

Ambroise Paré—A Sketch of the Romance side of  
His Career as Army Surgeon.

By ALEXIUS McGLANNAN, M. D.

CHIEF SURGEON, MEDICAL CORPS, N. G., MARYLAND.

*(Reprinted From The Military Surgeon, October, 1909.)*

ALEXIUS McGLANNAN.

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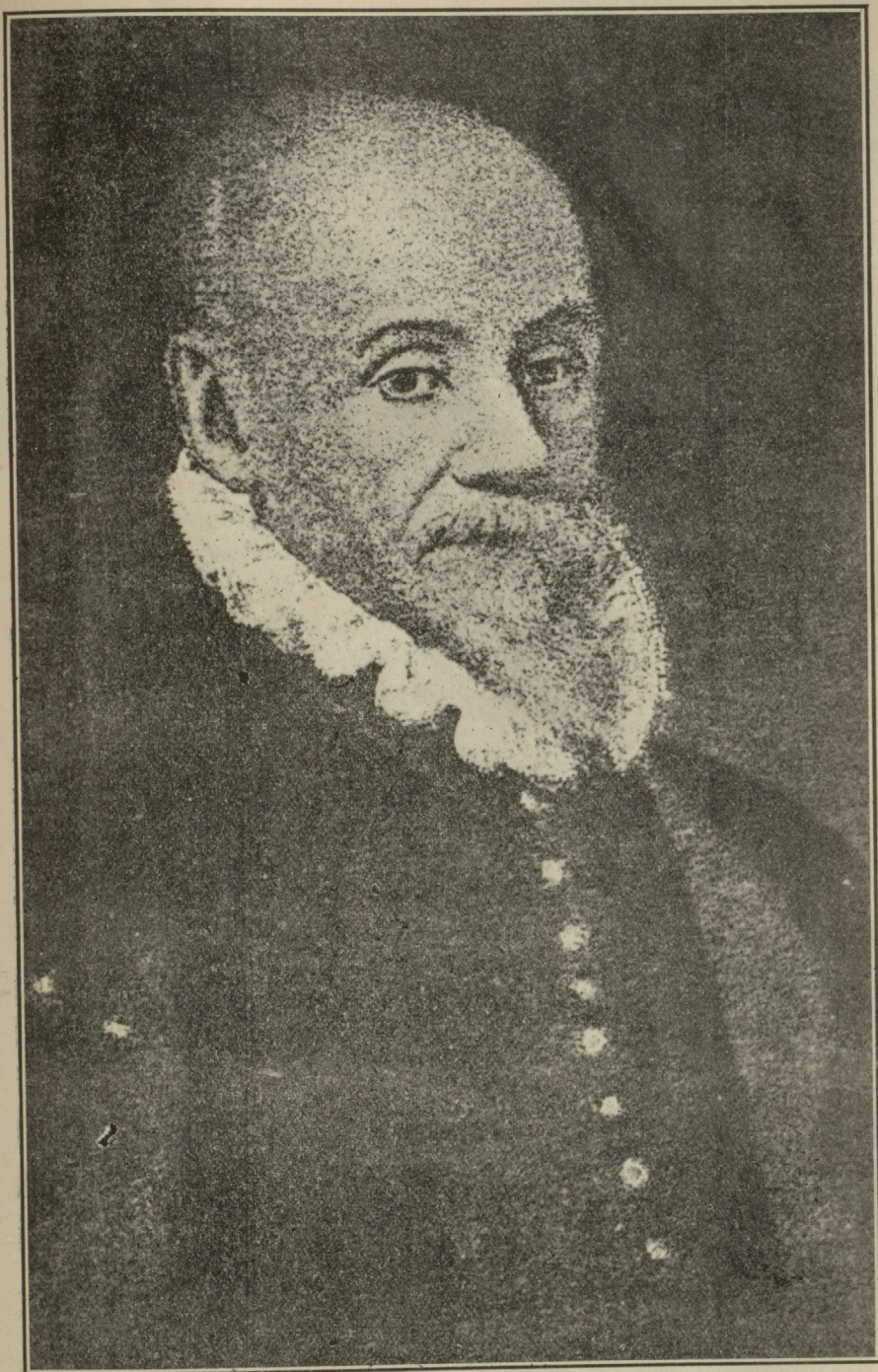
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**AMBROISE PARÉ.**  
(Age 65.)

From a portrait in the possession of Mme. La Marquise Le Charron, a descendant of one of his daughters.  
(Paget's Ambroise Paré and His Times.)

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## AMBROISE PARÉ—A SKETCH OF THE ROMANCE SIDE OF HIS CAREER AS ARMY SURGEON.

By ALEXIUS McGLANNAN, M. D.

CHIEF SURGEON, MEDICAL CORPS, N. G., MARYLAND.

IN THE HISTORY of surgery from the time of Machaon, who treated the wounds of classic warriors before the walls of Troy, to the American surgeon supervising camp sanitation in the Philippines, the army doctor has always furnished much of the romance. In this band of romantic heroes there is no more picturesque figure than that of Ambroise Paré, surgeon to four kings of France.

