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THE PARACELSUS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING

“It is in *Paracelsus* (the work that posterity will probably estimate as Browning’s greatest) that we must look for the strongest proof of his sympathy with man’s desire to know and bend the forces of nature to his service.”

EDWARD BERDOE

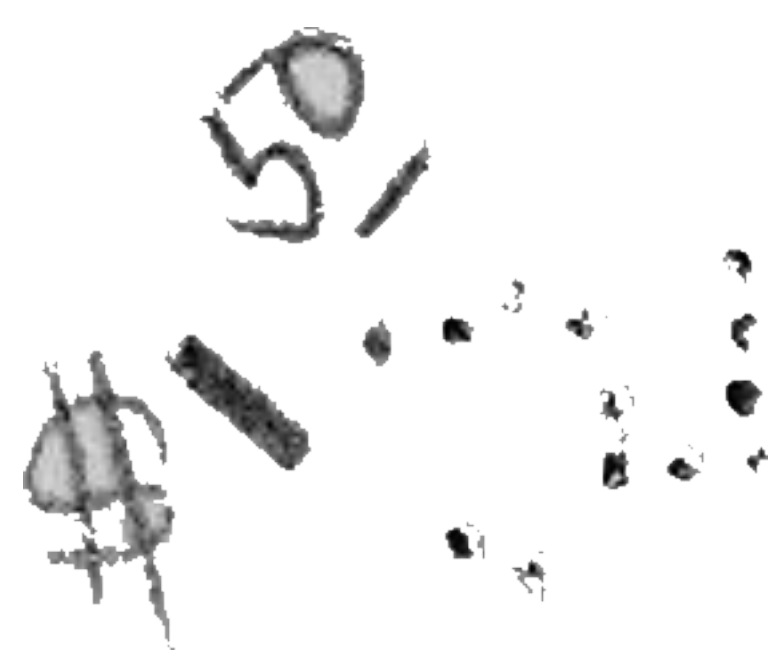
THE PARACELSUS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING

BY
CHRISTINA POLLOCK DENISON



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**TO YOU, DEAR
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY
INSCRIBED**

FOREWORD

FOR a comprehensive understanding of Robert Browning's poem "Paracelsus," some knowledge of the man Paracelsus and his doctrines is necessary. In an historical note and comment, Browning says: "The liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases by way of commentary." In all other respects I leave this volume to speak for itself. For valuable information I wish to gratefully acknowledge my obligation to Mr. Berdcoe's "Browning Cyclopedia," Mr. Wm. Sharp's "Life of Robert Browning," Hartmann's "History of Paracelsus," Erdmann's "History of Philosophy," and to some of the Browning Society's papers.

JANUARY 4, 1911.

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PARACELSUS, THE MAN

PARACELSUS, THE MAN

PHILIPPUS AUREOLUS THEOPH-
RASTUS BOMBAST, of Hohenheim,
known as Paracelsus (a name coined
for himself, apparently meaning to
imply that he was greater than Celsus), was
born in the year 1493, in the vicinity of
a place called Einsiedeln, a village some
leagues distant from the city of Zurich, in
Switzerland. His father, William Bombast,
of Hohenheim, was one of the descendants of
the old and celebrated family Bombast, and
they were called of Hohenheim, after their
ancient residence, known as Hohenheim, a
castle near the village of Plinnigen, in the
vicinity of Stuttgart, in Wurtemberg. He
was a relative of the Grand Master of the
Order of the Knights of St. John of these
times, whose name was George Bombast of
Hohenheim. He established himself, in his
capacity of a physician, near Einsiedeln;
and in the year 1492 he married the matron

of the hospital belonging to the abbey of that place, and the result of their marriage was Theophrastus, their only child. It may be mentioned that Paracelsus, in consideration of the place of his birth, has also been called Helvetius Eremita, and furthermore we sometimes find him called Germanus, Suevus, and Arpinus.

An old tradition says that Paracelsus was emasculated in infancy by accident or by a drunken soldier. The truth of this has not been ascertained but by many people is regarded as one of the calumnies invented by his enemies. It is certain, however, that no beard grew on his face, and his skull, which is still in existence, resembles the formation of a female rather than that of a male. He is painted nowhere with a beard. His portrait, in life-size, can still be seen at Salzburg, painted on the wall of his residence (Linzer Street, No. 365, opposite the church of St. Andrew). Other portraits of Paracelsus are to be found in Huser's edition of his works, and in the first volume of Hauber's "*Bibliotheca Magica*."

The head of Paracelsus, painted by Kaulbach in his celebrated picture, at the Museum at Berlin, called "*The Age of Reformation*,"

is idealized and bears little resemblance to the original.

In his early youth Paracelsus obtained instructions in science from his father, who taught him the rudiments of alchemy, surgery, and medicine. He always honored the memory of his father, and always spoke in the kindest terms of him, who was not only his father, but also his friend and instructor. He afterwards continued his studies under the tuition of the monks of the convent of St. Andrew, situated in the valley of Savon, under the guidance of the learned bishops, Eberhardt Baumgartner, Mathias Scheydt, of Rottgach, and Mathias Schacht, of Freisingen. Having attained his sixteenth year, he was sent to study at the University of Basel. He was afterwards instructed by the celebrated Johann Trithemius, of Spanheim, abbot of St. Jacob, at Wurzburg (1461–1516), one of the greatest adepts of magic, alchemy, and astrology, and it was under this teacher that his talents for the study of occultism were especially cultivated and brought into practical use. His love for the occult sciences led him to enter the laboratory of the rich Sigismund Fugger at Schwatz, in Tyrol, who, like the abbot, was a celebrated alchemist,

and able to teach to his disciple many a valuable secret.

Later on, Paracelsus traveled a great deal. He visited Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia, and it is said that he even went to India, because he was taken prisoner by the Tartars and brought to the Khan, whose son he afterwards accompanied to Constantinople. Every reader of the works of Paracelsus, who is also acquainted with the recent revelations made by the Eastern Adepts, cannot fail to notice the similarity of the two systems, which in many respects are almost identical, and it is therefore quite probable that Paracelsus, during his captivity in Tartary, was instructed in the secret doctrine by the teachers of occultism in the East. The information given by Paracelsus in regard to the sevenfold principles of man, the qualities of the astral body, the earth-bound elementaries, etc., was then entirely unknown in the West. Paracelsus, moreover, wrote a great deal about the Elementals, or spirits of Nature, but in his description of them he substituted for the Eastern terms such as were more in harmony with the German mythological conceptions of the same, for

the purpose of bringing these subjects more to the understanding of his countrymen, who were used to the Western method of thought. It is probable that Paracelsus stayed among the Tatars between 1513 and 1521, because, according to Van Helmont's account, he came to Constantinople during the latter year, and received there "The Philosopher's Stone."¹

The Adept from whom Paracelsus received this stone was, according to a certain *aureum vellus* (printed at Rorschach, 1598), a certain Solomon Trismosinus (or Pfeiffer), a countryman of Paracelsus. It is said that this Trismosinus was also in possession of the Universal Panacea; and it is asserted that he had been seen still alive, by a French traveler, at the end of the seventeenth century.

¹ "The Philosopher's Stone." This is not a stone in the usual sense of the term, but an allegorical expression, meaning the principle of wisdom upon which the philosopher who has obtained it by practical experience (not the one who is merely speculating about it) may fully rely on, as he would rely on the value of a precious stone, or as he would trust to a solid rock upon which to build the foundation of his (spiritual) house. It is the Christ in man: divine love substantialized. It is the light of the world; the very essence of that of which the world has been created; it is not mere spirit but substantial; for in the body of man is contained the greatest of all mysteries. "Paracelsus, Greatest of the Alchemists." DR. FRANZ HARTMANN.

Paracelsus traveled through the countries along the Danube, and came to Italy, where he served as an army surgeon in the Imperial army, and participated in many of the war-like expeditions of these times. On these occasions he collected a great deal of useful information, not only from physicians, surgeons, and alchemists, but also by his intercourse with executioners, barbers, shepherds, Jews, gipsies, midwives, and fortune-tellers. He collected useful information from the high and the low, from the learned and from the vulgar, and it was nothing unusual to see him in the company of teamsters and vagabonds, on the highways and at public inns — a circumstance on account of which his narrow-minded enemies heaped upon him bitter reproach and vilifications. Having traveled for ten years — sometimes exercising his art as a physician, at other times teaching or studying alchemy and magic,¹ according to the custom of these days — he returned at the age of thirty-two again to Germany, where he soon became very cele-

¹ Paracelsus says: "Magic and Sorcery are two entirely different things, and there is as much difference between them as there is between light and darkness, and between white and black. Magic is the greatest wisdom and knowledge of the supernatural powers."

brated on account of the many and wonderful cures which he performed.

In the year 1525 Paracelsus went to Basel; and in 1527, on the recommendation of *Æcolampadius*, he was appointed by the City Council a professor of physics, medicine, and surgery, receiving a considerable salary. His lectures were not — like those of his colleagues — mere repetitions of the opinions of Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna, the exposition of which formed the sole occupation of the professors of medicine of those times. His doctrines were essentially doctrines of his own, and he taught them independently of the opinions of others, gaining thereby the applause of his students, and horrifying his orthodox colleagues by his contravention of their established custom of teaching nothing but what could be well supported by old and accepted authorities, irrespective of whether or not it was compatible with reason and truth.

He held at the same time the office of city physician, and in that capacity he offered a resolution to the City Council of Basel, to the effect that the apothecaries of that city should be subjected to his supervision, and that he should be permitted to examine whether or not the compounders of medicine understood

their business, and to ascertain whether they had a sufficient quantity of pure and genuine drugs on hand so that he might prevent them from asking exorbitant prices for their goods.

The consequence of this measure was, as might have been expected, that he drew upon himself the concentrated hatred of all the druggists and apothecaries; and the other physicians and professors, jealous of his success in teaching medicine and curing diseases, joined in the persecution, under the pretext that his appointment as a professor at the university had been made without their consent, and that Paracelsus was a stranger, of whom "nobody knew where he came from," and furthermore that they did not know whether or not he was "a real doctor." But perhaps all these annoyances and vilifications would have had no serious consequences if he had not made the members of the City Council his enemies by writing a severe publication against a decision which he considered very unjust, and which was rendered in favor of a certain *Canonicus Cornelius* of *Lichtenfels*, whom he had saved from death after the latter had been given up to die by the other physicians, and who had acted very ungratefully towards him. The consequence

of his hasty action was, that he had to leave Basel secretly and hurriedly in July, 1528, to avoid unpleasant complications.

After this event Paracelsus resumed his strolling life, roaming — as he did in his youth — over the country, living in village taverns and inns, and traveling from place to place. Numerous disciples followed him, attracted either by a desire for knowledge or by a wish to acquire his art and to use it for their own purposes. The most renowned of his followers was Johannes Oporinus, who for three years served as a secretary and famulus to him, and who afterwards became a professor of the Greek language, and a well-known publisher, book-seller, and printer, at Basel. Paracelsus was exceedingly reticent in regard to his secrets, and Oporinus afterwards spoke very bitterly against him on that account, and thereby served his enemies. But after the death of Paracelsus he regretted his own indiscretion, and expressed great veneration for him.

Paracelsus went to Colmar in 1528, and came to Esslingen and Nuremburg in the years 1529 and 1530. The “regular physicians” of Nuremburg denounced him a quack, charlatan, and impostor. To refute

their accusations he requested the City Council to put some patients that had been declared incurable under his care. They sent him some cases of elephantiasis, which he cured in a short time and without asking any fee. Testimonials to that effect may be found in the archives of the city of Nuremburg.

But this success did not change the fortune of Paracelsus, who seemed to be doomed to a life of continual wanderings. In 1530 we find him at Noerdlingen, Munich, Regensburg, Amberg, and Meran; in 1531 in St. Gall, and in 1535 at Zurich. He then went to Maehren, Kaernthen, Krain, and Hongary, and finally landed in Salzburg, to which place he was invited by the Prince Palatine, Duke Ernst of Bavaria, who was a great lover of the secret arts. In that place Paracelsus obtained at last the fruits of his long labors and of a wide-spread fame.

