

**THE EARLY WRITINGS
OF MONTAIGNE,
AND OTHER PAPERS**

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The Early Writings of Montaigne, and other papers by Miss Grace Norton

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BY

MISS GRACE NORTON

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN MONTAIGNE"

Tout y est bon, ou au moins tout y est humain.
Montaigne.

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PREFACE

The writings of Montaigne prior to his *Essays* have been but little studied, yet they are of interest in themselves, and of still greater interest from containing, to some extent, indications of the origin of thoughts that are developed in the *Essays*, and from affording information as to various influences that affected their author's mind through life. It is this that makes it worth while, as it rarely is, to concern ourselves with the imperfect when we possess the better thing.

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TRANSLATION OF THE
THEOLOGIA NATURALIS OF
RAYMOND SEBON

“Des choses la nature est vrayment un indice
Qui de l'estre de Dieu nous donne la notice
(Si de l'estre de Dieu notice on peut avoir) ;
C'est pourquoi la nature avec sa Théologie
Mieux que l'art grave en nous la naïve effigie
De Dieu, de son essence, et de son haut pouvoir.”

Francois d'Amboise, parisien, escolier du Roy.
(Last lines of a Sonnet prefixed to the first edition
of the translation)

TRANSLATION OF THE
THEOLOGIA NATURALIS OF
RAYMOND SEBON¹

The first work given to the public by Montaigne was a translation of a Latin treatise by a theologian and philosopher of the preceding century.²

¹ This name has had various forms. In the original Latin work the author is styled Raimundus de Sabunde; in Montaigne's translation he is Raymond Sebon; in the 1580 edition of the Essays he is Raimond Sebond, and in the 1588 edition Raimond de Sebonde; and this is the form now accepted; but in this paper I have used Montaigne's earliest form.

² Montaigne believed him to be of Spanish birth, and so did other writers of the preceding century. But one of the latest students of Sebonde—the abbé Reulet—in a volume entitled '*Un Inconnu célèbre*,' published in Paris in 1875, brings testimony to show that Sebonde was a native of Toulouse. One evidence of this is the character of the Latin in which his book is written, which, far from being as Montaigne strangely asserts "un espagnol baragouiné en terminaisons latines," has, according to the abbé Reulet, no traces of Spanish, but is strongly impregnated with the Provençal language—the 'langue d'oc'—which was commonly spoken by the natives of Toulouse. It is certain that in the years 1434-1436 Sebonde (or Sibiude, his actual name) was a pro-

It was published in 1569—when Montaigne was thirty-six years old—with the following title: "*La Theologie naturelle de Raymond Sebon, docteur excellent entre les modernes, en laquelle par l'ordre de Nature, est demonstrée la verité de la Foy Chrestienne et Catholique, traduite nouvellement de Latin en François.*" Montaigne's name does not appear on the title-page of the first edition; but a dedicatory letter to his father is signed by him. This letter sets forth that this translation has been accomplished "*suyvant la charge*" given Michel by his father the year before. And in his '*Apologie de Raimond Sebond*' Mon-

fessor at the university of Toulouse and that the volume under consideration, the only work known by him, is in substance, and, for the most part, in form, a course of lectures then delivered by him. He died just afterward, in the Spring of 1436,—probably between fifty and sixty years of age.

His work was widely circulated in manuscript; a manuscript copy very carefully executed and completed just a year after the book was finished, exists in the Library of Toulouse. The book was first printed in 1484, and its popularity was such that there were nine editions in twenty-five years. In the next hundred and fifty years, six more followed; then, none appeared from 1648 to 1852, when a cheap edition was published at Solsbach, which is very likely to be the last.—Montaigne's translation is the only one that has been made.