaps the most charming district of charming France. In the far north-east gleam the white Alps; in the far south-west the white Pyrenees; and from the purple glens and yellow downs of the Cevennes on the north-west, the Herault slopes gently down towards the “Etangs,” or great salt-water lagoons, and the vast alluvial flats of the Camargue, the field of Caius Marius, where still run herds of half-wild horses, descended

from some ancient Roman stock; while beyond all glitters the blue Mediterranean. The great almond orchards, each one sheet of rose-colour in spring; the mulberry orchards, the oliveyards, the vineyards, cover every foot of available upland soil: save where the rugged and arid downs are sweet with a thousand odori-ferous plants, from which the bees extract the famous white honey of Narbonne. The native flowers and shrubs, of a beauty and richness rather Eastern than European, have made the "Flora Montpeliensis," and with it the names of Rondelet and his disciples, famous among botanists; and the strange fish and shells upon its shores afforded Rondelet materials for his immortal work upon the "Animals of the Sea." The innumerable wild fowl of the Bouches du Rhône; the innumerable songsters and other birds of passage, many of them unknown in these islands, and even in the north of France itself, which haunt every copse of willow and aspen along the brook-sides; the gaudy and curious insects which thrive beneath that clear, fierce, and yet bracing sunlight; all these have made the district of Montpellier a home prepared by Nature for those who study and revere her.

Neither was Chancellor Fanchon misled by patriotism, when he said the pleasant people who inhabit that district are fit for all the labours of the intellect. They are a very mixed race, and, like most mixed races, quick-witted, and handsome also. There is probably much Roman blood among them, especially in the towns; for Languedoc, or Gallia Narbonnensis, as it was called of old, was said to be more Roman than Rome itself. The Roman remains are more perfect and more interesting—so the late Dr. Whewell used to say—than any to be seen now in Italy; and the old

capital, Narbonne itself, was a complete museum of Roman antiquities ere Francis I. destroyed it, in order to fortify the city upon a modern system against the invading armies of Charles V. There must be much Visigothic blood likewise in Languedoc: for the Visigothic Kings held their courts there from the fifth century, until the time that they were crushed by the invading Moors. Spanish blood, likewise, there may be; for much of Languedoc was held in the early Middle Age by those descendants of Eudes of Aquitaine who established themselves as kings of Majorca and Arragon; and Languedoc did not become entirely French till 1349, when Philip le Bel bought Montpellier of those potentates. The Moors, too, may have left some traces of their race behind. They held the country from about A.D. 713 to 758, when they were finally expelled by Charles Martel and Eudes. One sees to this day their towers of meagre stonework, perched on the grand Roman masonry of those old amphitheatres, which they turned into fortresses. One may see, too—so tradition holds—upon those very amphitheatres the stains of the fires with which Charles Martel smoked them out; and one may see, too, or fancy that one sees, in the aquiline features, the bright black eyes, the lithe and graceful gestures, which are so common in Languedoc, some touch of the old Mahomedan race, which passed like a flood over that Christian land.

Whether or not the Moors left behind any traces of their blood, they left behind, at least, traces of their learning; for the university of Montpellier claimed to have been founded by Moors at a date of altogether abysmal antiquity. They looked upon the Arabian physicians of the Middle Age, on Avicenna and

Averrhoes, as modern innovators, and derived their parentage from certain mythic doctors of Cordova, who, when the Moors were expelled from Spain in the eighth century, fled to Montpellier, bringing with them traditions of that primæval science which had been revealed to Adam while still in Paradise; and founded Montpellier, the mother of all the universities in Europe. Nay, some went farther still, and told of Bengessaus and Ferragius, the physicians of Charlemagne, and of Marilephus, chief physician of King Chilperic, and even—if a letter of St. Bernard's was to be believed—of a certain bishop who went as early as the second century to consult the doctors of Montpellier; and it would have been in vain to reply to them that in those days, and long after them, Montpellier was not yet built. The facts are said to be: that as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century Montpellier had its schools of law, medicine, and arts, which were erected into a university by Pope Nicholas IV. in 1289.