Paré lived from 1510 to 1590, and flourished at a time when skill in the profession of arms was the highest pinnacle of human endeavor, when all Europe was an armed camp and the kings of France sent their armies against the English and against the Spanish, and when the end of one campaign was the beginning of the next. Irresistably the ambitious and energetic Paré was drawn to the army, and once there, his love for the work and devotion to his patrons held him through a long life to the dangers and hardships of active military service.

The details of Paré's life are rather well known, and his history is easily accessible. In his own writings we have much detail of himself and his surroundings; for instance, his "Journeys in Diverse Places" gives a most intimate acquaintance with his personality, while the "Complete Works of Ambroise Paré," edited and put into modern French by Malgaigne in 1840, portrays Paré almost as a contemporary hero. In English there are several good histories. Of these Padget's "Ambroise Paré and his times" (G. P. Putman's Sons, New York and London), combines brevity with clearness and the

most continued interest. Also we get glimpses of the surgeon as he appears in the Valois Romances of Alexandre Dumas, and in Balzac's Catharine de Medici, with an occasional mention of him in Edith Sickel's studies of Catharine de Medici, and in similar works.

In view of these well known and readily accessible sources of information, I have abandoned the idea of telling anything really important about the work of Paré, or his influence on surgery, but will take up the romantic rather than the serious side of his career.

Ambroise Paré came of humble ancestry, and received only an imperfect preliminary education. One of his brothers was a surgeon, and his sister married a man of the same profession. It is related that Paré's introduction into surgery was as assistant to Laurence Colot, who came from Paris to Laval to perform an operation on a friend of Paré's tutor, the village chaplain. In 1553 we found him in Paris, at that time a city of 150,000 people, scouraged by an epidemic of the plague and sheltering over 15,000 beggars, cut-throats, thieves and other criminals. In this wild community Paré lived for three or four years as interne at the Hotel de Dieu. Here he had Sylvius for a teacher. While Paré was resident, there was plenty of work in the hospital, and he loved it, and records with pride the extent of the service—the terrors of the plague, the operations for wounds and for disease, and also his own treatment of cases of frost bite. All this time the hospital management was being attacked, and apparently often with just cause. Paré, however, seems to have worked satisfactorily, getting on with everyone he came in contact with, and his departure was regretted, as though it had been appreciated, that he had done good work under bad rules and surroundings.

Leaving the hospital, Paré soon joined the army. In those days there was no regular military medical service. Each commander took his own surgeon and physician, but there was always a host of quacks and fakers following the army.



REDUCING A DISLOCATION OF THE ELBOW

From Paré's Works.

(Paget's Ambroise Paré and His Times.)

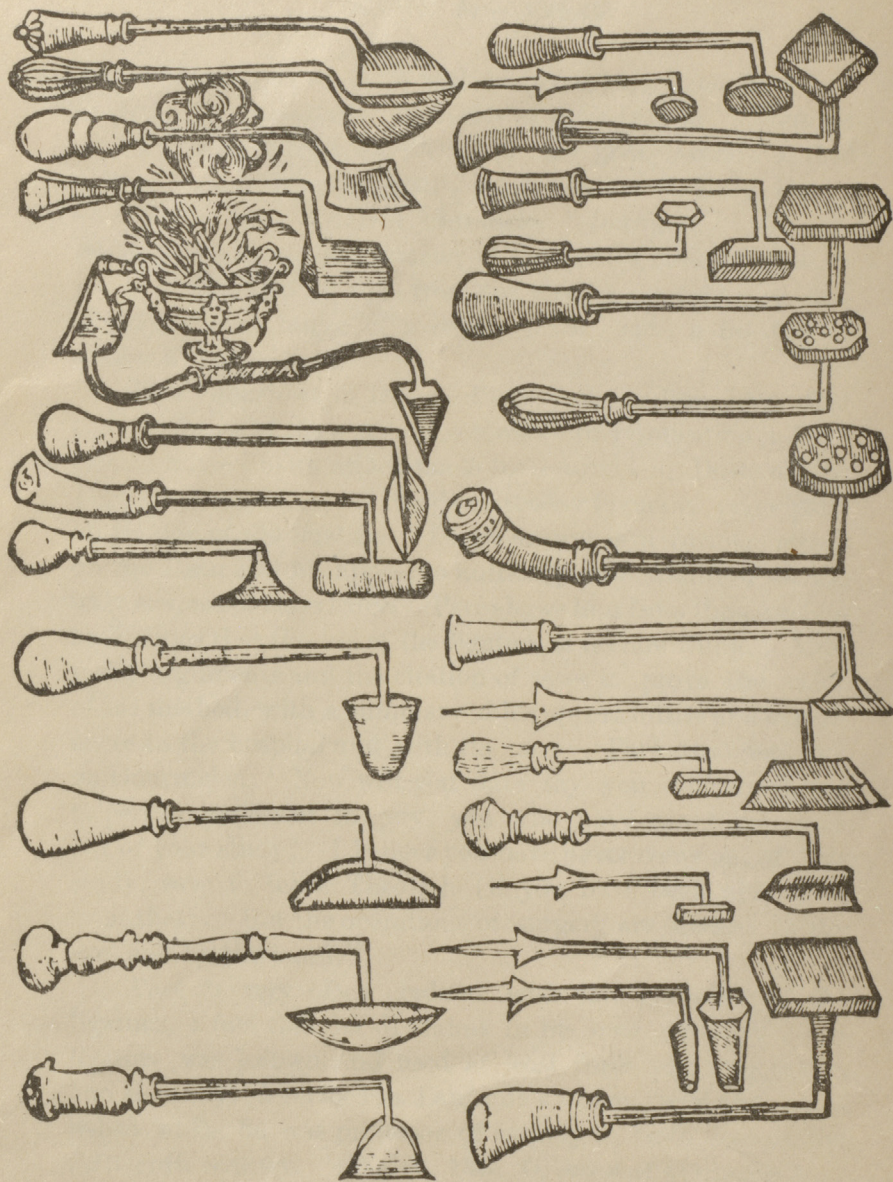
The surgeons had no rank and no fixed pay, depending entirely on the favor and generosity of their patrons. Thus we see Paré passing from the service of one great captain to that of another, until he was finally made surgeon to King Henry II. From his delightful chronicle, "Journeys in Diverse Places," we learn the character of his fees—a cask of wine, a horse, a collection of coins from the men in the ranks, a diamond from the finger of a duchess, etc., etc., a list full of romantic suggestion.

