Other aspects of Ambroise Paré's life

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His father was, according to some, a cabinet maker, but others, on probably better traditional evidence, state that he was valet de chambre and barber to the Sieur de Laval. Several of his near relatives were in medical occupations. Thus his sister Catherine married Gaspard Martin, a master barber-surgeon of Paris. He died following an amputation of the leg performed upon him by Paré. In a pamphlet written by a surgeon named Comperat, Paré was accused of having been more or less responsible for his brother-in-law's death, because he had used the method of ligation of the vessels to check the haemorrhage at the operation, instead of cauterising the stump. One brother, Jean, whom Paré greatly praises his skill in detecting the frauds of beggars who shammed diseases and deformities, was a master barber-surgeon at Vitre, and Paré and is supposed to have studied with him at for a time. He had another brother, also named Jean, who was a cabinet maker in Paris. Paré adopted his daughter Jeanne, giving her a handsome dowry when she married Claude Viart, a surgeon of Paris, who had lived 20 years in Paré's house as his pupil (Figs. 1, 2).

There is very little reliable information regarding Paré's early years. According to tradition, Paré's father put him to board with a chaplain in order that he might learn Latin. The priest, however, made Ambroise perform tasks in his garden but cared little about his education. On leaving this ecclesiastical education Paré was apprenticed to a surgeon of Laval named Vialot. All that we know definitely about Paré during this period may be gathered from a few statements of his own, which have been interpreted as indicating that he had begun the study of surgery first at Angers, or possibly at Vitre with his brother Jean. In his book on "Monsters", Paré tells of seeing a beggar at Angers in 1525 who was at the door of the "temple," as Huguenot chapels were then called, seeking alms because of a supposedly diseased arm which

he exposed to the view of the passers-by. In reality the impostor had cut an arm from a man who had been recently executed and, hanging it around his neck so that it projected from under his cloak, had made it appear that the decomposing member was one of his own. Unfortunately for him it became detached and fell to the ground, and when he tried to pick it up he was seen to have two good arms of his own. He was taken before a magistrate who had him publicly whipped, with the criminal's arm hanging around his neck, and then banished from the town.

With Vialot, Paré assisted at some operations and was so thrilled with enthusiasm that he was determined to go at once to Paris in Hotel Dieu Hospital and study surgery under the best masters obtainable. It is very difficult to ascertain just what were the duties and privileges of the students admitted to the Hotel Dieu. In 1327 Charles IV had ordered that two of the sworn surgeons of the Chatelet should visit the sick at the Hotel Dieu and had provided that a certain number of students should be employed in dressing wounds and other duties. Malgaigne postulates that the students treated the sick and injured and had the opportunity to perform autopsies and dissect cadavers. When mentioning his life there, Paré certainly speaks as though he had obtained plenty of such invaluable experience during his connection with the hospital. In the occasional references contained in his works to his residency we detect the pleasure and pride with which he looked upon it in retrospect. Paré left the Hotel Dieu about 1536 after serving there for seven years, and acquiring a large fund of practical knowledge (Fig. 3).

When Paré came to Paris the medical profession of that city was sharply divided into three classes. First came the physicians, members of the Faculte de Medecine who held their heads very high. They arrogated to themselves the right of control over all who attempted to practice the healing art in any of its branches. The second class was composed of the surgeons, incorporated in the Confrerie de Saint Come, and ordinarily termed surgeons of the long robe because of the garment they were authorised to wear. The community

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Fig. 1 Picture representing the house where Paré was born

of the barber-surgeons held third place. The barber-surgeons practised venesection, cupping and leeching, and were constantly extending their field by attempting operations, dressing wounds, etc. There were several groups of empirical practitioners who did much real surgery. The treatment of fractures and dislocations was largely in the hands of the

“rabouleurs” or bonesetters. Obstetrics was left in the hands of midwives, some of whom attained great renown for their ability (Figs. 4, 5, 6).