But he was not destined to enjoy a long time the rest he so richly deserved, because already on the 24th of September, 1541, he died after a short sickness (at the age of forty-eight years and three days), in a small room of the inn to the "White Horse," near the quay, and his body was buried in the graveyard of St. Sebastian. There is still a

mystery in regard to his death, but the most recent investigations go to confirm the statement made by his contemporaries, that Paracelsus during a banquet had been treacherously attacked by the hirelings of certain physicians who were his enemies, and that in consequence of a fall upon a rock, a fracture was produced on his skull, that after a few days caused his death. A German physician, S. Th. von Soemmering, examined the skull of Paracelsus, which, on account of its peculiar formation, could not easily be mistaken, and noticed a fracture going through the temporal bone, which, by reason of the age and frequent handling of that skull, had become enlarged in size so as to be easily seen, and that he believes that such a fracture could only have been produced during the lifetime of Paracelsus, because the bones of a solid but old and desiccated skull would not be likely to separate in that manner.

The bones of Paracelsus were exhumed in the year 1572, at a time when the church was repaired, and re-interred near the back side of the wall that encloses the space in front of the chapel of St. Philippi Neri, an extension of the church of St. Sebastian, where

his monument may be seen at the present time. The midst of a broken pyramid of white marble shows a cavity which contains his picture, and above it is a Latin inscription, saying:

PHILIPPI THEOPHRASTI PARACELSI QUI
TANTAM ORBIS FAMAM EX AURO CHYMICO
ADEPTUS EST EFFIGIES ET OSA DONEC
RURSUS CIRCUMDABITUR PELLE SUA
JON. CAP. XIX

Below the portrait are the following words:

SUB REPARATIONE ECCLESIAE MDCCLXXII
EX SEPULCHRALI TABE ERUTA HEIC
LOCATA SUNT

The base of the monument contains the following inscription:

CONDITUR HIC PHILIPPUS THEOPHRAS-
TUS INSIGNIS MEDICINAE DOCTOR QUI
DIRA ILLA VULNERA LEPRAM PODAGRAM
HYDROPSIN ALIAQUE INSANABILIA COR-
PORIS CONTAGIA MIRIFICA ARTE SUSTULIT
ET BONA SUA IN PAUPERES DISTRIBU-
ENDA LOCANDAQUE HONORAVIT. ANNO
MDXXXI. DIE XXIV. SEPTEMBRIS VITAM
CUM MORTE MUTAVIT

Below this inscription may be seen the coat of arms of Paracelsus, representing a beam of silver upon which are ranged three black balls, and below are the words:

PAX VIVIS REQUIES AETERNA SEPULTIS

A translation of the above inscription into German may be seen on a black board on the left side of the monument. The two latter inscriptions have evidently been taken from the original monument, but the one around the portrait was added in 1572.

Thus were the earthly remnants of Paracelsus disposed of.

Paracelsus left very few worldly goods at the time of his death, but the inheritance which he left in the shape of his writings is rich and imperishable. This extraordinary man—one of the most remarkable ones of all times and all peoples—found many enthusiastic followers; but the number of those who envied and therefore hated him was still greater. He had many enemies, because he overthrew the customary old-fogyism of the orthodox physicians and speculative philosophers of his age; he proclaimed new, and therefore unwelcome, ideas; and he defended his mode of thinking in a manner that was rather forcible than polite.

One-sided culture could see in Paracelsus nothing else but an enthusiast, a fanatic, and noise-maker; his enthusiastic followers, on the other hand, looked upon him as a god and a monarch of all mysteries and king of the spirits. It was his destiny to be misjudged by his friends as well as by his enemies, and each side exaggerated his qualities, the one his virtues, the other his faults. He was denounced and vilified by one set of ignoramuses, and his qualities extolled by another, and the two camps roused each other into a frenzy by their inordinate praises and vile denunciations, whose exaggerations were evident to every one but themselves. Those historians who have criticised the character of Paracelsus severely, forgot to take into consideration the customs and fashions of the time in which he lived, the character of his surroundings, and his restless wanderings. Now, as the battle of contending opinions has ceased to rage, we may take a dispassionate view of the past and, after studying his works and the writings of his critics and biographers, we will arrive at the conclusion that he was one of the greatest and most sublime characters of all times. His works contain inexhaustible mines of knowledge,

and an extraordinary amount of germs out of which great truths may grow if they are attended to by competent cultivators, and a great deal that is at present misunderstood and rejected will by future inquirers be drawn to the light, and be cut into some of the noblest blocks in the spiritual Temple of Wisdom.

The writings of Paracelsus are especially distinguished by the short and concise manner in which his thoughts are expressed. There is no ambiguity in his expressions, and if we follow the roads which he indicated, progressing at the same time along the path of physical science, we shall find the richest of treasures buried at the places that he pointed out with his magic wand.

Paracelsus was a Christian in the true meaning of that word, and he always attempted to support the doctrines he taught by citations from the Bible. He asks: "What is a philosophy that is not supported by spiritual revelation? Moses did not attempt to teach physics; he wrote in a theological sense calculated to impress the feelings and awaken the faith of the simple-minded, and perhaps he may not have understood physics himself. The scientist, unlike

the theologian, does not put any trust in his feelings, but believes only in his experiments, because physical science deals with phenomena and not with faith. The Hebrews, moreover, did not know much about natural science, and as a people they have always been more ignorant than others in that respect.”

“Faith is a luminous star that leads the honest seeker into the mysteries of Nature. You must seek your point of gravity in God, and put your trust into an honest, divine, sincere, pure, and strong faith, and cling to it with your whole heart, soul, sense, and thought, full of love and confidence. If you possess such a faith, God will not withhold His truth from you, but He will reveal His works to you credibly, visibly, and consolingly.

“Everything that happens takes place through the will of the Supreme. Conscience is the state which we have received from God, in which we should see our own image, and according to the dictates of which we should act, without attempting to discover reasons in the guidance of our life in regard to morals and virtues. We should do that which our conscience teaches, for no other reason but because our conscience teaches it. He who

does not burn himself will not be burned by God, and God provided him with a conscience into which he may put his implicit trust. To learn from others, to accept the opinion of others, to act in a certain manner because others are acting in that way, is temptation. Therefore faith into the things of the earth should be based upon the Holy Scripture and upon the teachings of Christ, and it will then stand upon a firm basis. Therefore we shall put the fundament and the corner-stone of our wisdom upon three principal points, which are: first, Prayer, or a strong desire and aspiration for that which is good. It is necessary that we should seek and knock, and thereby ask the Omnipotent Power within ourselves and remind it of its promises and keep it awake, and if we do this in the proper form and with a pure and sincere heart, we shall receive that for which we ask, and find that which we seek, and the doors of the Eternal that have been closed before us will be opened, and what was hidden before our sight will come to light. The next point is Faith: not a mere belief in something that may or may not be true, but a faith that is based upon knowledge, an unwavering confidence, a faith that may

move mountains and throw them into the ocean, and to which everything is possible, as Christ has Himself testified. The third point is Imagination. If this power is properly kindled in our soul, we will have no difficulty to make it harmonize with our faith. A person who is sunk into deep thought and, so to say, drowned in his own soul, is like one who has lost his senses, and the world looks upon him as a fool. But in the consciousness of the Supreme he is wise, and he is, so to say, the confidential friend of God, knowing a great deal more of God's mysteries than all those who receive their superficial learning through the avenues of the external senses; because he can reach God through his soul, Christ through faith, and attract the Holy Ghost through an exalted imagination. In this way we may grow to be like the Apostles, and to fear neither death nor prison, neither suffering nor torture, neither fatigue nor hunger, nor anything else."

But with all his piety Paracelsus was no bigot. He was an enemy of hypocrisy, ceremonial service, and pious ostentation. He says: "If you pray publicly, to what purpose will it serve? It will only be the

beginning and the cause of idolatry, and therefore it has been prohibited by Christ.”

“Let us depart from all ceremonies, conjurations, consecrations, etc., and all similar delusions and put our heart, will, and confidence solely upon the true rock. We must continually knock and remind the God (in us) to fulfil His promises. If this is done sincerely, without hypocrisy, with a true and pious heart, we will then obtain that for which we seek. The door will be opened for us and that which is mysterious become revealed to us.” (*Philosophia Occulta.*)

“Salvation is not attained by fasting and lip-prayer, neither by wearing a particular kind of clothing, nor by beating one’s self. Such things are all superstition and the outcome of hypocrisy. Christ says: ‘If you wish to pray, do it not publicly; but go into thy inner chamber.’ To pray publicly is the beginning of idolatry. If you pray publicly, then will the common people see it and imitate you, and they will fancy that if they will only blab a great deal like you, then will they be saved. Thus he looks upon you as his example and follows you instead of following Christ, who bids him to pray in secret.” (*Liber Philosophiæ.*)

“God from the beginning of the world has created all things holy and pure and they need not be consecrated by man. God is Himself holy, and all that He made out of His own will is holy likewise. It is for us, by becoming holy, to recognize the holiness of God in external nature.” (*Philosophia Occulta*.) During the time of the Reformation, when the mental atmosphere was in a state of great commotion, when everybody contended either for Luther or for the Pope, Paracelsus stood above the quarreling parties, and rejected all sectarianism, for he said: “Among all sects there is none which possesses intellectually the true religion. We must read the Bible more with our heart than with our brains, until at some future time the true religion will come into the world.” His sympathies, however, went with the liberal Protestants, and he expressed himself in regard to the action of Luther as follows: “The enemies of Luther are to a great extent composed of fanatics, knaves, bigots, and rogues. Why do you call me a ‘Medical Luther’? You do not intend to honor me by giving me that name, because you despise Luther. But I know of no other enemies of Luther but those whose kitchen

prospects are interfered with by his reforms. Those whom he causes to suffer in their pockets are his enemies. I leave it to Luther to defend what he says, and I shall be responsible for what I may say. Whoever is Luther's enemy will deserve my contempt. That which you wish to Luther you wish also to me: you wish us both to the fire."

Such were the true characteristics of this great man. The accusations brought against him by his opponents show that his faults have been so grossly exaggerated that the very absurdity of the charges brought against him renders such statements incredible and harmless. He has been represented as a drunkard, and this accusation has been based upon a passage occurring in a letter which he wrote to some students of the University of Zurich, and in which he addresses them as *Combibones optimi*. It seems, however, more probable that the partnership in drinking alluded to in this expression was meant to refer to the "wine" of wisdom rather than to any more material liquid; moreover, the contents of that letter are very serious and pathetic, and show no indication of frivolity or a love for debauch. It has also been ascertained that Paracelsus up to his twentieth

year never drank any intoxicating drinks, and even if it should be found that he afterwards drank wine, such a fact could easily be explained by the general custom of these times, according to which even the most honorable and respected persons (Luther included) were in the habit of “drinking each other’s health.” If we, moreover, take into consideration the quantity and quality of his works, which were all written within a period of time covering fifteen years, we may be permitted to conclude that he could not have accomplished such a work in a state of that continual intoxication in which, according to the statement of his enemies, he must have remained. “Therefore,” says Arnold, in his “History of Churches and Heretics,” “the report is disproved by the fact that a man who is a glutton and drunkard could not have been in possession of such divine gifts.”

Paracelsus says: “God has been so benevolent as to put before our eyes the things which we desire: good wines, beautiful women, good food, and other treasures, and He also protects in giving us the power to abstain, so that we may not become victims to intemperance. There is a marriage between two bodies: the tangible and the

intangible one (the soul), and the soul must keep the carnal body temperate and prevent it from taking more than its due measure. If this is not done, then there will be a state of adultery. (*Paramir, II.*)

Paracelsus has been accused of vanity and boasting, and the fact is, that he was proud of his own attributes and accomplishments; but he did not glorify his own person, only the spirit that exalted his soul. Seeing himself surrounded by ignorance, misjudged and misrepresented, but conscious of his own strength, he asserted his rights. He maintained that the value of the truths he taught would be appreciated in due time, and his prophecy has proved to be true. It was this consciousness of his superior power that inspired him to exclaim: "I know that the monarchy (of mind) will belong to me, that mine will be the honor. I do not praise myself, but Nature praises me for I am born of Nature and follow her. She knows me and I know her."

This language is not that of a boaster, but rather that of a general who knows that he will be victorious, when he writes: "After me, ye Avicenna, Galenus, Rhases, Montagnana, and others! you after me, not I after

you, ye of Paris, Montpellier, Suevia, Meissen, and Cologne; ye of Vienna and all that come from the countries along the Danube and Rhine and from the islands of the ocean! You Italy, you Dalmatia, you Sarmatia, Athens, Greece, Arabia, and Israelita! Follow me! It is not for me to follow you, because mine is the monarchy. Come out of the night of the mind! The time will come when none of you shall remain in his dark corner who will not be an object of contempt to the world, because I shall be the monarch and the monarchy will be mine.”