This "Journeys in Diverse Places" was written long after the occurrence of the events it records. Its Publication in 1580 was an answer to an attack made by Gourmelen, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, on Paré's methods of practice, principally on the use of the ligature. Paré's answer is a furious attack on the Dean and his appeal to authority and tradition as the only sources of knowledge. Paré shows him from these ancient authorities that the use of the ligature is no new thing. After many arguments and the citation of cases to prove the value of his method, with a summary of his opportunities and experiences in the hospital and with the army, Paré thunders out on Gourmelen, "Now will you dare say you will teach me to perform works of surgery, you who have never yet come out of your study? I believe you have never come out of your study, save to teach Theorich (if you have been able to do even that). But the operations of surgery are learned by the eye, and by the hand."

Paré is very often credited with the invention of the ligature, a fact that he disclaims in his own writings. The ligature was known and used at least three centuries earlier, and is clearly described in Lanfranc's *Chirurgia Magna*, published while he was professor of surgery in Paris, late in the thirteenth century. (Walsh, 13th, Greatest of Centuries.)

Paré's first military service was in the campaign of Turin. His first patient was a captain, shot in the ankle, and he records the case, "I dressed him, and God healed him." De-

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VARIOUS CAUTERIES, AND A BRAISER.

from Paré's Works.

(Paget's Ambroise Paré and His Times.)

scribing the conditions after the battle, he tells of entering a stable where some wounded men were sheltered. "As I was looking at them in pity, there came an old soldier who asked me if there were any way to cure them. I said, 'No.' And then he went up to them and cut their throats, gently, and without malice. And when I upraided him, he answered and prayed God, when he should be in such a plight, some one would do the same for him, that he should not linger in misery." So we see that the recent crusade for euthansia is not original, but just another sweep of the curve in human history.

In the first campaign we find Paré breaking away from authority. The customary treatment of wounds was by filling the cavity with boiling oil. This was abandoned because he ran out of oil for the purpose. In the emergency he used a simple protective dressing and found that wounds so treated did better than the others. At once he gave up the-boiling oil method.

At the time of the siege of Metz, Paré was sent into the town and was practically chief surgeon of the defending army. As soon as he arrived he was sent to dress a compound leg fracture in a lieutenant of the King's Guard. He found the patient in bad shape, under the care of a gentleman who had promised to cure him by means of the recitation of certain words. This happened in 1552—three hundred years before Mrs. Eddy.

We find Paré giving directions about the food of the garrison, and especially forbidding any intercourse with the natives of the outlying district, because the plague was known to be present in the ranks of the besieging army.

In the record of this same siege we find this note on a patient brought to Paré: "The seigneur had been wounded by a stone, on the temple, with fracture and depression of the bone. So soon as he received the blow, he fell to the ground as dead, and cast forth blood by the mouth, nose and ears, with great

vomiting, and was fourteen days without being able to speak or reason; also he had tremors of a spasmodic nature, and all his face was swollen and livid. I trepanned him at the side of the temporal, over the frontal bone. I dressed him, with other surgeons, and God healed him." Here we have a decompression operation for the results of fracture of the base of the skull.

When the siege was raised, the Duke of Guise, who commanded the French, sent Paré, with others, to treat the sick and wounded left behind by the retreating enemy, an action uncommon at that early day, but now ordered under the Geneva Convention.