The long life of Paré in surgery begins after the Hotel Dieu and covers a most interesting period in the history of France. He was born towards the close of the life of Louis XII, and his death occurred after the death of Henri III, and shortly before Henri IV was crowned King of France. Three crowned heads kept the European world in a turmoil throughout a large part of the first half of the sixteenth century—Charles V, Emperor of Germany; Henry VIII, King of England; and François I, King of France—all coming to the throne when young and vigorous, gifted with intellect and force of character, and imposing their personalities on the affairs and peoples of their domains. François I was fired with ambition to rule over certain parts of Italy, of which he claimed the inheritance, and his desires in this respect brought him into direct conflict with the Emperor. Henry VIII allied himself first with one and then with the other, on whichever side he thought would best serve his own interests. Another source of conflict was the claim of Charles to the Duchy of Burgundy and the Kingdom of Navarre, former appanages of the French crown. After many fruitless Italian campaigns in which a few brilliant military successes only served to involve the French more hopelessly in the toils, came the final disaster at Pavia, February 24, 1525. A splendid French army commanded by the King in person was overwhelmingly defeated by the Imperial troops under Lannoy and Charles of Bourbon, the former Constable of France, who had become a traitor and left his country to serve against it under Charles V. Ten thousand French were slain, among them many of the nobility and numerous officers of high rank. The King of France, the King of Navarre, the Count of St. Pol, the Mareschal Anne de

Fig. 2 Figure of a man without arms (Paré, Edition 1585)

Fig. 3 Picture of the hospital Hotel Dieu at the time of Ambroise Paré

Fig. 4 Reduction of shoulder dislocation with two persons

Fig. 5 Second method for reduction of shoulder dislocation

Montmorenci, and many other nobles and leaders were made prisoners. The King passed six months of captivity in Spain before he secured his release on the most humiliating terms, having to send two of his sons, one of them the future Henri II, to take his place as hostages, before he could return to his kingdom. Once among his subjects Francois declared that he did not consider himself bound by the terms of the treaty which had been agreed to while he was a prisoner at Madrid because it had been made while he was

under constraint. War was resumed and continued until 1529, when the Peace of Cambrai was negotiated by Louise of Savoy, mother of the French King, with the Archduchess Marguerite, the aunt of the Emperor, for which reason it is often known as the “Paix aux Dames” (Fig. 7).

The years immediately following this, however, were spent by Francois in cementing alliances and strengthening his forces for another conflict with the Emperor. He allied himself with Henry VIII, and in 1534–5 even entered into a

Fig. 6 Third method for reduction of shoulder dislocation

Fig. 7 Bombards that were transportable

treaty with the Turks. In 1535 Francisco Sforza, Duke of Milan, died and the King of France at once put forth his claims to the Duchy, sending an expedition into Italy to back them up. Charles V in return led a large army into Provence. Anne de Montmorenci commanded the army which defended France against this invasion. When the troops of the Emperor Charles V retreated, Anne de Montmorenci carried the war into Italy, passing the Alps after a successful engagement at the Pas de Suze. It was in this campaign that Paré began his career as a military surgeon, crossing the Alps with the army and finally sojourning for some time at Turin. Though he had not yet passed his examinations to be admitted to the community of the barber-surgeons he went in the capacity of surgeon during this period (Figs. 8, 9).

In 1541 Paré married Jeanne Mazelin, daughter of Jean Mazelin, a deceased “valet chauffe-cire de la Chancellerie de France.” Her mother, Jeanne de Prime, had remarried Etienne Cleret, a merchant and bourgeois of Paris. Paré and his wife lived on the left bank of the Seine near the end of the Pont Saint Michel in the parish of St. Andre des Arts. In the course of his life Paré acquired quite a few houses in this neighbourhood near what is now the Quai des Grand Augustines, and he also owned a house and vineyard in Meudon. The church of St. Andre des Arts and the houses of Paré have all disappeared in the course of modern improvements (Fig. 10).