This is not the language of vanity and self-conceit. It is the language either of inspiration or of folly, because extremes resemble each other. Thus a man might speak who imagines himself to be superior to others; but thus also would he speak who is conscious of being far above the rest and who floats in the light of the spirit while those below him are groping in the darkness of error. Paracelsus was proud of the spirit that spoke through him; but personally he was modest and self-sacrificing, and he well knew that a man would be a useless thing if he were not overshadowed by the spirit of the Supreme. He says: “Remember that

God has put a mark upon us, consisting in our shortcomings and diseases, to show to us that we have nothing to pride ourselves about, and that nothing comes within the reach of our full and perfect understanding; that we are far from knowing absolute truth, and that our own knowledge and power amounts to very little indeed.”

Personal vanity and ostentation were not the elements to be found in the character of Paracelsus — they were the customs of the physicians of that age; but it is a daily occurring fact that he who exposes and denounces the faults of others appears to the superficial observer as boasting of his own superiority, although no such motive may prompt him. And as Paracelsus was not slow to criticise the ignorance of the “learned,” it was necessarily supposed by the vulgar that he looked upon himself as more learned than all others, and they had not the capacity to know whether or not he was justified in such an estimate of himself. He was, however, far superior in medical skill to all his colleagues, and performed apparently miraculous cures among many patients that had been pronounced incurable by the leading doctors — a fact that has been proved by

Erasmus of Rotterdam, a most careful and scientific observer. Among such patients were not less than eighteen princes, on whom the best physicians had tried their arts and failed. In his thirty-third year he was already an object of admiration for the laity, and an object of professional jealousy for the physicians. He also incurred the wrath of the latter by treating many of the poorer classes without pay, while the other physicians unrelentingly claimed their fees. The most common reward for his labor was ingratitude, and this he earned everywhere, not only in the houses of the moderately wealthy, but also among the rich; for instance, in the house of the Count Philippus of Baden, whose case had been given up as hopeless by his physicians. Paracelsus cured the Count in a short time, who in return showed great penuriousness towards him. Moreover, the ingratitude of that prince caused great joy to the enemies of Paracelsus, and gave them a welcome opportunity to ridicule and slander him more than ever.

Accusations of a different order are brought against him, referring to the bluntness of his style of writing, which was not always refined or polite. It should, however, be remem-

bered that such a style of speaking and writing was universally used at these times, and objectionable expressions were adopted by all, not excluding Luther, the great Reformer, who, in spite of his genius, was a mortal man. Paracelsus was a great admirer of Luther, and even surpassed him in enthusiasm for religious and intellectual freedom. Luther seemed to him to be still too conservative. He believed that such a gigantic revolution in the world of mind could not be accomplished with meekness and condescension, but that it required firmness, tenacity, and an unbending will. He says of himself: "I know that I am a man who does not speak to everyone only that which might please him, and I am not used to give submissive answers to arrogant questions. I know my ways and I do not wish to change them; neither could I change my nature. I am a rough man, born in a rough country; I have been brought up in pine-woods, and I may have inherited some knots. That which seems to me polite and amiable may appear unpolished to another, and what seems silk in my eyes may be but homespun to you,"

Great abuse has been heaped upon Paracelsus by his enemies on account of his rest-

less and roaming way of living. He acquired his knowledge, not in the comfortable manner in which the great majority of scientists acquire theirs, but he traveled all over the country on foot, and went wherever he expected to find something that might be useful to know. He writes: "I went in search of my art, often incurring danger of life. I have not been ashamed to learn that which seemed useful to me even from vagabonds, executioners, and barbers. We know that a lover will go a long way to meet the woman he adores: how much more will the lover of wisdom be tempted to go in search of his divine mistress!"

He says: "The knowledge to which we are entitled is not confined within the limits of our own country, and does not run after us, but waits until we go in search of it. No one becomes a master of practical experience in his own house, neither will he find a teacher of the secrets of Nature in the corners of his room. We must seek for knowledge where we may expect to find it, and why should the man be despised who goes in search of it? Those who remain at home may live more comfortably and grow richer than those who wander about; but I neither

desire to live comfortably, nor do I wish to become rich. Happiness is better than riches, and happy is he who wanders about, possessing nothing that requires his care. He who wants to study the book of Nature must wander with his feet over its leaves. Books are studied by looking at the letters which they contain; Nature is studied by examining the contents of her treasure-vaults in every country. Every part of the world represents a page in the book of Nature, and all the pages together form the book that contains her great revelations.”

So little has Paracelsus been understood by the profane, that even to this day he is accused of having advocated the very superstitions which his books are intended to destroy. Far from advocating the superstitious practises of the star-gazers, he says: “There are two *Entia* (Causes) active in man, namely, the *Ens Seminis* and the *Ens Virtutis*”; that is to say, the qualities which man’s physical constitution has inherited from his parents, and the tendencies or inclinations and talents which he has developed in a former state of existence — “but the planets and stars neither build up his body, nor do they endow man with virtues or vices

nor with any qualities whatsoever. The course of Saturn lengthens or shortens nobody's life, and although Nero and Mars were of the same kind of temperament, nevertheless Nero was not the child of Mars, nor Helena the daughter of Venus. If there never had been any Moon in the sky, there would be nevertheless people who partake of her nature. The stars force us to nothing, they incline us to nothing; they are free for themselves and we are free for ourselves. It is said that a wise man rules over the stars; but this does not mean that he rules over the influences which come from the stars in the sky; but that he rules over the powers which exist in his own constitution."

"We cannot live without sunshine and we need the influences of the stars as much as we need heat and cold, food and water; they produce our seasons and ripen our fruits, but man's body does not come from the stars, nor is his character formed by them, and if there never had been any planet on the sky, there would be nevertheless some people of a melancholy disposition, others of a choleric temperament, etc."

Paracelsus did not read or write much. He says that for ten years he never read a book,

and his disciples testify that he dictated his works to them without using any memoranda or manuscripts. On taking an inventory of his goods after his death, a Bible, a Biblical Concordance, a Commentary to the Bible, and a written book on Medicine, were all the books that could be found in his possession. Even earlier than Luther he had publicly burned a Papal bull, and with it the writings of Galen and Avicenna. He says: "Reading never makes a physician. Medicine is an art and requires practical experience. If it were sufficient to learn to talk Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, to become a good physician, it would also be sufficient for one to read Livius to become a great commander-in-chief. I began to study my art by imagining that there was not a single teacher in the world capable to teach it to me, but that I had to acquire it myself. It was the book of Nature written by the finger of God, which I studied — not those of the scribblers, for each scribbler writes down the rubbish that may be found in his head; and who can sift the true from the false? My accusers complain that I have not entered the temple of knowledge through the 'legitimate door.' But which one is the truly legitimate door? Galenus and Avicenna or

Nature? I have entered through the door of Nature; her light, and not the lamp of an apothecary's shop, has illuminated my way."

Great stress was laid by his accusers upon the fact that he wrote the greater part of his books and taught his doctrines in the German language, and not, as was then customary, in Latin. But this was one of his most important acts; because in so doing he produced a reformation in science similar to the one that Luther produced in the Church. He rejected the time-honored use of the Latin language, because he believed that the truth could as well be expressed in the language of the country in which he lived. This daring act was the beginning of free thought in science, and the old belief in authorities began to weaken. It is probable that Paracelsus would never have attained his knowledge if he had permitted his mind to be fettered and imprisoned by the idle formalities that were connected with a scientific education at that time.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PARACELSUS

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ALTHOUGH the doctrine of the Macrocosm and the Microcosm was of primitive antiquity, and had even been last emphasized by Raymond of Sabunde, who had not remained unknown to Paracelsus, yet it is only since and by means of the latter that it was made the central point of the whole of philosophy. He designates nature as the sphere of philosophy, and hence excludes from the latter all theology. Not as though the two were antagonistic, or as though theology were subordinated to philosophy, but the works of God are either works of nature or works of Christ; the former are comprehended by philosophy, the latter by theology. Accordingly philosophy speaks as a pagan, and was already a possession of the pagans; yet the philosopher may be a Christian, for father and son are compatible the one with the other. Philosophy and theology are mutually exclusive, for

the instrument of the former is the natural light, reason, and itself is a form of knowledge; theology, on the other hand, is a form of faith, meditated by revelation, reading of the scriptures, and prayer. Faith surpasses the light of nature, but only because it cannot exist without natural wisdom, which, however, can exist without faith. The latter, therefore, is the greater. Philosophy has nature for its sole and single object, is only apprehended invisible nature, as nature, on the other hand, is merely visible, actual philosophy. Since philosophy is only the science of the world, but the world is partly the macrocosm which contains, partly the microcosm which is man, the philosophy of Paracelsus only contains what we are accustomed to call cosmology and anthropology, only that the two are never separated, and some things which concern man, as will shortly be seen, lie outside the sphere of philosophy.

As no human work can be rightly appreciated unless we know for what end it was undertaken, so also in the case of creation we must inquire after God's "intention." It is of a twofold nature: God desires that nothing may remain hidden, that everything

may become visible and revealed; and secondly, that everything which He has founded and left incomplete should come to completeness. Man carries out both purposes, by knowing things and by carrying them towards their destiny by transforming them; on that account man is last in creation and is God's proper intention, and the world is only to be known inasmuch as philosophy contemplates man as the world's final aim and fruit, and searches in him as the book from which nature's secrets may be read. On the other hand, as the fruit can only be understood from the seed, so man can only be understood from that which preceded him, that is, from the world. This circle cannot appear fallacious to Paracelsus, who lays down as a fundamental proposition that he only is a philosopher who knows one thing in another. Moses, too, relates that after all things had been created out of nothing, for the creation of man, an instrument was necessary. The latter, the "*limus terrae*," is an extract and a quintessence of all that was created before man, and might just as well be called *limus mundi*, since all *creata* are contained in it, and therefore in man formed from it, and can accordingly come out of it. This holds,

not only of cold and fire, but also of the wolf nature and the adder nature, and this being so, men can with literal accuracy be called wolves, etc. Since man is everything, therefore to him, as the center and point of all things, nothing is impenetrable. But besides the earth, the All comprehends the heavens also, that is, the constellations or the fundamental sidereal or ethereal powers, which, themselves invisible, have their "corpus" in the visible stars. Accordingly the *limus terrae* and man formed from it are of a double nature; first the visible, tangible, earthly, and secondly the invisible, intangible, heavenly, astral body. This latter is usually called *spiritus* by Paracelsus; any one who should translate this word by life-principle or life-spirit, might find upon the usage of Paracelsus, who instead of body and spirit often says *corpus* and life, or also that the *spiritus* is "the life and balsam of all corporal things," of which none is created without *spiritus*. Not only do men consist of a body sprung from the elements, and the spirit descended from the stars, so that they may be called children of the marriage of those two, but all beings, even those without sense, live and are penetrated by the astral spirit;

but all the rest are only fragments of that which man is in completeness. In accordance with a universal world-law, which Paracelsus calls the foundation of his whole philosophy, every creature yearns after that out of which it has been created, partly to maintain itself, for everything eats of its own mother and lives on her, partly to return to its original, for everything dies and is buried in its father. Accordingly both the component parts of man attract to themselves that from which they sprung as the magnet attracts the iron; to hunger and thirst, which induce the body to appropriate the elements and transform them into flesh and blood, there corresponds in the spirit imagination, by means of which it nourishes itself on the stars, gains sense and thoughts which are its food. Imagination, as the peculiar function of the spirit, is of the greatest importance in the formation of seed and fruit, in the generation and healing of diseases; it is the means of the illumination naturalis, makes the spirit 'capable of speculation, etc. Hence, as all natural impulses have their seat in the earthly body, so all arts and all natural wisdom have theirs in the sidereal body or life-spirit. They are

also similar to one another in that both pass away; at death the body goes back to the elements, the spirit is absorbed by the stars; the latter takes place later than the former, hence spirits can appear in the places to which they are bound by imagination, but they also die through the gradual disappearance of their thoughts, sense, and understanding.