As prisoner of war Paré went to the Duke of Savoy, and, among other patients, treated one of the officers for a wound of the lung. This he did by packing the external wounds with tents, anointed with yolk of egg, Venice turpentine and a little oil of roses. The patient died and Paré was asked by the Emperor's surgeon to embalm the body. His record of this incident is a charming example of the obsequiousness of a lower caste man, mixed with the conceit of a skilled workman, that is so prominent in Paré's character. "Seeing his kindness, and fearing to displease him, I then decided to show them the anatomist that I was, expounding to them many things." How like some later day surgical clinics!

After operating on the Marquis de Auret, we find Paré giving minute directions for the subsequent treatment of his patient. An exact diet is outlined, massage is ordered, and local heat by bricks and by an earthenware bottle filled with a decoction and wrapped in cloths. Most ingenious of all is, "We must make artificial rain, pouring water from some high place into a cauldron, that he may hear the sound of it; by which means sleep shall be provoked on him."

The most famous of Paré's military patients was Francois of Lorraine, the Duke of Guise. The Duke was Lieutenant General of the army, and, with his brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, had a most powerful influence in the political affairs

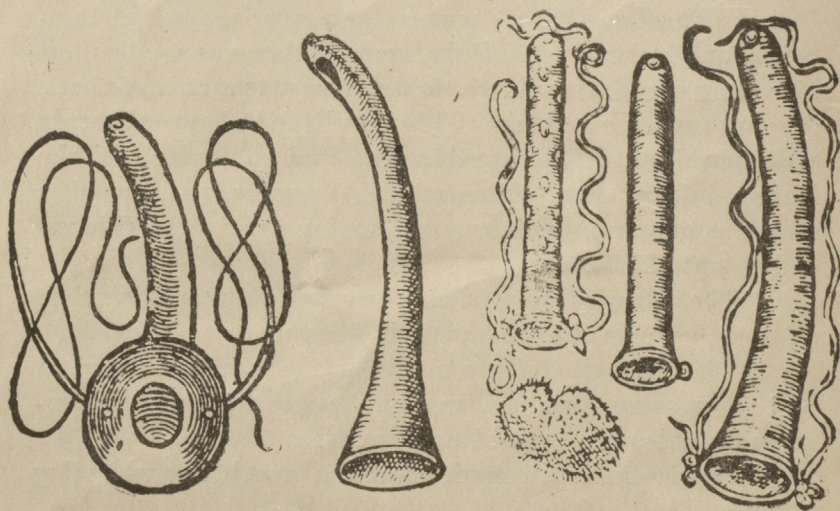
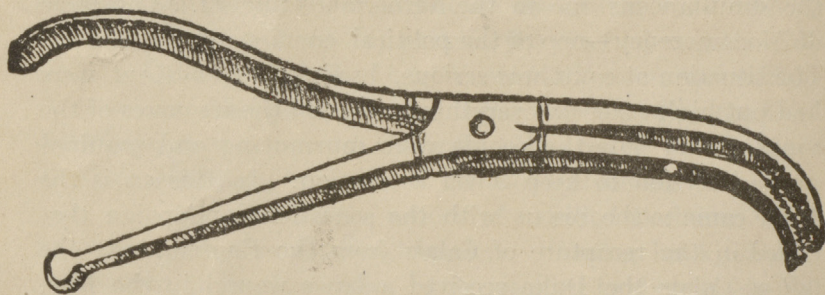
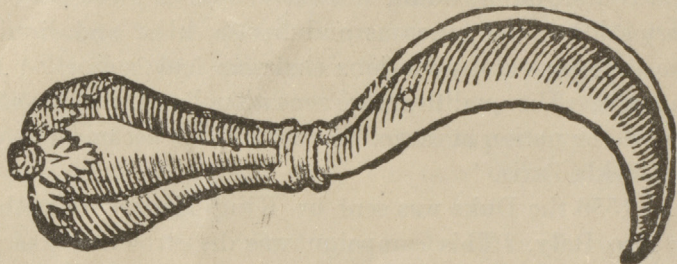
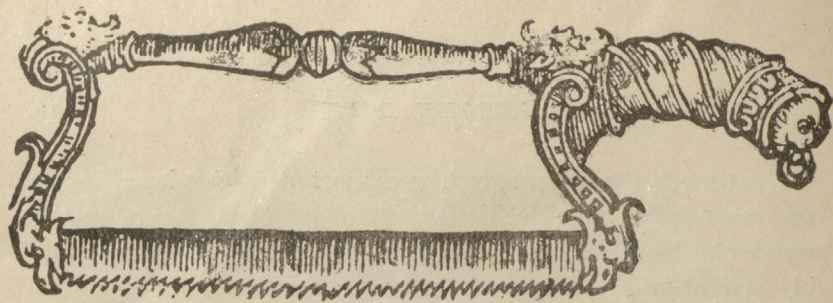
of the time. Dumas makes him a most attractive hero, brave and resourceful, loyal to his friends, a great strategist, and a wonderful leader of men. Edith Sickel, contrasting him with his elegant and stylish brother, says, "Insolent and brutal he was, of course, or he would not have been a great sixteenth century soldier; but generous and heroic, also, and dignified by the sufferings and privations that war had compelled him to undergo. His qualities were sensational and, in spite of the hatred of the nation at large, he periodically became the darling of fickle Paris."