The university of Montpellier, like—I believe—most foreign ones, resembled more a Scotch than an English university. The students lived, for the most part, not in colleges, but in private lodgings, and constituted a republic of their own, ruled by an abbé of the scholars, one of themselves, chosen by universal suffrage. A terror they were often to the respectable burghers, for they had all the right to carry arms; and a plague likewise, for, if they ran in debt, their creditors were forbidden to seize their books, which, with their swords, were generally all the property they possessed. If, moreover, anyone set up a noisy or unpleasant trade near their lodgings, the scholars could compel the town authorities to turn him out.

They were most of them, probably, mere boys of from twelve to twenty, living poorly, working hard, and—those at least of them who were in the colleges—cruelly beaten daily, after the fashion of those times; but they seem to have comforted themselves under their troubles by a good deal of wild life out of school, by rambling into the country on the festivals of the saints, and now and then by acting plays; notably, that famous one which Rabelais wrote for them in 1531: "The moral comedy of the man who had a dumb wife;" which "*joyous patelinage*" remains unto this day in the shape of a well-known comic song. That comedy young Rondelet must have seen acted. The son of a druggist, spicer, and grocer—the three trades were then combined—in Montpellier, and born in 1507, he had been destined for the cloister, being a sickly lad. His uncle, one of the canons of Maguelonne, near by, had even given him the revenues of a small chapel—a job of nepotism which was common enough in those days. But his heart was in science and medicine. He set off, still a mere boy, to Paris to study there; and returned to Montpellier, at the age of eighteen, to study again.

The next year, 1530, while still a scholar himself, he was appointed procurator of the scholars—a post which brought him in a small fee on each matriculation—and that year he took a fee, among others, from one of the most remarkable men of that or of any age, François Rabelais himself.

And what shall I say of him?—who stands alone, like Shakespeare, in his generation; possessed of colossal learning—of all science which could be gathered in his days—of practical and statesmanlike wisdom—of knowledge of languages, ancient and

modern, beyond all his compeers—of eloquence, which when he speaks of pure and noble things becomes heroic, and, as it were, inspired—of scorn for meanness, hypocrisy, ignorance—of esteem, genuine and earnest, for the Holy Scriptures, and for the more moderate of the Reformers who were spreading the Scriptures in Europe,—and all this great light wilfully hidden, not under a bushel, but under a dunghill. He is somewhat like Socrates in face, and in character likewise; in him, as in Socrates, the demigod and the satyr, the man and the ape, are struggling for the mastery. In Socrates, the true man conquers, and comes forth high and pure; in Rabelais, alas! the victor is the ape, while the man himself sinks down in cynicism, sensuality, practical jokes, foul talk. He returns to Paris, to live an idle, luxurious life; to die—says the legend—saying, “I go to seek a great perhaps,” and to leave behind him little save a school of Pantagruelists—careless young gentlemen, whose ideal was to laugh at everything, to believe in nothing, and to gratify their five senses like the brutes which perish. There are those who read his books to make them laugh; the wise man, when he reads them, will be far more inclined to weep. Let any young man who may see these words remember, that in him, as in Rabelais, the ape and the man are struggling for the mastery. Let him take warning by the fate of one who was to him as a giant to a pigmy; and think of Tennyson’s words—

Arise, and fly
The reeling faun, the sensual feast;
Strive upwards, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

But to return. Down among them there at Mont-

pellier, like a brilliant meteor, flashed this wonderful Rabelais, in the year 1530. He had fled, some say, for his life. Like Erasmus, he had no mind to be a martyr, and he had been terrified at the execution of poor Louis de Berquin, his friend, and the friend of Erasmus likewise. This Louis de Berquin, a man well known in those days, was a gallant young gentleman and scholar, holding a place in the court of Francis I., who had translated into French the works of Erasmus, Luther, and Melancthon, and had asserted that it was heretical to invoke the Virgin Mary instead of the Holy Spirit, or to call her our Hope and our Life, which titles—Berquin averred—belonged alone to God. Twice had the doctors of the Sorbonne, with that terrible persecutor, Noel Beda, at their head, seized poor Berquin, and tried to burn his books and him; twice had that angel in human form, Marguerite d'Angoulême, sister of Francis I., saved him from their clutches; but when Francis—taken prisoner at the battle of Pavia—at last returned from his captivity in Spain, the suppression of heresy and the burning of heretics seemed to him and to his mother, Louise of Savoy, a thank-offering so acceptable to God, that Louis Berquin—who would not, in spite of the entreaties of Erasmus, purchase his life by silence—was burnt at last on the Place de Grêve, being first strangled, because he was of gentle blood.