To these two component parts, which together make man an animal, there is now added the seat, not of the light of nature, but of the eternal reason, the soul which springs from God. This is the living breath which, when God created Adam, He caused to be added to the *limus terrae*, and at the generation of each individual He causes to be added to the seed, the extract of all the elemental parts, and which at death, being eternal, returns to the eternal. The soul, which is essentially distinct from the spirit, and which is related to its thoughts as a king to his council, has its seat in the heart, with which accordingly we ought to love God. It is so related to the spirit that the latter may be called its body, and itself the spirit's spirit. Paracelsus moreover sometimes uses the word *spiritus* in such a wide sense as to include

both the spirit (of life) and the soul. It is the result of a confusion between spirit and soul when any one shifts to the power of the elements or the stars the responsibility of an individual's being good or evil. Whether he be hot or cold depends on the former, whether he be smith or builder on the latter, but whether he be good or evil depends on the soul alone, which God has left free, and in the power of which He has left it to determine itself in one direction or another. As regards the reasons which have induced God thus to leave the soul to freedom, in which, if it persists, it is miserable, whilst bliss consists in entire submission to God, philosophy has nothing to say. Indeed, all that concerns that supernatural essence, the soul, is defiled, when considered by the light of nature. Through this triplicity of nature, man is partly like to, partly surpassed by, three other kinds of beings. He is nature, spirit, and angel, unites in himself the properties into which the beasts, angels, and elemental spirits (Saganae) are divided. These latter, namely, which are named after the elements to which they belong, Watermen (Nymphs, Undines), Earthmen (Gnomes, Pygmies), Airmen (Sylphs, Sylvans, Lemurs),

Firemen (Salamanders, Penates), have no souls and are therefore often called Inanimata. Only by marriage with human beings can they receive souls for themselves and their children. As the body has its food in the elements, the spirit in the stars, so the soul has its food in Christ, who speaks to her as the earth to her children: take, eat, this is myself. The means of partaking of this food is faith, which is so much more powerful and effects so much more than imagination, just because the soul is more than the spirit. It is on that account frequently contrasted as the sacramental with the elemental.

As man by his three component parts points to the elemental, the sidereal, and the divine ("deal") world, the knowledge of these three worlds is the condition of the complete knowledge of man. Accordingly, philosophy, astronomy, and theology are given as the foundations on which the true science of medicine rests. But Paracelsus, besides that he was himself a physician, had the further reason for referring to medicine, that in the true physician he saw the ideal of a scientific man, so much so that he says that of all the arts and faculties, that of the

physician was dearest to God. Very naturally so, for the man whose task it is to investigate the nature of the highest thing in the world and to further its well-being may well look down on the rest. Besides the dignity of its object, medicine may also pride itself on something else: in it, namely, are united the two elements which, according to Paracelsus, belong to true science-speculation, which without experience gives but “vain phantasies” and experimentum, which nevertheless without science, as Hippocrates says, is fallax and results in nothing but “experimentler” (empirics), who deserve no preference to many an old woman and barber: but they combine to make a true experientia or a plain demonstrative and obvious philosophy. Without philosophic, astronomical, and theological knowledge the physician is not in a position to decide which diseases are of an earthly, which of a sidereal origin, and which are visitations of God. But as the *Theorica causae* coincides with the *Theorica curae*, he runs the risk of attacking elemental diseases with sidereal remedies, or vice versa, or also of making attempts at natural healing where they are out of place.

To these demands made of the physician

are attached, as helps to their fulfilment we might say, the representations of the three sciences mentioned. First, as regards Philosophy, that “mother of a good physician” by it, astronomy being separated from it, it is to be understood, the universal science of nature, which treats of all creata which existed before man. Paracelsus here goes back to the final basis of all being, which he finds in the “fiat” with which God brings to an end His solitary existence, and which may accordingly be called the *prima materia*, or to the *mysterium magnum*, in which all things were contained, not essentially or qualitatively, but in the mode in which the image to be carved out of it is contained in the wood. Both names, however, are also attributed to the product of the fiat, in which it becomes materialized, the seed of all things. The name *yle*, seldom used, and the perpetually recurring *yliaster* or *yliastron*, as a name for this first product of the divine, creative power, will not surprise any one who thinks on the *hyle* and *hyleachim* of many Schoolmen. In these, as in a seed-vessel (*limbus*), all things to come are contained. Since He who uttered the fiat is the Triune, also the formless primitive sub-

stance is subject to the universal world-law of triplicity; it contains three principles which Paracelsus usually calls Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury. That instead of these he also uses balsamum, resine, and liquor, and his express declaration as well, prove, that by those terms we are not to understand the corporeal substances salt, sulphur, and quicksilver, but the primary powers (hence "spirits," also *materiae primae*), which are best reflected in our salt, etc. All corporeal beings contain these principles, as for instance what smokes in the wood is mercury, what burns, sulphur, what remains in ashes is salt, and in man, salt appears in the body, sulphur in the soul, mercury in the spirit. By sublimation, burning, and analysis of these three, and by the fact that they combine in different relationships, there arises the manifoldness of things, so that all things are concealed in everything, one is their concealer, the bodily and visible vessel. As it is by cutting away the superfluous that the image grows out of the wood, so it is by the way of separation, *Separatio*, that the different beings arise out of the *Yliaster*. And indeed by such a separation there first arise the elements, which four parts of the *Yliaster*

are often themselves again called the four (individual) *yliastri*. Paracelsus ceaselessly contests the peripatetic-scholastic theory, according to which the elements are complexions of the primitive qualities of heat and cold, etc. Partly because these qualities, as accidents, require a substratum, partly because each element has but one chief quality. Not because they are complexions, but because they are “mothers” of things, are they elements. Moreover, what held good of the three *primae substantiae* contained in them holds good also of the elements: *Elementum aquae* is not the water which we see, but the invisible mother of our water, who brings forth this visible, less wet, substance we see — a soul, a spirit. In the first separation the elements *ignis* and *aer* combine in opposition to the other two, and so there arises, there the heavens, here the “globule” of the earth, like the yolk of the egg swimming in the white. In the former there are formed, from the *elementum ignis*, the life-giving mother of our (destroying) fire, the firmament and the stars, including the transparent heaven. In the latter again, the wet separates itself from the dry, and sea and land

arise. Within these four there now arise out of the four elements, by means of the Vulcanus indwelling in them, which is not a personal spirit, but a *virtus*, which is the power of nature subject to man, individual things, with the rise of which many *errata naturae* slip in. (Consider here Aristotle's nature, working demonically, but failing of its end.) The products of the elements, which are not of like kind with their parents as are those of composite bodies, but "divertalla," are divided into perceptible, or the above-mentioned elemental spirits and the different beasts, and imperceptible, such as metals which come from water, plants which come from the earth, lightning which comes from the heavens, rain which comes from the air. The place of Vulcanus in the elements is taken in each individual thing by the "ruler" or "archeus," that is, its individual natural power, by which things maintain themselves and, especially in the expulsion of disease, again establish themselves. The earth also has its archeus, who among other functions "measures the etnal or mineral fire in the mountains, like the alchemists." Man is distinguished from all other natural beings by the fact that he does not belong to

one element merely, but much rather, seeing that he consists of them, all the elements belong to him, and so he does not live in but on the earth. Because he is the extract of all things, their “quintessence,” he is therefore dependent on them, his spirit as well as his body dies away without nourishment from without. So likewise, he and his circumstances can only be known from the study of the elements and nature in general, and this is a fortunate thing for the sick, for otherwise the physician would have to learn their condition by experiment on the sick themselves, which would be the death of many.

The knowledge of water and earth only supplies the letters for a judgment on the earthly body of man. A judgment on his life proper is conditioned by knowledge of the stars, and accordingly Astronomy, the “higher part” of philosophy, along with the philosophy of the elements, is indispensable to the physician. The heavenly and the earthly world, as they consist of the same primal substances, and as one Vulcan works in both, ought not to be separated as they usually are. The same thing which in heaven exists as a star, exists on earth, but as a vegetable,

and in the water, but there as a metal. To him who clearly understands this and thereby possesses the “ars signata,” who does not attribute the same name to different things but such as express their individual nature, the heavens become a “herbarium spirituale sidereum,” as he would have a stella Artemisiae, Melissae, etc. Our present knowledge extends so far as to say that there must be far more metals than the seven, which are named on account of the number of the planets. Naturally, what holds good of water and earth must have its application to man, their quintessence: there is nothing in the heavens which is not in him. That which is there Mars, and in the earth, iron, is in man, gall. This point is important for the diagnosis of disease and the choice of a remedy. The two belong together, for where we have the cause of the disease, there we must seek the basis of cure. The aphorism *contraria contrariis* does not mean that cold is to be overcome by heat, but that sickness is to be overcome by health, the harmful effect of a principle by its beneficent effect. Here also, if diseases were to be designated according to their nature, we would have to give up the old names, and

speak of martial and mercurial diseases, for the stars are the principia morborum. Certainly, in order to be able to do so, we must not isolate man, but regard him from the standpoint of the astronomer and astrol-ogist, must recognize in the wind-storm the accelerated pulse of nature, in the feverish pulse of a sick man we must recognize an inner storm, in the origin of stone in the bladder the same process which gives rise to thunder, etc. As, on the one hand, this knowledge will place the physician in a po-sition not to treat sidereal illnesses, like, *e.g.*, the plague, in which, just because it is such, imagination plays so important a part, as if they were the common elemental sort, so, on the other hand, it will free him from the proud folly of thinking that it is he who heals the sick. Only nature does so, and his task is to put away what hinders her from doing so, to protect her from hostile foes. Another expression for the same assertion is, that it is the physician's duty to give opportunity to the archeus, that is, the particular natural force, to exercise its healing influence. As this takes place by means of the remedy which is put into the stomach, the stomach is often designated as the special seat of the archeus.

Both the higher and the lower part of philosophy point to the basis of all things, hence Paracelsus calls the light of nature the beginning of Theology; he who has a correct judgment in natural things will not “lightly ponder” Christ and the Holy Scriptures. Because he seriously believes that philosophy must rest on theology as its corner-stone, and further, because he regards Scripture as the sole source of theology, he studied the latter with great zeal. (Morhof claims to have seen exegetical commentaries on Scripture in Paracelsus’ own hand.) But since he at the same time always contrasts theology with knowledge, there is no need of going into his theology further here. Reference must be made to one subject, only because it is closely inter-connected with his relation to the scholastic philosophy: his attitude to the Roman Catholic Church. When it is seen that he names Wicklif along with Albert and Lactantius among those who are predestined to doctrine, that he entertains the highest admiration for Zwingli, that he derides the opponents of Luther, speaks disrespectfully of the Pope, frequently expresses himself against the mass, worship of saints, and pilgrimages, one may be tempted to count him

quite as one of the innovators of his time. And yet it would be incorrect to do so, for against it there is his Mariolatry, his assurance that he would have the useless fools away from the mass, not the saints, etc. His attitude might be compared with that of Erasmus, whom moreover he regarded the most highly of all the scholars of his time; with more reason perhaps with those of the mystics treated of above, who, without leaving the Church of Rome, neglected those points of her doctrine which were afterwards attacked by the reformers.

If medicine were mere science and theory, it would rest upon the three sciences just characterized. But now Paracelsus lays the greatest weight on the fact that it is an art and praxis. He must therefore supply her with directions and a technique as the fourth pillar on which she rests. This is accordingly afforded by Alchemy, by which is properly to be understood every art of bringing about transformations, so that the baker who makes bread out of corn, the wine-presser who makes wine out of grapes, is thereby an alchemist, as is the archeus who changes food into flesh and blood. With these changes of things according to their character, there

is associated the alchemist in the narrower sense, that is the chemist, who refines, ennobles, and heals things, but just on that account is the opposite of a magician. The purest and most refined in everything is its quintessence or (since this word should only be used where an extract, like the *limus terrae*, contains everything from which it was extracted, without involving that anything is withdrawn from the residuum), to speak more exactly, its arcanum, its tincture or elixir. As in the latter the thing is contained with its force and quality without foreign admixture, it is naturally the chief task of medical alchemy to prepare quintessences, arcana or tinctures. They are drawn from metals, but also from things which have life, from plants, and the more living the thing is, the stronger the quintessence. If it were possible to draw such an extract from man without his death, that would give the absolute cure. The “mummy” is an approximation to it, but as it is mostly got from the bodies of those who have died of disease, in the most favorable case from those who have been executed, and therefore always from the dead, it is not to be compared with the former. As examples of such arcana

after which we have to strive, Paracelsus cites *prima materia*, *lapis philosophorum*, *mercurius vitae*, and *tinctura*, for the attainment of which he gives the methods. Here, as in general with Paracelsus, it is hard to tell where self-deception ceases and charlatanry begins. He cannot be acquitted of either: on the contrary, neither here nor in the case of the famous recipe for the production of the homunculus, is it possible to think of an ironical jest. That in all his alchemistic works he demands that the stars and their constellations should be observed, that the sun's crop and fallow season, that is summer and winter, should be distinguished, is a necessary consequence of the interdependence of all things which he asserts. Amid all the assertions which appear so fantastic, he is never tired of warning his readers against fantasies, and of demanding that nature herself should be allowed to point out the way. But he not only regards it as such guidance that an accidental experimentum teaches how an herb has once operated, but also when nature promises a certain definite effect by means of the form of a plant taken as a signature; and finally, when from the fact that a beast can feed on, that is draw to itself,

that which is poison to us, we draw the inference that this poison will draw away, that is to itself, our wounds, we follow not our own conceit but nature. He is entirely in earnest that our knowledge is only the self-revelation of nature, that our knowledge is but listening to her; and that he heard a great deal from her is proved by his fortunate cures, and by the fact that many of his fundamental principles have maintained themselves to this day.