In 1556 the Duke was sent by King Henry II. with an army into Italy. This campaign was disastrous as was also the simultaneous one in the Netherlands under the Constable de Montmorency—one of the political enemies of the Guises. The situation at court was serious, because the constant wars had put high taxes on everything, drained the resources of the country, and now the people were murmuring and required some diversion to keep down revolution. In this crisis the Duke came to the rescue with the sensational campaign that ended in the recapture of Calais from the English. At the fall of Calais the Duke received a lance wound in the face. Dumas (*The Two Dianas*) makes this a most marvelous campaign, undertaken by the Duke, among other reasons, to allow his young friend, Gabriel de Montmorency, to earn his father's freedom from King Henry. The novelist tells how stubbornly the city resisted and in describing the final surrender and the Duke's injury, says, "Francois de Lorraine, as intrepid a soldier as he was an able general, was always in the thickest and hottest of the fight."

"The calamity occurred at a breach already half carried, on the other side of a ditch entirely filled up."

"The Duke de Guise, a mark for the weapons aimed at him from every direction, was on horseback, tranquilly encouraging his men by word and example."

"Suddenly he perceived, above the breach, the white flag of truce. \* \* \*

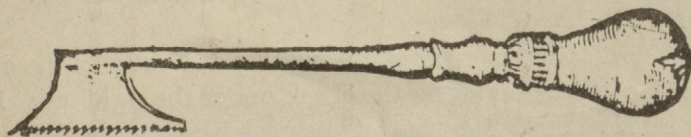
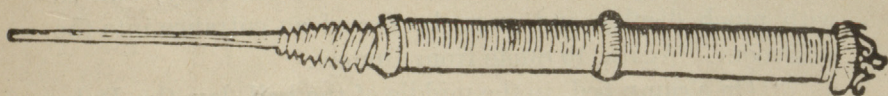
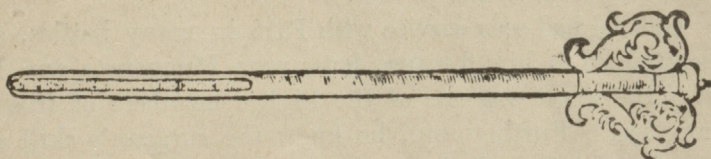
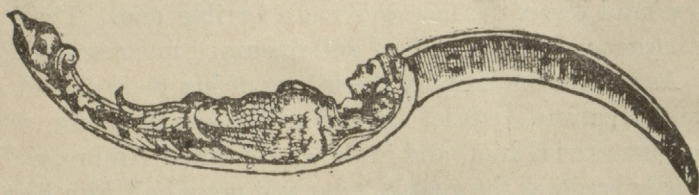
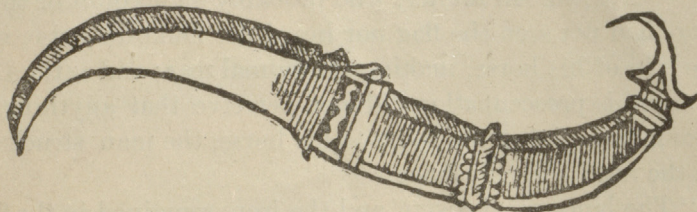
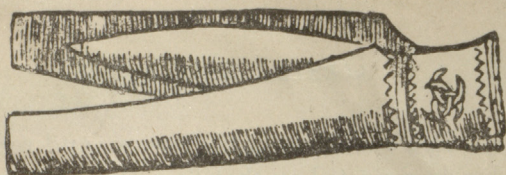


#### AMPUTATING INSTRUMENTS.

From Paré's Works.

1. An amputating-saw. 2. An amputating-knife. 3. A forceps for picking up the vessels for ligature after amputation. 4. Drainage tubes and sponge.

(. adget's Ambroise Paré and His Times.)



# INSTRUMENTS OF GENERAL SURGERY.

from Paré's Works.

1. A lancet, which has on it the crest of Diane de Poitiers.
2. An incision-knife.
3. A small knife folding into a sheath.
4. A director.
5. A cataract needle, screwing into a handle.
6. A small saw.

(Paget's Ambroise Paré and His Times.)

"He raised the visor of his casque, and rode a few yards forward, his eyes riveted on that flag, the emblem of triumph and peace. \* \* \*

"An English soldier, who probably on account of the uproar, had not seen the flag nor heard the Duke de Guise, seized the rein of his horse, making the animal rear; and as the Duke, who in his preoccupation did not perceive that anything was wrong, was giving the spurs to his horse, the man struck him on the head with his lance.

"The lance was broken, and the iron remained in the flesh. The wound was of the face and was a terrible one. The Duke was borne away like one dead and remained unconscious."

