

so wonderfully manifested as in the pardon of sinners,) and that he display his eternal and boundless mercy in bringing him to true repentance and salvation, and that he ordain all things with regard to him according to his holy will, and to the greater glory of his adorable name.

### ST. ROMANUS, ARCHBISHOP OF ROUEN, C.

HE was born of an illustrious and virtuous French family, brought up in the practice of piety, and placed young in the court of Clotaire II., the third French king who was master of the whole monarchy. He was referendary or chancellor to that prince, when, in 626, upon the death of Hidulphus, he was chosen archbishop of Rouen, and compelled to receive episcopal consecration. The remains of idolatry in that diocese excited his zeal; he converted the unbelievers, and destroyed a famous temple of Venus at Rouen, and three others in the diocese, dedicated to Mercury, Jupiter, and Apollo. Amongst many miracles which he wrought, it is related that the Seine having overflowed a considerable part of the city, the saint, who happened then to be at the court of Dagobert for certain affairs of his church, upon hearing this melancholy news, made haste to comfort and succour his afflicted flock: and kneeling down to pray on the side of the water with a crucifix in his hand, the water retired gently within the banks of the river.\* If the

---

\* The name of St. Romanus is famous in France, on account of an extraordinary privilege which the metropolitical chapter of Rouen enjoys of releasing, in his honour, a prisoner under sentence of death for murder, every year, on the feast of the ascension of our Lord. The chapter sends notice to the parliament of Rouen two months before to stop the execution of criminals till that time; and on that day choose the prisoner, who, being first condemned to death by the parliament, then is set at liberty, assists in carrying the shrine of St. Romanus in the great procession, hears two exhortations, then is told, that in honour of St. Romanus he is pardoned. After the procession, a high mass is sung in the metropolitical church, by an ancient privilege, though it be five or six o'clock in the evening. The common people pretend this privilege took its rise from St. Romanus killing a great serpent, with the assistance of a murderer, whom he took out of the dungeon. But no traces of this story are found in any life of this saint, or in any writings before the latter end of the fourteenth century. The figure of a serpent called Gargouille, seems here, as in some other towns, originally to have been meant to represent symbolically the devil overcome by Christ. The deliverance of the condemned criminal was probably intended for a symbol of the redemption of mankind through Christ. The dukes of Nor-

miracles of this holy prelate raise our admiration, the eminent virtues which he practised ought still more to fix our attention. He macerated his body with continual austerities, and after the fatigues of his ministry, passed almost whole nights in prayer. By his indefatigable zeal he banished vice and superstition, and watched over the souls of all his flock as over his own. He had discharged all the duties of an apostolic pastor thirteen years, when God made known to him that the time was come in which he was to be called to receive his recompence. Romanus, whose whole life had been an earnest preparation for that hour, received the summons with joy; and redoubling the fervour of his penance, prayers, and other good works, disposed himself for that happy moment, in which he entered the joy of his Lord, on the 23d of October, 639. St. Owen was his successor. Romanus was interred in the church of St. Godard, one of his predecessors; but, in the eleventh age, his body was removed into our Lady's, which is the cathedral. The first shrine having been impoverished, the archbishop Rotrou, in 1179, caused a very rich one to be made, which is known by the name of *La fierta-saint-Romain*. See Le Cointe, Ann. Franc. an. 626, 635, 638, and the Life of St. Romanus, written in Leonine verses, by a clergyman or monk of Rouen, before the reign of Charlemagne, brought to light by the Maurist monks, Martenne and Durand, in 1717. (Thesaur. Nov. Anecdot., p. 1651.) This poem was compiled from a life of this saint, which was more ancient. (Rivet, Hist. Lit., t. 4, p. 73, et Contin., t. 8, p. 376.) St. Romanus's life was again composed by Gerard, dean of St. Medard's, at Soissons, in the tenth age; also by Fulbert, the learned archdeacon of Rouen, in 1091, (not by the second Fulbert, who flourished in 1130.) This last piece was published by Rigaltius, with dissertations and notes.

---

mandy granted and maintained this privilege; and it has been confirmed by several French kings. It is called *Privilege de la Fierté ou chasse de St. Romain*. Under the French kings of the first race, several holy bishops were sometimes allowed by the kings and governors to set open prisons. It is not improbable that from some such action of St. Romanus this privilege arose. Some moderns think it was established in memory of his having miraculously stopped the overflowing of the river; the origin of this privilege has been the subject of many dissertations. See Duplessis, Descr. de la Haute Norm., t. 2.