NOTE

NOTE

PARACELSUS was written by Browning when he was twenty-three years of age. It was begun in the late autumn of 1834, and published in the summer of the following year.

In the earlier edition of this, his first acknowledged work (which he dedicated to his friend Count Amédée de Ripert-Monclar, who suggested the subject to the poet), this interesting and explanatory preface was given: "I am anxious that the reader should not, at the very outset, — mistaking my performance for one of a class with which it has nothing in common, — judge it by principles on which it was never moulded, and subject it to a standard to which it was never meant to conform. I therefore anticipate his discovery, that it is an attempt, probably more novel than happy, to reverse the method usually adopted by writers whose aim it is to set forth any phenomena of the mind or the passions, by the operation of persons and events; and that, instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ventured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress, and have suffered the agency by which it is influenced and determined, to be generally discernible in its effects alone, and subordinate throughout, if not altogether excluded; and this for a reason. I have endeavored to write a poem, not a drama: the canons of the drama

are well known, and I cannot but think that inasmuch as they have immediate regard to stage representation, the peculiar advantages they hold out are really such only so long as the purpose for which they were at first instituted is kept in view. I do not very well understand what is called a Dramatic *Poem*, wherein all those restrictions only submitted to on account of compensating good in the original scheme are scrupulously retained, as though for some special fitness in themselves — and all new facilities placed at an author's disposal by the vehicle he selects, as pertinaciously rejected. It is certain, however, that a work like mine depends on the intelligence and sympathy of the reader for its success, — indeed, were my scenes stars, it must be his cooperating fancy which, supplying all chasms, shall collect the scattered lights into one constellation, a Lyre or a Crown. I trust for his indulgence towards a poem which had not been imagined six months ago; and that even should he think slightly of the present (an experiment I am in no case likely to repeat), he will not be prejudiced against other productions which may follow in a more popular, and perhaps less difficult form."

From the last paragraph of this note it might fairly be inferred that Browning wished to please generally, and that he was aware of the difficulty of the popularization of poetry written on similar lines to *Paracelsus*.

In choosing this subject for his first mature poem, Browning was guided first of all by his intense sympathy with the scientific spirit. Realizing as he did, long before the scientific minds of our time, *Paracelsus'* true worth, and recognizing the value of the noble work done for mankind by him, Browning set himself the glorious task of restoring to his proper place in the scientific world this great benefactor of humanity.

Paracelsus' name had been covered with infamy by

his enemies and biographers. Browning thrust aside all pettiness of the physical, and laid bare to us the soul of this great mystic. The mysticism associated with the name of *Paracelsus* was probably another reason for the choice of this subject. Browning was fond of the mystical, and is acknowledged to be its subtlest interpreter in the English language.

The poem, in five scenes, is in form a dialogue between *Paracelsus* and his friend Festus and his wife Michal in the first scene, Aprile, an Italian poet, in the second, and Festus only in the remaining scenes. Through the personal media of these three incidental characters, the vicissitudes of *Paracelsus* are brought out. His career is traced from its noble outset at Würzburg to its inglorious end in a hospital at Salzburg. While these minor characters have little bearing on the external action of the poem, they have all a distinct individuality. Festus, *Paracelsus*' friend and adviser, is a man of simple nature. His devotion to *Paracelsus*, and his understanding and toleration of that great restless spirit, make him an impressive and lasting type. Michal is interesting as Browning's first sketch of a woman — *Pauline* of course exists only in the abstract. The portrait of gentleness and tenderness that Browning paints for us in this character, once seen, will always be remembered.

Aprile is a type of the poet's own poetical ideal — a type of the artist, a soul immoderately possessed with the desire to love as *Paracelsus* was with the desire to know.

Paracelsus, though written in dialogue, was not intended for a drama, as Browning stated in his note of preface to the first edition. It might be classed as epical rather than dramatic. It has been justly praised as a serious historical study of the great German scientist and mystic, and again for its philosophical ele-

ment. Browning says, "I have endeavored to write a poem," and it is from this its poetical side that it is most important.

William Sharp in his "Life of Robert Browning" says, "When we read certain portions of '*Paracelsus*' and the lovely lyrics interspersed in it, it is difficult not to think of the poet as sometimes, in later life, stooping like the mariner in Roscoe's beautiful sonnet, striving to reclaim 'some loved lost echo from the fleeting strand.' But it is the fleeting shore of exquisite art, not of the far-reaching shadowy capes and promontories of the '*Poetic Land*.'"

PARACELSUS, THE POEM

ROBERT BROWNING

BORN, MAY 7, 1812

DIED, DECEMBER 12, 1889

PARACELSUS

PERSONS

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS

FESTUS and MICHAL, his friends

APRILE, an Italian *Poet*

I. PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE. — *Würzburg — a garden in the environs.* 1512

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL

Par. Come close to me, dear friends; still closer;
thus!

Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats — perchance a long, long time —
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours —
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!
For if you would remember me aright —
As I was born to be — you must forget
All fitful, strange, and moody waywardness
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as these, dear friends!
— My heart no truer, but my words and ways

More true to it: as Michal, some months hence,
Will say, "this autumn was a pleasant time,"
For some few sunny days; and overlook
Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
Autumn would fain be sunny — I would look
Liker my nature's truth; and both are frail,
And both beloved for all their frailty!

Mich.

Aureole!

Par. Drop by drop! — she is weeping like a child!
Not so! I am content — more than content —
Nay, Autumn wins you best by this its mute
Appeal to sympathy for its decay!
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow
down,
Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,
That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among!
Then for the winds — what wind that ever raved
Shall vex that ash that overlooks you both,
So proud it wears its berries? Ah! at length,
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
Sequestered nest! This kingdom, limited
Alone by one old populous green wall,
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
Gray crickets, and shy lizards, and quick spiders,
Each family of the silver-threaded moss —
Which, look through, near, this way, and it appears
A stubble-field, or a cane-brake — a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh now!
Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
Looking out, wondering at the world — or best,
Yon painted snail, with his gay shell of dew,
Traveling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps!

Mich. In truth we have lived carelessly and well!

Par. And shall, my perfect pair — each, trust me,
born

For the other; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune? Stay! . . . Whene'er
That plant shall wave its tangles lightly and softly,
As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers, you
Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success! Ah, see! the sun sinks broad
Behind St. Saviour's: wholly gone, at last!

Fest. Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes
awhile!

You are ours to-night at least; and while you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, the thought came back
That none could leave what he so seemed to love:
But that last look destroys my dream — that look!
As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star!
How far was Würzburg, with its church and spire,
And garden-walls, and all things they contain,
From that look's far alighting?

Par. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy, to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit, — disposed
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks, and words, —
Need never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
Nor have recourse to Fancy's busy aid
To fashion even a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget
Itself in them, assured how well they are.

Beside, this Festus knows, he thinks me one
 Whom quiet and its charms attract in vain,
 One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
 Too fill'd with airy hopes to make account
 Of soft delights which free hearts garner up:
 Whereas, behold how much our sense of all
 That's beauteous proves alike! When Festus learns
 That every common pleasure of the world
 Affects me as himself; that I have just
 As varied appetites for joy derived
 From common things; a stake in life, in short,
 Like his; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
 That life affords not, would as soon destroy;—
 He may convince himself, that, this in view,
 I shall act well advised: and last, because,
 Though heaven and earth, and all things, were at
 stake,

Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve!

Fest. True: and the even is deepening, and we sit
 As little anxious to begin our talk
 As though to-morrow I could open it
 As we paced arm in arm the cheerful town
 At sun-dawn; and continue it by fits
 (Old Tritheim busied with his class the while)
 In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
 Half frightened by the awful tomes around;
 And here at home unbosom all the rest
 From even-blush to midnight; but, to-morrow! . . .
 Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind?
 We two were brothers, and henceforth the world
 Will rise between us:—all my freest mind?
 'Tis the last night, dear Aureole!

Par. Oh, say on!
 Devise some test of love—some arduous feat
 To be performed for you—say on! If night
 Be spent the while, the better! Recall how oft

My wondrous plans, and dreams, and hopes, and fears,
 Have — never wearied you . . . oh, no! . . . as I
 Recall, and never vividly as now,
 Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
 And its green hills were all the world to us,
 And still increasing to this night, which ends
 My further stay at Würzburg . . . Oh, one day
 You shall be very proud! Say on, dear friends!

Fest. In truth? 'Tis for my proper peace, indeed,
 Rather than yours; for vain all projects seem
 To stay your course: I said my latest hope
 Is fading even now. A story tells
 Of some far embassy despatched to buy
 The favor of an eastern king, and how
 The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
 Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime:
 Just so, the value of repose and love,
 I meant should tempt you, better far than I
 You seem to comprehend — and yet desist
 No whit from projects where repose nor love
 Have part.

Par. Once more? Alas! as I forbode!

Fest. A solitary briar the bank puts forth
 To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.

Par. Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you wish?
 That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
 Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
 Reject God's great commission — and so die!
 You bid me listen for your true love's sake:
 Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long
 And patent cherishing of the selfsame spirit
 It now would quell; as though a mother hoped
 To stay the lusty manhood of the child
 Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
 Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank
 From aught which marked me out apart from men:

It all amounts to this — the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though there were no God:
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Lusts of the world, Festus abhors the most —
But which these tenets sanctify at once;
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.

Mich. Is it so, Festus?

He speaks so calmly and kindly — is it so?

Par. Reject those glorious visions of God's love
And man's design; laugh loud that God should send
Vast longings to direct us; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold; I know
The world's cry well, and how to answer it!
But this ambiguous warfare . . .

Fest. . . . Wearies so
That you will grant no last leave to your friend
To urge it? — for his sake, not yours? I wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words,
Erringly apprehended — a new creed,
Ill understood — begot rash trust in you,
And shared in your undoing.

Par. Choose your side:
Hold or renounce: but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success.

Fest. Prove that to me—but that! Prove you abide
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labor laid on you; prove, all you covet
A mortal may expect; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead
To its attainment — and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth!

You smile; but I had gathered from slow thought —
 Much musing on the fortunes of my friend —
 Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain:
 But it all leaves me at my need: in shreds
 And fragments I must venture what remains.

Mich. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should
 scorn . . .

Fest. Stay, Michal: Aureole, I speak guardedly
 And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
 This is no ill-considered choice of yours —
 No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.
 Not from your own confiding words alone
 Am I aware your passionate heart long since
 Gave birth to, nourished, and at length matures
 This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
 Where I was born your elder by some years
 Only to watch you fully from the first:
 In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
 Even then — 'twas mine to have you in my view
 As you had your own soul and those intents
 Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,
 With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
 Our childhood's home to join the favored few
 Whom, here at Würzburg, Tritheim deigns to teach
 A portion of his lore: and not the best
 Of those so favored, whom you now despise,
 Came earnest as you came; resolved, like you,
 To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
 By patient toil a wide renown like his.
 And this new ardor which supplants the old,
 I watched, too; 'twas significant and strange,
 In one matched to his soul's content at length
 With rivals in the search for Wisdom's prize,
 To see the sudden pause, the total change;
 From contest, the transition to repose —
 From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,

To a blank idleness; yet most unlike
 The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
 Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
 That careless bearing, free from all pretense
 Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek —
 Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
 What it professed to praise — though not so well
 Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce as brief,
 Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed —
 That ostentatious show of past defeat,
 That ready acquiescence in contempt,
 I deemed no other than the letting go
 His shivered sword, of one about to spring
 Upon his foe's throat; but it was not thus:
 Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.
 For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
 That you prepared to task to the uttermost
 Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim,
 Which — while it bore the name your rivals gave
 Their own most puny efforts — was so vast
 In scope that it included their best flights,
 Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
 In place of many, — the secret of the world,
 Of man, and man's true purpose, path, and fate:
 — That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
 This purpose, with the sages of the *Past*,
 Have struck upon a way to this, if all
 You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
 You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW:
 And that this aim shall differ from a host
 Of aims alike in character and kind,
 Mostly in this, — to seek its own reward
 In itself only, not an alien end
 To blend therewith; no hope, nor fear, nor joy,
 Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
 Devotion to sustain you or betray:

Thus you aspire.