As soon as he hears of the injury of his good friend and powerful patron, Gabriel hurries to the guard house, where they have carried him, and in the crowd finds Ambroise Paré furiously berating the guards, who will not admit him because he has no license in his pocket.

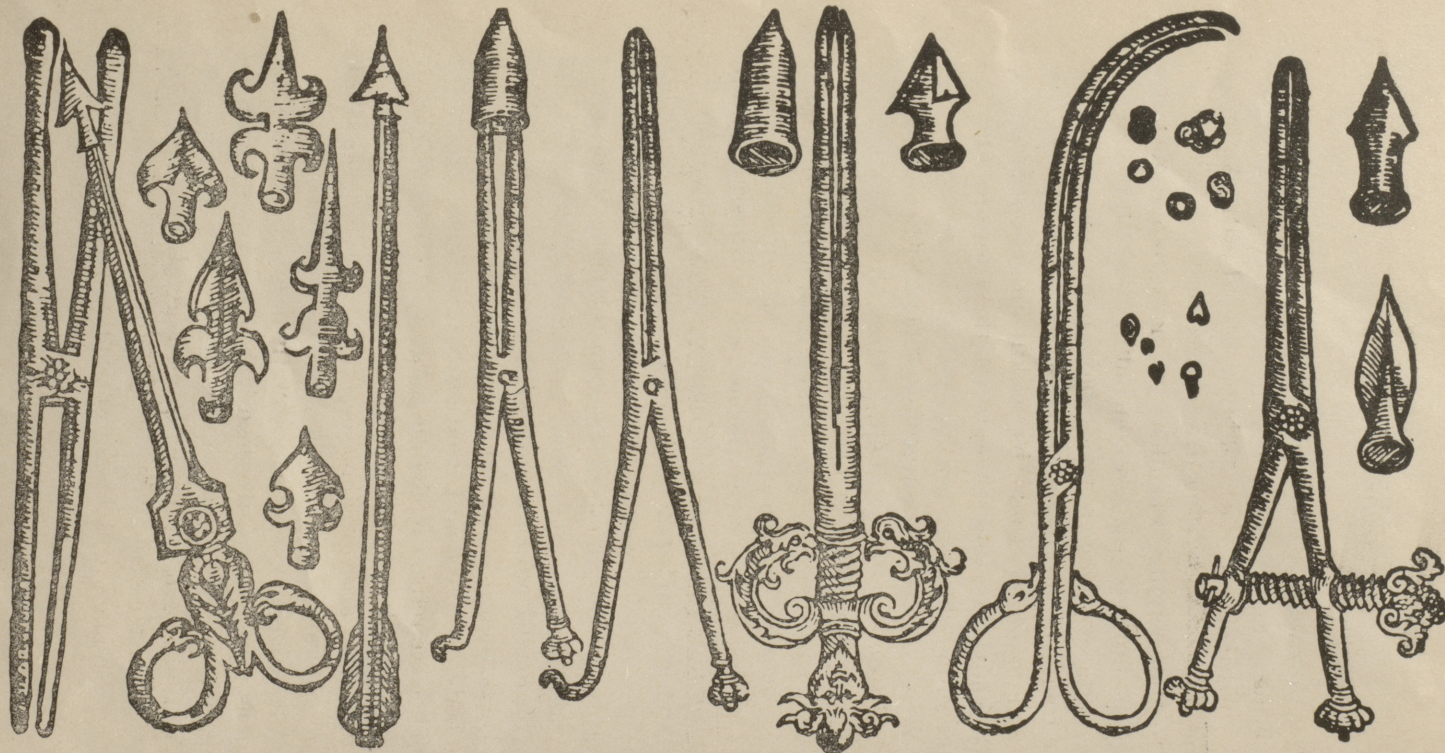
Gabriel had seen service with Paré in many battles, and was attracted to him because both were Huguenots and had met in the secret sessions of the higher members of this religious sect. Furthermore, he knew the surgeon's skill and knew that the Duke had on more than one occasion praised Paré's work beyond that of any other in the army, and so with much display and anger he forced an entrance into the sick room. Again, to quote from Dumas:

"On a camp bed, in the middle of the hall, lay the Duke de Guise motionless and unconscious, his face covered with blood.

"That face was pierced through and through; the iron of the lance, after entering the cheek under the right eye, had penetrated as far as the nape of the neck beneath the left ear, and the fragment, broken off, projected half a foot from the head. The wound was horrible to behold.

"Around the bed were the twelve surgeons, standing appalled amid the general desolation,

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INSTRUMENTS FOR EXTRACTING ARROW-HEADS OR LINKS OF CHAIN-ARMOUR.

from Paré's Works.

1. A dilator. 2. An arrow-head forceps. 3. An instrument like a glove stretcher, so that the hollow arrow-head could be drawn out over the end of it. 4. A catcher with a sharp spike to seize a broken arrow. 5. A forceps. 6. A dilator. 7. An arrow, detachable arrow-heads, links of chain-armor.