By Jeanne Mazelin, Paré had three children. On July 4th 1545, his son François was baptised at the church of St. Andre des Arts. This child died sometime before the 5th of August 1549, because in signing a legal document on that

date the Parés state that they are childless. Fourteen years later a second son, appropriately named Isaac, was born to Paré. This child lived less than one year, his funeral occurring on August 2, 1560. About a year after the death of this

Fig. 8 Foot soldier at the time of Ambroise Paré

Fig. 9 Costumes of French soldiers at the time of Ambroise Paré

son a daughter was born who was baptised Catherine, on September 30, 1560. This daughter grew up, married Francois Rousselet, the brother of her father's second wife, and died September 21th 1616. November the fourth, 1573, Paré's wife, Jeanne Mazelin, died and was buried on the same day in the Church of St. Andre des Arts. She was fifty-three years old and was survived by one daughter,

Catherine, aged thirteen years. The two sons died in infancy. Paré had also living with him at this time Jeanne Paré, the daughter of his brother Jean, the cabinet maker, whom he had adopted. Only three months after his first wife's death on January 18, 1574, Paré married Jacqueline Rousselet, whose father, Jacques Rousselet, was chevaucher ordinaire of the stables of the king (Figs. 11, 12).

Fig. 10 Small map of the territory near the end of the Pont Saint Michel in Paris, showing the houses which were owned by Paré, and occupied by him or his relatives. He acquired these one by one, first purchasing the Maison de la Vache in 1550

Fig. 11 Picture representing church of St. Andre des Arts that no longer exists

Fig. 12 Treatment of the open fracture of the forearm by Ambroise Paré

Fig. 13 Picture representing the murder of Admiral Coligny

The subject of Paré's religious belief has been most vehemently discussed. Malgaigne decides that he was a Catholic, and he certainly conformed externally to that faith. He was twice married by the rites of that church, once at St. Andre des Arts, and the second time at St. Severin; his children were baptised in that faith, and he was buried in it. He passed most of his life at a bigoted Catholic court, during the heat of the wars of religion, and was the personal attendant of kings who were bent on repressing the religion at all costs; nevertheless he was in the torment of the massacre of Saint Barthelemy. On August 22th 1572 about eleven o'clock in the morning, as Coligny was walking from his house to the Louvre, a shot was fired at him from a window, cutting off the index finger of his right hand and then ploughing up through his left arm to the elbow. His followers dashed into the house from whence the shot had come but the scoundrel who had fired made his escape on horseback. He was a servant of the Guises named Maurevert, the house belonged to that family, and the horse on which he escaped had come from their stables. Paré was sent for and dressed Coligny's arm, amputating the injured finger. The same day the King and the Queen Mother went with solemn hypocrisy to pay a visit of sympathy to the wounded Admiral. Meanwhile the excitement in Paris was

intense. The Huguenots threatened reprisals for the injury to their chief, and a rumour spread among the Catholics that the Huguenots were going to storm the Louvre, carry off the King and Queen Mother, and massacre all the Guises and their adherents.

A conference between King Charles IX and the Queen Mother and the Catholic leaders resulted in a determination to anticipate any hostile action on the part of the Huguenots by a general massacre of them. The signal was to be given by sounding the bell on the Church of Saint Germain L'Auxerois. It is said that Charles IX held out against the final decision of the conference as long as possible, finally giving way with the exclamation that they might kill the Huguenots, but that if they started the massacre they must continue it until they had exterminated all the Huguenots, so that not one should remain to reproach him afterwards. The conspirators did their best to fulfill his desire. De Thou, the historian, estimates the number killed in Paris at 2,000, but other estimates are much larger. Coligny was murdered in his bedchamber and his body, thrown from the window onto the pavement below before life was extinct, landed at the feet of the Due de Guise who had personally led the soldiers who sought him (Fig. 13). The frisson of horror spread through England and the rest of the Protestant world.