Par. You shall not state it thus:
I should not differ from the dreamy crew
You speak of. I profess no other share
In the selection of my lot, than this,
A ready answer to the will of God
Who summons me to be his organ: all
Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed
No better than your sages.

Fest. Such the aim, then,
God sets before you; and 'tis doubtless need
That he appoint no less the way of praise
Than the desire to praise; for, though I hold
With you, the setting forth such praise to be
The natural end and service of a man,
And think such praise is best attained when man
Attains the general welfare of his kind —
Yet, this, the end, is not the instrument.
Presume not to serve God apart from such
Appointed channel as He wills shall gather
Imperfect tributes — for that sole obedience
Valued, perchance. He seeks not that his altars
Blaze — careless how, so that they do but blaze.
Suppose this, then; that God selected you
To know (heed well your answers, for my faith
Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
I cannot think you dare annex to such
Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
An intense hope, nor let your gifts create
Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
Conducive to success — make destiny
Dispense with man's endeavor. Now dare you search
Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
Whether you have not rather wild desire
For this distinction, than security
Of its existence; whether you discern

The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
 Clear as that purpose — and again, that purpose
 Clear as your yearning to be singled out
 For its pursuer. Dare you answer this?

Par. (After a pause.) No, I have nought to fear!

Who will may know
 The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
 It be so? — if indeed the strong desire
 Eclipse the aim in me? — if splendor break
 Upon the outset of my path alone,
 And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal
 Shall I require to my authentic mission
 Than this fierce energy — this instinct striving
 Because its nature is to strive? — enticed
 By the security of no broad course,
 With no success forever in its eyes!
 How know I else such glorious fate my own,
 But in the restless irresistible force
 That works within me? Is it for human will
 To institute such impulses? — still less,
 To disregard their promptings? What should I
 Do, kept among you all; your loves, your cares,
 Your life — all to be mine? Be sure that God
 Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart!
 Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
 Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
 What full-grown power informs her from the first,
 Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
 The silent boundless regions of the sky!
 Be sure they sleep not whom God needs! Nor fear
 Their holding light his charge, when every hour
 That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.
 This for the faith in which I trust; and hence
 I can abjure so well the idle arts
 These pedants strive to learn and teach; Black Arts,
 Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth —

Let others prize: too intimate a tie
 Connects me with our God! A sullen fiend
 To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites
 To help me — what are these, at best, beside
 God helping, God directing everywhere,
 So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
 And every object shall be charged to strike,
 Teach, gratify, her master God appoints?
 And I am young, my Festus, happy and free!
 I can devote myself; I have a life
 To give; I, singled out for this, the One!
 Think, think; the wide east, where old Wisdom sprung;
 The bright south, where she dwelt; the hopeful north,
 All are passed o'er — it lights on me! 'Tis time
 New hopes should animate the world, new light
 Should dawn from new revealings to a race
 Weighed down so long, forgotten so long; so shall
 The heaven reserved for us, at last receive
 Creatures whom no unwonted splendors blind,
 But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
 Whose beams not seldom blest their pilgrimage,
 Not seldom glorified their life below.

Fest. My words have their old fate and make faint
 stand

Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth —
 Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,
 Some one of Learning's many palaces,
 After approved example; seeking there
 Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,
 Who laid up treasure with the like intent?
 — So lift yourself into their airy place,
 And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
 Unraveling the knots their baffled skill
 Pronounced inextricable, true! — but left
 Far less confused? A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
 Might do much at their vigor's waning-point;

Succeeding with new-breathed and earnest force,
 As at old games a runner snatched the torch
 From runner still: this way success might be.
 But you have coupled with your enterprise
 An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
 Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
 What books are in the desert? writes the sea
 The secret of her yearning in vast caves
 Where yours will fall the first of human feet?
 Has Wisdom sate there and recorded aught
 You press to read? Why turn aside from her
 To visit, where her vesture never glanced,
 Now — solitudes consigned to barrenness
 By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn?
 Now — ruins where she paused but would not stay,
 Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
 She called an endless curse on, so it came —
 Or, worst of all, now — men you visit, men,
 Ignoblest troops that never heard her voice,
 Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
 Or Athens, — these shall Aureole's teachers be!
 Rejecting past example, practice, precept,
 Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone:
 Thick like a glory round the Stagyrite
 Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!
 Whate'er you may protest, knowledge is not
 Paramount in your love; or for her sake
 You would collect all help from every source —
 Rival or helper, friend, foe, all would merge
 In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
 And those who showed them not.

Par. What shall I say?
 Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
 By a fire — by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
 As from without some master, so it seemed,
 Repressed or urged its current: this but ill

Expresses what I would convey — but rather
 I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
 Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,
 So became manifest. I knew not then
 What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
 At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
 Were laid away in some great trance — the ages
 Coming and going all the while — till dawned
 His true time's advent, and could then record
 The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed, —
 Then I might tell more of the breath so light
 Upon my eyelids, and the fingers warm
 Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never
 So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
 I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
 A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
 And having this within me and about me
 While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes, and woods
 Confined me — what oppressive joy was mine
 When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,
 The ever-moving concourse of mankind!
 Believe that ere I joined them — ere I knew
 The purpose of the pageant, or the place
 Consigned to me within its ranks — while yet
 Wonder was freshest and delight most pure —
 'Twas then that least supportable appeared
 A station with the brightest of the crowd,
 A portion with the proudest of them all!
 And from the tumult in my breast, this only
 Could I collect — that I must thenceforth die,
 Or elevate myself far, far above
 The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long
 At once to trample on — yet save mankind —
 To make some unexampled sacrifice
 In their behalf — to wring some wondrous good
 From heaven or earth for them — to perish, winning

Eternal weal in the act: as who should dare
 Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
 That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
 No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep:
 Yet never to be mixed with men so much
 As to have part even in my own work — share
 In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
 I would withdraw from their officious praise,
 Would gently put aside their profuse thanks:
 Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
 Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
 Of desert-people from their dragon-foe;
 When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
 His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
 Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for
 His realm; and he points, smiling, to his scarf,
 Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet,
 Gay set with twinkling stones — and to the east,
 Where these must be displayed!

Fest. Good: let us hear
 No more about your nature, “which first shrank
 From all that marked you out apart from men!”

Par. I touch on that: these words but analyze
 That first mad impulse — ’twas as brief as fond;
 For as I gazed again upon the show,
 I soon distinguished here and there a shape
 Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.
 Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
 Interpret my own thoughts: — “Behold the clue
 To all,” I rashly said, “and what I pine
 To do, these have accomplished: we are peers!
 They know, and therefore rule: I, too, will know!”
 You were beside me, Festus, as you say;
 You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom Fame
 Is lavish to attest the lords of mind;
 Not pausing to make sure the prize in view

Would satiate my cravings when obtained —
But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow
And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder Tritheim schools
But faced me, all-sufficient, all-content,
Or staggered only at his own strong wits;
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over
That struggle; suffice it, that I loathed myself
As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
Within me: and this lasted till one night
When, as I sate revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said — “See’st thou not,
Desponding child, whence came defeat and loss?
Even from thy strength. Consider: hast thou gazed
Presumptuously on Wisdom’s countenance,
No veil between; and can thy hands which falter
Unguided by thy brain the mighty sight
Continues to absorb, pursue their task
On earth like these around thee — what their sense
Which radiance ne’er distracted, clear describes?
If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their
 life,
Unfed by splendor. Let each task present
Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
In profitless waiting for the gods’ descent,
But have some idol of thine own to dress
With their array. Know, not for knowing’s sake,
But to become a star to men forever.
Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds.
Look one step onward, and secure that step.”
And I smiled as one never smiles but once;
Then first discovering my own aim’s extent,
Which sought to comprehend the works of God,

And God himself, and all God's intercourse
 With the human mind; I understood, no less,
 My fellow's studies, whose true worth I saw,
 But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.
 And softer came the voice — "There is a way —
 'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
 With frailty — hopeless, if indulgence first
 Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength:
 Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,
 Apart from all reward?" And last it breathed —
 "Be happy, my good soldier; I am by thee,
 Be sure, even to the end!" — I answered not,
 Knowing Him. As He spoke, I was endued
 With comprehension and a steadfast will;
 And when He ceased, my brow was sealed His own.
 If there took place no special change in me,
 How comes it all things wore a different hue
 Thenceforward? — pregnant with vast consequence —
 Teeming with grand results — loaded with fate;
 So that when quailing at the mighty range
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste
 To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
 Its bearings and effects alone — at once
 What was a speck expands into a star,
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
 Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul!
 I see my way as birds their trackless way —
 I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
 I ask not: but unless God send his hail
 Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
 In some time — his good time — I shall arrive:
 He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

Mich. Vex him no further, Festus; it is so!

Fest. Just thus you help me ever. This would hold
 Were it the trackless air, and not a path
 Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet

Of many a mighty spirit gone that way.
 You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
 But they were famous in their day — the proofs
 Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

Par. Their light! the sum of all is briefly this:
 They labored, and grew famous; and the fruits
 Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth,
 Given over to a blind and endless strife
 With evils, which of all your Gods abates?
 No; I reject and spurn them utterly,
 And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
 Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,
 While in the distance heaven is blue above
 Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns?

Fest. And yet
 As strong delusions have prevailed ere now:
 Men have set out as gallantly to seek
 Their ruin; I have heard of such — yourself
 Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

Mich. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint
 Through the drear way, do you expect to see
 Their city dawn afar amid the clouds?

Par. Aye, sounds it not like some old well-known
 tale?

For me, I estimate their works and them
 So rightly, that at times I almost dream
 I too have spent a life the sages' way,
 And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance
 I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
 An age ago; and in that act, a prayer
 For one more chance went up so earnest, so
 Instinct with better light let in by Death,
 That life was blotted out — not so completely
 But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
 Dim memories; as now, when seems once more
 The goal in sight again: all which, indeed,

Is foolish, and only means — the flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
Than my belief, explained to you or no.

Fest. And who am I to challenge and dispute
That clear belief? I put away all fear.

Mich. Then Aureole is God's commissary! he shall
Be great and grand — and all for us!

Par. No, sweet!
Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind
'Tis well — but there our intercourse must end:
I never will be served by those I serve.

Fest. Look well to this; here is a plague-spot, here,
Disguise it how you may! 'Tis true, you utter
This scorn while by our side and loving us;
'Tis but a spot as yet; but it will break
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.

How can that course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love?
It seems you have abjured the helps which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
Have humbly sought — I dare not thoroughly probe
This matter, lest I learn too much: let be,
That popular praise would little instigate
Your efforts, nor particular approval
Reward you; put reward aside; alone
You shall go forth upon your arduous task,
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
None share your triumph — still you must retain
Some one to cast your glory on, to share
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,
I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made my cause their own;
They should ward off Fate's envy — the great gift,
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,

Being so a gift to them as well as me.
If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach!

Mich. O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,
Without first calling, in my fancy, both
To listen by my side — even I! And you?
Do you not feel this? — say that you feel this!

Par. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length
Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need
A further strengthening in these goodly helps!
My course allures for its own sake — its sole
Intrinsic worth; and ne'er shall boat of mine
Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.
Your sages say, "if human, therefore weak:"
If weak, more need to give myself entire
To my pursuit; and by its side, all else . . .
No matter! I deny myself but little
In waiving all assistance save its own —
Would there were some real sacrifice to make!
Your friends the sages threw their joys away,
While I must be content with keeping mine.

Fest. But do not cut yourself from human weal!
You cannot thrive — a man that dares affect
To spend his life in service to his kind,
For no reward of theirs, nor bound to them
By any tie; nor do so, Aureole! No —
There are strange punishments for such. Give up
(Although no visible good flow thence) some part
Of the glory to another; hiding thus,
Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.
Say, say almost to God — "I have done all
For her — not for myself!"

Par. And who, but lately,
Was to rejoice in my success like you?
Whom should I love but both of you?