Montpellier received its famous guest joyfully. Rabelais was now forty-two years old, and a distinguished savant; so they excused him his three years' undergraduate's career, and invested him at once with the red gown of the bachelors. That red gown—or, rather, the ragged phantom of it—is still shown at Montpellier, and must be worn by each

bachelor when he takes his degree. Unfortunately, antiquarians assure us that the precious garment has been renewed again and again—the students having clipped bits of it away for relics, and clipped as earnestly from the new gowns as their predecessors had done from the authentic original.

Doubtless, the coming of such a man among them to lecture on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates, and the *Ars Parva* of Galen, not from the Latin translations then in use, but from original Greek texts, with comments and corrections of his own, must have had a great influence on the minds of the Montpellier students; and still more influence—and that not altogether a good one—must Rabelais's lighter talk have had, as he lounged—so the story goes—in his dressing-gown upon the public place, picking up quaint stories from the cattle-drivers off the Cevennes, and the villagers who came in to sell their olives and their grapes, their vinegar and their vine-twig faggots, as they do unto this day. To him may be owing much of the sound respect for natural science, and much, too, of the contempt for the superstition around them, which is notable in that group of great naturalists who were boys in Montpellier at that day. Rabelais seems to have liked Rondelet, and no wonder: he was a cheery, lovable, honest little fellow, very fond of jokes, a great musician and player on the violin, and who, when he grew rich, liked nothing so well as to bring into his house any buffoon or strolling-player to make fun for him. Vivacious he was, hot-tempered, forgiving, and with a power of learning and a power of work which were prodigious, even in those hard-working days. Rabelais chaffs Rondelet, under the name of *Rondibilis*; for, indeed, Rondelet grew up

into a very round, fat, little man; but Rabelais puts excellent sense into his mouth, cynical enough, and too cynical, but both learned and humorous; and, if he laughs at him for being shocked at the offer of a fee, and taking it, nevertheless, kindly enough, Rondelet is not the first doctor who has done that, neither will he be the last.

Rondelet, in his turn, put on the red robe of the bachelor, and received, on taking his degree, his due share of fisticuffs from his dearest friends, according to the ancient custom of the University of Montpellier. He then went off to practise medicine in a village at the foot of the Alps, and, half-starved, to teach little children. Then he found he must learn Greek; went off to Paris a second time, and alleviated his poverty there somewhat by becoming tutor to a son of the Viscomte de Turenne. There he met Gonthier of Andernach, who had taught anatomy at Louvain to the great Vesalius, and learned from him to dissect. We next find him setting up as a medical man amid the wild volcanic hills of the Auvergne, struggling still with poverty, like Erasmus, like George Buchanan, like almost every great scholar in those days; for students then had to wander from place to place, generally on foot, in search of new teachers, in search of books, in search of the necessaries of life; undergoing such an amount of bodily and mental toil as makes it wonderful that all of them did not—as some of them doubtless did—die under the hard training, or, at best, desert the penurious Muses for the paternal shop or plough.

Rondelet got his doctorate in 1537, and next year fell in love with and married a beautiful young girl.

called Jeanne Sandre, who seems to have been as poor as he.