(Paget's Ambroise Paré and His Works.)

“ But they were not acting; they were only looking on and speaking.

“ At that moment when Gabriel entered with Ambroise Paré, one of them was saying in a loud voice:

“ ‘So after having consulted, we have found ourselves under the painful necessity of concluding that the Duke de Guise is mortally wounded; for, to have any chance of saving him, the fragment of the lance must be pulled out of the wound, and to do so would be to kill him at once.’ \* \* \*

“ Paré advanced into the midst of the surgeons and examined the wound closely.

“ ‘Well,’ asked the surgeon-in-chief, with an ironical smile, ‘will you extract the iron’?

“ ‘I will,’ said Paré, resolutely.

“ ‘And what marvelous instrument do you intend to use’?

“ ‘My hands,’ said he.

“ ‘I protest firmly,’ cried the surgeon, furiously, ‘against any such profanation of the illustrious sufferer’s last agony.’

“ ‘And we join in your protest,’ shouted all the other surgeons.

“ ‘Have you any method of saving the prince’s life’? rejoined Ambroise.

“ ‘No, for it is impossible,’ said they all.

“ ‘He is, then, mine,’ said Ambroise, stretching his hand over the body, as if to take possession.

“ ‘Then we retire,’ replied the surgeon-in-chief, who, with his confrères, made a movement as if to withdraw.

“ ‘But what are you going to do’? Ambroise was asked from all quarters.

“ ‘The Duke de Guise is apparently dead; I am going to treat him as if he were really dead,’ answered Ambroise, as he took off his doublet and rolled up his sleeves.

“ ‘To make such experiments on a gentlemen, as if in *anima vili*!’ cried a scandalized old practitioner.

“ ‘Yes!’ replied Ambroise, I am going to treat him, not

as a man, not even as an *anima vilis*, but as a thing. Look'!

"He boldly planted his foot on the breast of the Duke.

"A murmur of doubt, terror, and menace ran through the assembly.

"Take care, Master'! said one of the Duke's lieutenants. 'Take care! If you fail I cannot answer for the anger of the friends and servants of the Duke.'

"Indeed'! said Ambroise, with a sad smile.

"You risk your head'! exclaimed another.

"Be it so'! he said, 'I risk my head for his. But, at least, do not disturb me while I do so.'

"Ambroise Paré placed his left knee on the breast of the Duke; then, leaning over, he took the wood of the lance in the tips of his fingers and shook it, first gently, but gradually with more force.

"The Duke started as if in horrible torture.

All the affrightened spectators turned equally pale.

"Ambroise Paré paused for a second, as if struck with terror. An agonizing perspiration bedewed his forehead; but he returned to his work.

"At the end of a minute—a minute longer than an hour—the iron was extracted.

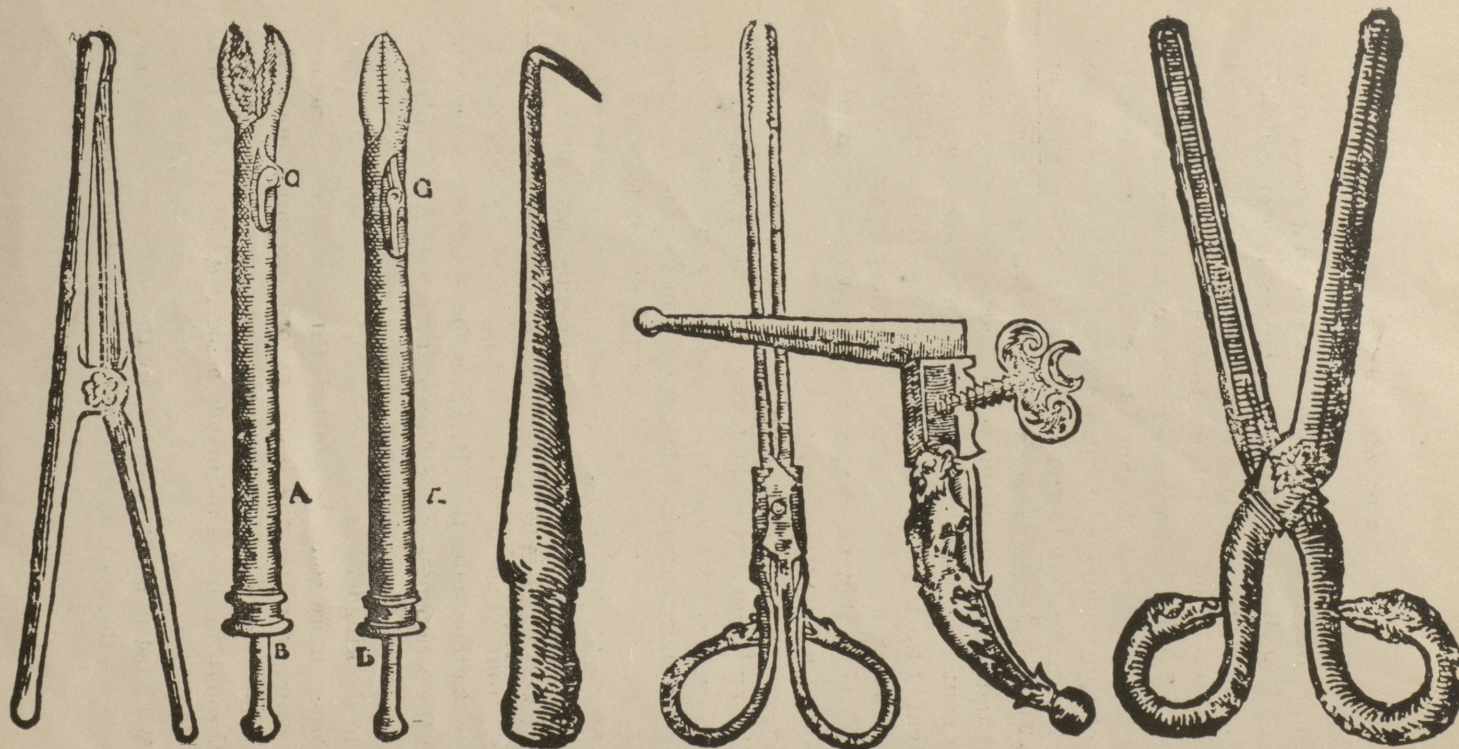
"Ambroise Paré quickly flung it from him, and bent over the gaping wound.