Fest. I know not:

But know this, you, that 'tis no wish of mine
 You should abjure the lofty claims you make;
 Although I can no longer seek, indeed,
 To overlook the truth, that there will be
 A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
 Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees:
 — A being knowing not what love is. Hear me!
 You are endowed with faculties which bear
 Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
 To summon meaner spirits to do their will,
 And gather round them at their need; inspiring
 Such with a love themselves can never feel —
 Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
 I know not if you joy in this or no,
 Or ever dream that common men can live
 On objects you prize lightly, but which make
 Their heart's sole treasure: the affections seem
 Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste
 Or die: and this strange quality accords,
 I know not how, with you; sits well upon
 That luminous brow, though in another it scowls
 An eating brand — a shame. I dare not judge you:
 The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
 There's no alternative — I own you one
 Of higher order, under other laws
 Than bind us; therefore, curb not one bold glance!
 'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all. . . .

Mich. Stay with us, Aureole! cast those hopes away,
 And stay with us! An angel warns me, too,
 Man should be humble; you are very proud:
 And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such!
 He warns me not to dread a quick repulse,
 Nor slow defeat, but a complete success!
 You will find all you seek, and perish so!

Par. (*After a pause.*) Are these the barren first fruits
 of my life?

Is love like this the natural lot of all?
How many years of pain might one such hour
O'erbalance? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,
What shall I say, if not that I desire
To merit this your love; and will, dear friends,
In swerving nothing from my first resolves.
See, the great moon! and ere the mottled owls
Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
You acquiesce at last in all save this —
If I am like to compass what I seek
By the untried career I choose; and then,
If that career, making but small account
Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
Sufficient to sustain my soul — for thus
I understand these fond fears just expressed.
And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,
The labors and the precepts of old time,
I have not slightly disesteemed. But, friends,
Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe:
There is an inmost center in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception — which is truth;
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Blinds it, and makes all error: and, "*to know*"
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendor may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And you trace back the effluence to its spring
And source within us, where broods radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour: chance — for hitherto, your sage
Even as he knows not how those beams are born,

As little knows he what unlocks their fount;
 And men have oft grown old among their books
 To die, case-hardened in their ignorance,
 Whose careless youth had promised what long years
 Of unremitted labor ne'er performed:
 While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
 That autumn loiterers just as fancy-free
 As the midges in the sun, have oft given vent
 To truth — produced mysteriously as cape
 Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
 Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
 The lowest as the highest? some slight film
 The interposing bar which binds it up,
 And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
 Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
 Truth issues proudly? See this soul of ours!
 How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
 In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
 By age and waste, set free at last by death:
 Why is it, flesh enthralls it or enthrones?
 What is this flesh we have to penetrate?
 Oh, not alone when life flows still do truth
 And power emerge, but also when strange chance
 Ruffles its current; in unused conjuncture,
 When sickness breaks the body — hunger, watching,
 Excess, or languor — oftenest death's approach —
 Peril, deep joy, or woe. One man shall crawl
 Through life, surrounded with all stirring things,
 Unmoved — and he goes mad; and from the wreck
 Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
 You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
 Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
 Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
 Bars in the spirit! We may not be doomed
 To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
 Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God!

But elevate the race at once! We ask
To put forth just our strength, our human strength,
All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted —
See if we cannot beat thy angels yet!
Such is my task. I go to gather this
The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed
About the world, long lost or never found.
And why should I be sad, or lorn of hope?
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's?
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust?
Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me?
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from His, like those who set themselves
To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams
Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to this narrow sphere,
But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast desires, —
Still, all a dream! Thus was life scorned; but life
Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth! I am priest!
And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence — parting with a youth
Like theirs who squander every energy
Convertible to good, on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust! And though I spurn
All adventitious aims, from empty praise
To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps
Important, and concerns himself for me,
May know even these will follow with the rest —
As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
My own affections, laid to rest awhile,
Will waken purified, subdued alone
By all I have achieved; till then — till then . . .

Ah! the time-wiling loitering of a page
 Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring
 The stately lady's presence whom he loves —
 The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat
 Enwraps the queenly pearl — these are faint types!
 See how they look on me — I triumph now!
 But one thing, Festus, Michal! — I have told
 All I shall e'er disclose to mortal: say —
 Do you believe I shall accomplish this?

Fest. I do believe!

Mich. I ever did believe!

Par. Those words shall never fade from out my
 brain!

This earnest of the end shall never fade!
 Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
 Two points in the adventure of the diver:
 One — when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge?
 One — when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?
 Festus, I plunge!

Fest. I wait you when you rise!

II. PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE. *Constantinople. — “The House of a Greek
 Conjuror.”* 1521

PARACELSUS

Over the waters in the vaporous west
 The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold,
 Behind the outstretched city, which between,
 With all that length of domes and minarets,
 Athwart the splendor, black and crooked runs
 Like a Turk verse along a scimeter.
 There lie, thou saddest writing, and awhile
 Relieve my aching sight. 'Tis done at last!

Strange — and the juggles of a sallow cheat
 Could win me to this act! 'Tis as yon cloud
 Should voyage unwreck'd o'er many a mountain-top
 And break upon a molehill. I have dared
 Come to a pause with knowledge; scan for once
 The heights already reach'd, without regard
 To the extent above; fairly compute
 What I have clearly gained; for once excluding
 My future which should finish and fulfil
 All half-gains, and conjectures, and mere hopes —
 And this, because a fortune-teller bids
 His credulous enquirers write thus much,
 Their previous life's attainment, in his book,
 Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
 Make that life perfect: here, accordingly,
 'Mid the uncouth recordings of such dupes,
 — Scrawled in like fashion, lie my life's results!
 These few blurred characters suffice to note
 A stranger wandered long through many lands,
 And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
 Discoveries, as appended here and there,
 The fragmentary produce of much toil,
 In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
 Confusedly massed, as when acquired; himself
 Too bent on gaining more to calmly stay
 And scrutinize the little which he gained:
 Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber
 And a mad lover's ditty — lies the whole!

And yet those blottings chronicle a life —
 A whole life, — mine! No thought to turn to act,
 No problem for the fancy, but a life
 Spent and decided, wasted past recall,
 Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, turn the page
 And take its chance, — thus: what, concerning “life,”
 Does this remembrancer set down? — “We say

‘Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.’
 ’Tis the mere echo of time; and he whose heart
 Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech
 Was copied from a human tongue, can never
 Recall when he was living yet knew not this.
 Nevertheless long seasons come and go,
 Till some one hour’s experience shows what nought,
 He deemed, could clearer show; and ever after
 An altered brow, and eye, and gait, and speech
 Attest that now he knows the adage true
 ‘Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.’”

Aye, my brave chronicler, and this same time
 As well as any: let my hour speak now!

Now! I can go no farther; well or ill —
 ’Tis done. I must desist and take my chance;
 I cannot keep on the stretch; ’tis no back-shrinking —
 For let the least assurance dawn, some end
 To my toil seem possible, and I proceed
 At any price, by any sacrifice:
 Else, here I pause: the old Greek’s prophecy
 Is like to turn out true — “I shall not quit
 His chamber till I know what I desire!”
 Was it the light wind sung it, o’er the sea?

An end, a rest! strange how the notion, once
 Admitted, gains strength every moment! Rest!
 Where kept that thought so long? this throbbing brow
 To cease — this beating heart to cease — its crowd
 Of gnawing thoughts to cease! — To dare let down
 My strung, so high-strung brain — to dare unnerve
 My harassed o’ertasked frame — to know my place,
 — My portion, my reward, my failure even,
 Assigned, made sure for ever! — To lose myself
 Among the common creatures of the world —

To draw some gain from having been a man —
Neither to hope nor fear — to live at length!
Oh, were it but in failure, to have rest!
What, sunk insensibly so deep? Has all
Been undergone for this? Was this the prayer
My labor qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal? Had I gone
Carelessly through my task, and so judged fit
To moderate my hopes; nay, were it now
My sole concern to exculpate myself,
And lessen punishment, — I could not choose
An humbler mood to wait for the decree!
No, no, there needs not this; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the task:
The rest is God's concern — mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held
By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot
Has trod, unscathed, the temple-courts so far
That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whose wrath he met unquailing, follow sly
And fasten on him, fairly past their power,
If where he stands he dares but stay; no, no —
He must not stagger, faint and fall at last,
— Knowing a charm to baffle them; behold,
He bares his front — a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams, and glooms!
If he be priest henceforth, or if he wake
The god of the place to ban and blast him there, —
Both well! What's failure or success to me?
I have subdued my life to the one end
Ordained life; there alone I cannot doubt,
That only way I may be satisfied.
Yes, well have I subdued my life! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vows,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,

Which gave, in truth, my nature freely up,
 In what it should be, more than what it was —
 Consenting that whatever passions slept,
 Whatever impulses lay unmatured,
 Should wither in the germ, — but scarce foreseeing
 That the soil, doomed thus to perpetual waste,
 Would seem one day, remembered in its youth
 Beside the parched sand-tract which now it is,
 Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
 I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
 I felt them not; yet now, 'tis very plain
 Some soft spots had their birth in me at first —
 If not love, say, like love: there was a time
 When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
 Set not remorselessly love's claims aside;
 This heart was human once, or why recall
 Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg, which the Mayne
 Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm?

And Festus — my poor Festus, with his praise,
 And counsel, and grave fears — where is he now?
 Or the sweet maiden, long ago his bride?
 I surely loved them — that last night, at least,
 When we . . . gone! gone! the better: I am saved
 The sad review of an ambitious youth,
 Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,
 But let grow up and wind around a will
 Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone
Purging my path successively of aught
 Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.
 I have made life consist of one idea:
 Ere that was master — up till that was born —
 I bear a memory of a pleasant life
 Whose small events I treasure; till one morn
 I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
 Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell

Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for futurity,
Since I had just determined to become
The greatest and most glorious man on earth.
And since that morn all life has been forgot;
All is one day — one only step between
The outset and the end: one tyrant aim,
Absorbing all, fills up the interval —
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
Through a career or friendly or opposed
To its existence: life, death, light and shade,
The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not instruments of sorrow or delight:
For some one truth would dimly beacon me
From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble
Into assured light in some branching mine,
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold —
And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
On either side the truth, as its mere robe;
Men saw the robe — I saw the august form.
So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
So much is good, then, in this working sea
Which parts me from that happy strip of land —
But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too!
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,
And still more faint as the sea widens; last
I sicken on a dead gulph, streaked with light
From its own putrifying depths alone!
Then — God was pledged to take me by the hand;
Now — any miserable juggler bends
My pride to him. All seems alike at length:
Who knows which are the wise and which the fools?
God may take pleasure in confounding pride
By hiding secrets with the scorned and base —

He who stoops lowest may find most — in short,
 I am here; and all seems natural; I start not
 And never having glanced behind to know
 If I had kept my primal light from wane,
 Am thus insensibly grown — what I am!

Oh, bitter; very bitter!

And more bitter,

To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin —
 Plague beneath plague — the last turning the first
 To light beside its darkness. Better weep
 My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone
 In tears which burn! Would I were sure to win
 Some startling secret in their stead! — a tincture
 Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
 Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
 To opal shafts! — only that, hurling it
 Indignant back, I might convince myself
 My aims remained as ever supreme and pure!
 Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
 That if I fail, some fault may be the cause, —
 That, though I sink, another may succeed?
 O God, the despicable heart of us!
 Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart!

'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject
 Single rewards, and ask them in the lump;
 At all events, once launched, to hold straight on:
 For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit
 Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
 Full consummation! As a man, you had
 A certain share of strength, and that is gone
 Already in the getting these you boast.
 Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say —
 “Great master, we are here indeed; dragged forth

To light: this hast thou done; be glad! now, seek
The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting!”

And yet 'tis surely much, 'tis very much,
Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
Arrive with inexhaustible light; and lo,
I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not!
While I am left with gray hair, faded hands,
And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast?
Knowledge it seemed, and *Power*, and *Recompense*!
Was she who glided through my room of nights, —
Who laid my head on her soft knees, and smoothed
The damp locks, — whose sly soothings just began
When my sick spirit craved repose awhile —
God! was I fighting Sleep off for Death's sake?
God! Thou art Mind! Unto the Master-Mind
Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!
All else I will endure: if, as I stand
Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,
I bow me; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will;
I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die:
And if no trace of my career remain,
Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
In these bright chambers, level with the air,
See thou to it! But if my spirit fail,
My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
Hast thou done well by me? So do not thou!
Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed!
Hold me before the frequency of thy seraphs,
And say — “I crushed him, lest he should disturb
My law. Men must not know their strength: behold,
Weak and alone, how near he raised himself!”