But he had gained, meanwhile, a powerful patron; and the patronage of the great was then as necessary to men of letters as the patronage of the public is now. Guillaume Pellicier, Bishop of Maguelonne—or rather then of Montpellier itself, whither he had persuaded Paul II. to transfer the ancient see—was a model of the literary gentleman of the sixteenth century; a savant, a diplomat, a collector of books and manuscripts, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac, which formed the original nucleus of the present library of the Louvre; a botanist, too, who loved to wander with Rondelet collecting plants and flowers. He retired from public life to peace and science at Montpellier, when to the evil days of his master, Francis I., succeeded the still worse days of Henry II., and Diana of Poitiers. That Jezebel of France could conceive no more natural or easy way of atoning for her own sins than that of hunting down heretics, and feasting her wicked eyes—so it is said—upon their dying torments. Bishop Pellicier fell under suspicion of heresy: very probably with some justice. He fell, too, under suspicion of leading a life unworthy of a celibate churchman, a fault which—if it really existed—was, in those days, pardonable enough in an orthodox prelate, but not so in one whose orthodoxy was suspected. And for awhile Pellicier was in prison. After his release he gave himself up to science, with Rondelet and the school of disciples who were growing up around him. They rediscovered together the *Garum*, that classic sauce, whose praises had been sung of old by Horace, Martial, and Ausonius; and so child-like, superstitious if you will, was the reverence in

the sixteenth century for classic antiquity, that when Pellicier and Rondelet discovered that the Garum was made from the fish called Picarel—called Garon by the fishers of Antibes, and Giroli at Venice, both these last names corruptions of the Latin Gerres—then did the two fashionable poets of France, Étienne Dolet and Clement Marot, think it not unworthy of their muse to sing the praises of the sauce which Horace had sung of old. A proud day, too, was it for Pellicier and Rondelet, when wandering somewhere in the marshes of the Camargue, a scent of garlic caught the nostrils of the gentle bishop, and in the lovely pink flowers of the water-germander he recognised the Scordium of the ancients. "The discovery," says Professor Planchon, "made almost as much noise as that of the famous Garum; for at that moment of naïve fervour on behalf of antiquity, to re-discover a plant of Dioscorides or of Pliny was a good fortune and almost an event."

I know not whether, after his death, the good bishop's bones reposed beneath some gorgeous tomb, bedizened with the incongruous half-Pagan statues of the Renaissance; but this at least is certain, that Rondelet's disciples imagined for him a monument more enduring than of marble or of brass, more graceful and more curiously wrought than all the sculptures of Torrigiano or Cellini, Baccio Bandinelli or Michael Angelo himself. For they named a lovely little lilac snapdragon, *Linaria Domini Pellicerii*—"Lord Pellicier's toad-flax;" and that name it will keep, we may believe, as long as winter and summer shall endure.

But to return. To this good Patron—who was the Ambassador at Venice—the newly-married Rondelet

determined to apply for employment; and to Venice he would have gone, leaving his bride behind, had he not been stayed by one of those angels who sometimes walk the earth in women's shape. Jeanne Sandre had an elder sister, Catharine, who had brought her up. She was married to a wealthy man, but she had no children of her own. For four years she and her good husband had let the Rondelets lodge with them, and now she was a widow, and to part with them was more than she could bear. She carried Rondelet off from the students who were seeing him safe out of the city, brought him back, settled on him the same day half her fortune, and soon after settled on him the whole, on the sole condition that she should live with him and her sister. For years afterwards she watched over the pretty young wife and her two girls and three boys—the three boys, alas! all died young—and over Rondelet himself, who, immersed in books and experiments, was utterly careless about money; and was to them all a mother—advising, guiding, managing, and regarded by Rondelet with genuine gratitude as his guardian angel.

Honour and good fortune, in a worldly sense, now poured in upon the druggist's son. Pellicier, his own bishop, stood godfather to his first-born daughter. Montluc, Bishop of Valence, and that wise and learned statesman, the Cardinal of Tournon, stood godfathers a few years later to his twin boys; and what was of still more solid worth to him, Cardinal Tournon took him to Antwerp, Bordeaux, Bayonne, and more than once to Rome; and in these Italian journeys of his he collected many facts for the great work of his life, that "History of Fishes" which he dedicated, naturally enough, to the cardinal. This book with its plates is,