When he rose a flash of joy illumined his visage. It was a sublime moment. Without the great surgeon speaking, everyone knew there was hope now. The servants of the Duke wept warm tears; others kissed the skirts of his coat."

The Duke did recover, but with a great scar, which led to his popular name—The Scar-face.

King Henry II. died from the effects of a lance wound received in a tournament. Dumas states that the Duke de Guise kept Paré away from Paris after the injury, because the death of the King was favorable to the Duke's political fortunes, and he did not, therefore, wish him to have the best

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# INSTRUMENTS FOR EXTRACTING BULLETS.

From Paré's Works.

1. A dilator.
- 2, 3. A catcher, open and shut.
4. A blunt hook.
- 5, 6. A fine-toothed forceps and a dilator.
7. A grooved forceps.

(Paget's Ambroise Paré and His Times.)

attention. But in Paré's own writings we find a description of the wound, of the treatment and of the post-mortem findings. Paré was only one of many surgeons in attendance. Among others was Versalius, sent from Brussels by order of Philip of Spain (Paget). In order to determine the effect and direction of the splinters of the lance, the surgeons were given the heads of four criminals, executed at the time, for that purpose.

Paré was in the innermost councils of the Huguenots, and was at the same time respected and trusted by Catherine de Medici and the leaders of the ruling party. He was quite active in politics, and late in life was vigorous in denouncing the condition of the government. Balzac shows him as the confident of Catherine, and at the same time the adviser of the Huguenots. Probably he escaped the massacre of St. Bartholomew's through the friendship of the Queen.

Dumas makes him something of an astrologer and Sorcerer. We find him arranging horoscopes, and engaged in one very dramatic search for knowledge of the future through some weird experiments with a chicken. Then there is the story of the wax images, furnished for the purpose of working evil spells on certain individuals.

Catherine de Medici is usually credited with preventing Paré's operating on Francois II. for the relief of the otitic brain abscess, from which he died. But in a life of Coligny, however, the author states that Paré told the Admiral he had concealed the seriousness of the disease from the royal family, because he feared the tumult such an announcement was sure to raise in the kingdom.

Much more could be said of Paré and his experiences. The history of his practice is the history of France under the last of the Valois family, and would lead us far afield. All the way through his life is intimately associated with that of Catherine de Medici.

We must judge Paré's work by the standards of his time. His was not the glorious thirteenth century, but the end of the

Renaissance, the dawn of modern times, one of the periods marked by a down curve on the chart of human progress. Men had forgotten the teachings of William of Salicet, of his great pupil Lanfranc, and of Guy de Chauliac. The science and art of medicine was wide adrift from surgery, and this latter science was practically lost. Only the semblance of the art remained in the hands of the barber surgeons. Paré did marvelous work and his imprint on surgical practice is indelible.

His most conspicuous fault is a certain blatant egotism, often characteristic of self-made men, and a lack of proper judicial balance in estimating the value of his own work and opinions, a frequently occurring evidence of an insufficient training in general culture. For example, in the dedication to the King of the Opera Omnia, he says, "God is my witness, and men are not ignorant of it, that I have labored more than forty years to throw light on the art of surgery and bring it to perfection. And in this labor I have striven so hard to attain my end, that the ancients have naught wherein to excel us, save the discovery of first principles; and posterity will not be able to surpass us (be it said without malice or offence) save by some additions, such as are easily made to things already discovered." (Paget.)

This from a man who had no conception of the primary healing of wounds, to whom asepsis was unknown, and who had no idea of inhalatory anaesthesia.

114 W. FRANKLIN ST.  
BALTIMORE.

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