for the time, a masterpiece of accuracy. Those who are best acquainted with the subject say, that it is up to the present day a key to the whole ichthyology of the Mediterranean. Two other men, Belon and Salviani, were then at work on the same subject, and published their books almost at the same time; a circumstance which caused, as was natural, a three-cornered duel between the supporters of the three naturalists, each party accusing the other of plagiarism. The simple fact seems to be that the almost simultaneous appearance of the three books in 1554-55 is one of those coincidences inevitable at moments when many minds are stirred in the same direction by the same great thoughts—coincidences which have happened in our own day on questions of geology, biology, and astronomy; and which, when the facts have been carefully examined, and the first flush of natural jealousy has cooled down, have proved only that there were more wise men than one in the world at the same time.

And this sixteenth century was an age in which the minds of men were suddenly and strangely turned to examine the wonders of nature with an earnestness, with a reverence, and therefore with an accuracy, with which they had never been investigated before. "Nature," says Professor Planchon, "long veiled in mysticism and scholasticism, was opening up infinite vistas. A new superstition, the exaggerated worship of the ancients, was nearly hindering this movement of thought towards facts. Nevertheless, Learning did her work. She rediscovered, reconstructed, purified, commented on the texts of ancient authors. Then came in observation, which showed that more was to be seen in one blade of grass than in any page of

Pliny. Rondelet was in the middle of this crisis a man of transition, while he was one of progress. He reflected the past; he opened and prepared the future. If he commented on Dioscorides, if he remained faithful to the theories of Galen, he founded in his 'History of Fishes' a monument which our century respects. He is above all an inspirer, an initiator; and if he wants one mark of the leader of a school, the foundation of certain scientific doctrines, there is in his speech what is better than all systems, the communicative power which urges a generation of disciples along the path of independent research, with Reason for guide, and Faith for aim."

Around Rondelet, in those years, sometimes indeed in his house—for professors in those days took private pupils as lodgers—worked the group of botanists whom Linnæus calls "the Fathers," the authors of the descriptive botany of the sixteenth century. Their names, and those of their disciples and their disciples again, are household words in the mouth of every gardener, immortalised, like good Bishop Pellicier, in the plants that have been named after them. The *Lobelia* commemorates Lobel, one of Rondelet's most famous pupils, who wrote those "Adversaria" which contain so many curious sketches of Rondelet's botanical expeditions, and who inherited his botanical (as Joubert his biographer inherited his anatomical) manuscripts. The *Magnolia* commemorates the Magnols; the *Sarracenia*, Sarrasin of Lyons; the *Bauhinia*, Jean Bauhin; the *Fuchsia*, Bauhin's earlier German master, Leonard Fuchs; and the *Clusia*—the received name of that terrible "Matapalo" or "Scotch attorney," of the West Indies, which kills the hugest tree, to become as huge a tree itself—immortalises

the great Clusius, Charles de l'Escluse, citizen of Arras, who, after studying civil law at Louvain, philosophy at Marburg, and theology at Wittenberg under Melancthon, came to Montpellier in 1551, to live in Rondelet's own house, and become the greatest botanist of his age.

These were Rondelet's palmy days. He had got a theatre of anatomy built at Montpellier, where he himself dissected publicly. He had, says tradition, a little botanic garden, such as were springing up then in several universities, specially in Italy. He had a villa outside the city, whose tower, near the modern railway station, still bears the name of the "Mas de Rondelet." There, too, may be seen the remnants of the great tanks, fed with water brought through earthen pipes from the Fountain of Albe, wherein he kept the fish whose habits he observed. Professor Planchon thinks that he had salt-water tanks likewise; and thus he may have been the father of all "Aquariums." He had a large and handsome house in the city itself, a large practice as physician in the country round; money flowed in fast to him, and flowed out fast likewise. He spent much upon building, pulling down, rebuilding, and sent the bills in seemingly to his wife and to his guardian angel Catharine. He himself had never a penny in his purse: but earned the money, and let his ladies spend it; an equitable and pleasant division of labour which most married men would do well to imitate. A generous, affectionate, careless little man, he gave away, says his pupil and biographer, Joubert, his valuable specimens to any savant who begged for them, or left them about to be stolen by visitors, who, like too many collectors in all ages, possessed light

fingers and lighter consciences. So pacific was he meanwhile, and so brave withal that even in the fearful years of "The Troubles," he would never carry sword, nor even tuck or dagger: but went about on the most lonesome journeys as one who wore a charmed life, secure in God and in his calling, which was to heal, and not to kill.

These were the golden years of Rondelet's life; but trouble was coming on him, and a stormy sunset after a brilliant day. He lost his sister-in-law, to whom he owed all his fortunes, and who had watched ever since over him and his wife like a mother; then he lost his wife herself under most painful circumstances; then his best-beloved daughter. Then he married again, and lost the son who was born to him; and then came, as to many of the best in those days, even sorer trials, trials of the conscience, trials of faith.

For in the meantime Rondelet had become a Protestant, like many of the wisest men round him; like, so it would seem from the event, the majority of the university and the burghers of Montpellier. It is not to be wondered at. Montpellier was a sort of halfway resting-place for Protestant preachers, whether fugitive or not, who were passing from Basle, Geneva, or Lyons, to Marguerite of Navarre's little Protestant court at Pau or at Nerac, where all wise and good men, and now and then some foolish and fanatical ones, found shelter and hospitality. Thither Calvin himself had been, passing probably through Montpellier, and leaving—as such a man was sure to leave—the mark of his foot behind him. At Lyons, no great distance up the Rhone, Marguerite had helped to establish an organised Protestant community; and when in 1536 she herself had passed through Montpellier, to visit her brother

at Valence, and Montmorency's camp at Avignon, she took with her doubtless Protestant chaplains of her own, who spoke wise words—it may be that she spoke wise words herself—to the ardent and inquiring students of Montpellier. Moreover, Rondelet and his disciples had been for years past in constant communication with the Protestant savants of Switzerland and Germany, among whom the knowledge of nature was progressing as it never had progressed before. For—it is a fact always to be remembered—it was only in the free air of Protestant countries the natural sciences could grow and thrive. They sprung up, indeed, in Italy after the restoration of Greek literature in the fifteenth century; but they withered there again only too soon under the blighting upas shade of superstition. Transplanted to the free air of Switzerland, of Germany, of Britain, and of Montpellier, then half Protestant, they developed rapidly and surely, simply because the air was free; to be checked again in France by the return of superstition with despotism super-added, until the eve of the great French Revolution.

So Rondelet had been for some years Protestant. He had hidden in his house for a long while a monk who had left his monastery. He had himself written theological treatises: but when his Bishop Pellicier was imprisoned on a charge of heresy, Rondelet burnt his manuscripts, and kept his opinions to himself. Still he was a suspected heretic, at last seemingly a notorious one; for only the year before his death, going to visit patients at Perpignan, he was waylaid by the Spaniards, and had to get home through by-passes of the Pyrenees, to avoid being thrown into the Inquisition.

And those were times in which it was necessary for

a man to be careful, unless he had made up his mind to be burned. For more than thirty years of Rondelet's life the burning had gone on in his neighbourhood; intermittently it is true: the spasms of superstitious fury being succeeded, one may charitably hope, by pity and remorse; but still the burnings had gone on. The Benedictine monk of St. Maur, who writes the history of Languedoc, says, quite *en passant*, how someone was burnt at Toulouse in 1553, luckily only in effigy, for he had escaped to Geneva: but he adds, "next year they burned several heretics," it being not worth while to mention their names. In 1556 they burned alive at Toulouse Jean Escalle, a poor Franciscan monk, who had found his order intolerable; while one Pierre de Lavour, who dared preach Calvinism in the streets of Nismes, was hanged and burnt. So had the score of judicial murders been increasing year by year, till it had to be, as all evil scores have to be in this world, paid off with interest, and paid off especially against the ignorant and fanatic monks who for a whole generation, in every university and school in France, had been howling down sound science, as well as sound religion; and at Montpellier in 1560-61, their debt was paid them in a very ugly way. News came down to the hot southerners of Languedoc of the so-called conspiracy of Amboise.—How the Duc de Guise and the Cardinal de Lorraine had butchered the best blood in France under the pretence of a treasonable plot; how the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé had been arrested; then how Condé and Coligny were ready to take up arms at the head of all the Huguenots of France, and try to stop this life-long torturing, by sharp shot and cold steel; then how in six months' time the king would assemble a general council to

settle the question between Catholics and Huguenots. The Huguenots, guessing how that would end, resolved to settle the question for themselves. They rose in one city after another, sacked the churches, destroyed the images, put down by main force superstitious processions and dances; and did many things only to be excused by the exasperation caused by thirty years of cruelty. At Montpellier there was hard fighting, murders—so say the Catholic historians—of priests and monks, sack of the new cathedral, destruction of the noble convents which lay in a ring round Montpellier. The city and the university were in the hands of the Huguenots, and Montpellier became Protestant on the spot.

Next year came the counter-blow. There were heavy battles with the Catholics all round the neighbourhood, destruction of the suburbs, threatened siege and sack, and years of misery and poverty for Montpellier and all who were therein.

Horrible was the state of France in those times of the wars of religion which began in 1562; the times which are spoken of usually as "The Troubles," as if men did not wish to allude to them too openly. Then, and afterwards in the wars of the League, deeds were done for which language has no name. The population decreased. The land lay untilled. The fair face of France was blackened with burnt homesteads and ruined towns. Ghastly corpses dangled in rows upon the trees, or floated down the blood-stained streams. Law and order were at an end. Bands of robbers prowled in open day, and bands of wolves likewise. But all through the horrors of the troubles we catch sight of the little fat doctor riding all unarmed to see his patients throughout Languedoc; going vast dis-

tances, his biographers say, by means of regular relays of horses, till he too broke down. Well, for him, perhaps, that he broke down when he did; for capture and recapture, massacre and pestilence, were the fate of Montpellier and the surrounding country, till the better times of Henry IV. and the Edict of Nantes in 1598, when liberty of worship was given to the Protestants for awhile.

In the burning summer of 1566, Rondelet went a long journey to Toulouse, seemingly upon an errand of charity, to settle some law affairs for his relations. The sanitary state of the southern cities is bad enough still. It must have been horrible in those days of barbarism and misrule. Dysentery was epidemic at Toulouse then, and Rondelet took it. He knew from the first that he should die. He was worn out, it is said, by over-exertion; by sorrow for the miseries of the land; by fruitless struggles to keep the peace, and to strive for moderation in days when men were all immoderate. But he rode away a day's journey—he took two days over it, so weak he was—in the blazing July sun, to a friend's sick wife at Realmont, and there took to his bed, and died a good man's death. The details of his death and last illness were written and published by his cousin Claude Formy; and well worth reading they are to any man who wishes to know how to die. Rondelet would have no tidings of his illness sent to Montpellier. He was happy, he said, in dying away from the tears of his household, and "safe from insult." He dreaded, one may suppose, lest priests and friars should force their way to his bedside, and try to extort some recantation from the great savant, the honour and glory of their city. So they sent for no priest to Realmont; but round his bed

a knot of Calvinist gentlemen and ministers read the Scriptures, and sang David's psalms, and prayed; and Rondelet prayed with them through long agonies, and so went home to God.

The Benedictine monk-historian of Languedoc, in all his voluminous folios, never mentions, as far as I can find, Rondelet's existence. Why should he? The man was only a druggist's son and a heretic, who healed diseases, and collected plants, and wrote a book on fish. But the learned men of Montpellier, and of all Europe, had a very different opinion of him. His body was buried at Realmont; but before the schools of Toulouse they set up a white marble slab, and an inscription thereon setting forth his learning and his virtues; and epitaphs on him were composed by the learned throughout Europe, not only in French and Latin, but in Greek, Hebrew, and even Chaldee.

So lived and so died a noble man; more noble, to my mind, than many a victorious warrior, or successful statesman, or canonised saint. To know facts, and to heal diseases, were the two objects of his life. For them he toiled, as few men have toiled; and he died in harness, at his work—the best death any man can die.