But if delusions trouble me — and Thou,

Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
 Throughout my toil and wanderings, dost intend
 To work man's welfare through my weak endeavor —
 To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
 From thine own blinding crown — to smile, and
 guide

This puny hand, and let the work so framed
 Be styled my work, — hear me! I covet not
 An influx of new power, an angel's soul:
 It were no marvel then — but I have reached
 Thus far, a man; let me conclude, a man!
 Give but one hour of my first energy,
 Of that invincible faith — one only hour!
 That I may cover with an eagle-glance
 The truths I have, and spy some certain way
 To mold them, and completing them, possess!

Yet God is good: I started sure of that,
 And why dispute it now? I'll not believe
 But some undoubted warning long ere this
 Had reached me: stars would write his will in heaven,
 As once when a labarum was not deemed
 Too much for the old founder of these walls.
 Then, if my life has not been natural,
 It has been monstrous: yet, till late, my course
 So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
 A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,
 Though such were meant to follow as its fruit,
 Could find no place in it. True, I am worn;
 But who clothes summer, who is Life itself?
 God, that created all things, can renew!
 And then, though after life to please me now
 Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
 Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
 As bursts the flower from earth, and root, and stalk?
 What use were punishment, unless some sin

Be first detected? let me know that first!
(*Aprile, from within*)

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
Long ago, but all too low,
So that scarce a thought was stirred
If really spoke the voice or no:
I heard it in my youth, when first
The waters of my life outburst:
But now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
The voice, still low, but fatal-clear —
As if all *Poets*, that God meant
Should save the world, and therefore lent
Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
To do his work, or lightly used
Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavor,
And mourn, cast off by him forever, —
As if these leaned in airy ring
To call me; this the song they sing.

“Lost, lost! yet come,
With our wan troupe make thy home:
Come, come! for we
Will not breathe, so much as breathe
Reproach to thee!
Knowing what thou sink’st beneath:
So we sank in those old years,
We who bid thee, come! thou last
Who, a living man, hast life o’erpast,
And all together we, thy peers,
Will pardon ask for thee, the last
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
With those who watch, but work no more —
Who gaze on life, but live no more:
And yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
God’s message which our lips, too weak,

Refused to utter, — shouldst redeem
 Our fault: such trust, and all, a dream!
 So we chose thee a bright birth-place
 Where the richness ran to flowers —
 Couldst not sing one song for grace?
 Nor make one blossom man's and ours?
 Must one more recreant to his race
 Die with unexerted powers
 And join us, leaving as he found
 The world, he was to loosen, bound?
 Anguish! ever and forever;
 Still beginning, ending never!
 Yet, lost and last one, come!
 How couldst understand, alas,
 What our pale ghosts strove to say,
 As their shades did glance and pass
 Before thee, night and day?
 Thou wert blind, as we were dumb;
 Once more, therefore, come, O come!
 How shall we better arm the spirit
 Who next shall thy post of life inherit —
 How guard him from thy ruin?
 Tell us of thy sad undoing
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
 Our weary task, ever renewing
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
 Our powers, and man they could not save!"

APRILE *enters*.

A spirit better armed, succeeding me?
 Ha, ha! our king that wouldst be, here at last?
 Art thou the *Poet* who shall save the world?
 Thy hand to mine. Stay, fix thine eyes on mine.
 Thou wouldst be king? Still fix thine eyes on mine!
Par. Ha, ha! why crouchest not? Am I not king?

So torture is not wholly unavailing!
 Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair?
 Art thou the Sage I only seemed to be,
 Myself of after-time, my very self
 With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,
 Who robs me of my prize and takes my place
 For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect?
 I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
 That such might come, and thou didst hear the while!

Apr. Thine eyes are lusterless to mine; my hair
 Is soft, nay silken soft: to talk with thee
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale,
 True, thou hast labored, hast withstood her lips,
 The siren's! Yes, 'tis like thou hast attained!
 Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest?
 I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed
 In after-time; that I should hear the earth
 Exult in thee, and echo with thy praise,
 While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Par. Not so! I know thee, I am not thy dupe!
 Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
 Even as thou sayest, succeeding to my place,
 Reaping my sowing — as I scorned to reap
 The harvest sown by sages passed away.
 Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,
 As if, except through me, thou had searched or striven!
 Aye! tell the world! Degrade me, after all,
 To an aspirant after fame, not truth —
 To all but envy of thy fate, be sure!

Apr. Nay, sing them to me; I shall envy not:
 Thou shalt be king! Sing thou, and I will stand
 Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
 And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
 To fill thy throne — but none shall ever know!
 Sing to me: for already thy wild eyes
 Unlock my heart-springs, as some crystal-shaft

Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount
 After long time — so thou reveal'st my soul!
 All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear!

Par. (His secret! my successor's secret — fool!)
 I am he that aspired to KNOW — and thou?

Apr. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved!

Par. Poor slave! I am thy king indeed.

Apr. Thou deem'st
 That — born a spirit, dowered even as thou,
 Born for thy fate — because I could not curb
 My yearnings to possess at once the full
 Enjoyment; yet neglected all the means
 Of realizing even the frailest joy;
 Gathering no fragments to appease my want,
 Yet nursing up that want till thus I die —
 Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe, sure march,
 O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,
 Neglecting nought below for aught above,
 Despising nothing and ensuring all —
 Nor that I could (my time to come again)
 Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own:
 Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.
 I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost! lost!

O ye who armed me at such cost,

Your faces shall I bear to see

With your gifts even yet on me? —

Par. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck creature after all!
 Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den:
 They spread contagion, doubtless: yet he seemed
 To echo one foreboding of my heart
 So truly, that . . . no matter! How he stands
 With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair
 Which turns to it, as if they were akin:
 And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue
 Nearly set free, so far they rise above
 The painful fruitless striving of that brow

And enforced knowledge of those lips, firm set
 In slow despondency's eternal sigh!
 Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause?)
 Be calm, I charge thee, by thy fealty!
 Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

Apr. I would love infinitely, and be loved.
 First: I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
 The forms of earth. No ancient hunter, raised
 Up to the gods by his renown; no nymph
 Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree,
 Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,
 Should be too hard for me; no shepherd-king,
 Regal with his white locks; no youth who stands
 Silent and very calm amid the throng,
 His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
 Until the tyrant pass; no law-giver;
 No swan-soft woman, rubbed with lucid oils,
 Given by a god for love of her — too hard!
 Each passion sprung from man, conceived by man,
 Would I express and clothe it in its right form,
 Or blend with others struggling in one form,
 Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
 For, if you marveled at some mighty spirit
 With a fit frame to execute his will —
 Aye, even unconsciously to work his will —
 You should be moved no less beside some strong,
 Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
 Endeavoring to subdue it, and inform it
 With its own splendor! All this I would do,
 And I would say, this done, "God's sprites being made,
 He grants to each a sphere to be its world,
 Appointed with the various objects needed
 To satisfy its spiritual desires;
 So, I create a world for these my shapes
 Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength!"
 And, at their word, I would contrive and paint

Woods, valleys, rocks, and plains, dells, sands, and wastes,
 Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed,
 Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun;
 And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
 A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice
 Around them, and fare onward — all to hold
 The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone —
 Bronze labyrinths, palace, pyramid, and crypt,
 Baths, galleries, courts, temples, and terraces,
 Marts, theaters, and wharfs — all filled with men!
 Men everywhere! And this performed in turn,
 When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes,
 And fears, and hates, and loves which moved the crowd, —
 I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
 And I would speak: no thought which ever stirred
 A human breast should be untold; no passions,
 No soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
 Within a heart fed with desires like mine —
 To the last comfort, shutting the tired lids
 Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
 Beneath the tent-tree by the way-side well:
 And this in language as the need should be,
 Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
 Now piled up in a grand array of words.
 This done, to perfect and consummate all,
 Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
 I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
 Mysterious notions of the soul, no way
 To be defined save in strange melodies.
 Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
 And having received all love bestowed on it,
 I would die: so preserving through my course
 God full on me, as I was full on men:

And He would grant my prayer — “I have gone through

All loveliness of life; make more for me,
If not for men — or take me to thyself,
Eternal, infinite Love!”

If thou hast ne'er
Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art
No king of mine.

Par. Ah me!

Apr. But thou art here!

Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss
Were blind with glory; nor grow mad to grasp
At once the prize long patient toil should claim;
Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I
Would do as thou, a second time: nay, listen —
Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,
Our time so brief, — 'tis clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,
And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
Rather, grow wise in time: what though our work
Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way? 'Twere little praise
Did full resources wait on our good will
At every turn. Let all be as it is.
Some say the earth is even so contrived
That tree, and flower, a vesture gay, conceal
A bare and skeleton framework: had we means
That answered to our mind! But now I seem
Wrecked on a savage isle: how rear thereon
My palace? Branching palms the props shall be,
Fruit glossy mingling; gems are for the east;
Who heeds them? I can waive them. Serpent's
scales,

Birds' feathers, downy furs, and fishes' skins
 Must help me; and a little here and there
 Is all I can aspire to: still my art
 Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.
 "Had I green jars of malachite, this way
 I'd range them: where those sea-shells glisten above,
 Cressets should hang, by right: this way we set
 The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
 Woven of mere fern and rush and blossoming flag."
 Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
 Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample
 Of my own land's completer workmanship,
 Some trifle little heeded there, but here
 The place's one perfection — with what joy
 Would I enshrine the relic — cheerfully
 Foregoing all the marvels out of reach!
 Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
 Of the angels — one word of the fiat of God —
 To let my followers know what such things are!
 I would adventure nobly for their sakes:
 When nights were still, and still, the moaning sea,
 And far away I could descry the land
 Whence I departed, whither I return,
 I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
 At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
 And fling my gains before them, rich or poor —
 "Friends," I would say, "I went far, far for them,
 Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds
 Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,
 Past, tracks of milk-white minute blinding sand,
 Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly
 Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,
 In haste — not pausing to reject the weeds,
 But happy plucking them at any price.
 To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,
 They are scarce lovely: plait and wear them, you!

And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed —
 The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,
 The snakes that traveled far to sip their dew!"
 Thus for my higher loves; and thus even weakness
 Would win me honor. But not these alone
 Should claim my care; for common life, its wants
 And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues:
 The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
 A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
 Than he his own heart's language. I would live
 Forever in the thoughts I thus explored,
 As a discoverer's memory is attached
 To all he finds: they should be mine henceforth,
 Imbued with me, though free to all before;
 For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,
 Should come up crusted o'er with gems: nor this
 Would need a meaner spirit, than the first:
 Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed
 In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit —
 As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow,
 And comforts violets in their hermitage.
 But master, poet, who hast done all this,
 How didst thou 'scape the ruin I have met?
 Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,
 Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,
 Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,
 Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey —
 That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
 Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
 Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
 By thee forever, bright to thy despair?
 Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
 Resolve to single out *one*, though the rest
 Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
 In beauty, to the world; forgetting, so,
 Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power?

And, this determined, wert thou ne'er seduced
 By memories, and regrets, and passionate love,
 To glance once more farewell? and did their eyes
 Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
 Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
 And laugh that man's applause or welfare once
 Could tempt thee to forsake them? Or when years
 Had passed, and still their love possessed thee wholly;
 When from without some murmur startled thee
 Of darkling mortals, famished for one ray
 Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
 Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells,
 And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
 Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
 And, to that end, select some shape once more?
 And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
 Faint memories of the rest, that charmed so long
 Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,
 As whirling snowdrifts blind a man who treads
 A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm?
 Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall;
 Say, I was tempted sorely: say but this,
 Dear lord, Aprile's lord!

Par. Clasp me not thus,
 Aprile! . . . That the truth should reach me thus!
 We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not, or I faint!

Apr. My king! and envious thoughts could outrage
 thee!

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
 In thy success, as thou! Let our God's praise
 Go bravely through the world at last! What care
 Through me or thee? I feel thy breath . . . why, tears?
 Tears in the darkness — and from thee to me?

Par. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
 To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!
 We wake at length from weary dreams; but both

Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and drear
 Appears the world before us, we no less
 Wake with our wrists and ankles jeweled still.
 I, too, have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE —
 Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
 Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake:
 What penance canst devise for both of us?

Apr. I hear thee faintly . . . the thick darkness!

Even

Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew: I speak,
 And now I die. But I have seen thy face!
 O, poet, think of me, and sing of me!
 But to have seen thee, and to die so soon!

Par. Die not, Aprile: we must never part.
 Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
 Whom this strange chance unites once more? *Part?*
 never!

Till thou, the lover, know; and I, the knower,
 Love — until both are saved. Aprile, hear!
 We will accept our gains, and use them — now!
 God, he will die upon my breast! Aprile!

Apr. To speak but once, and die! yet by his side.
 Hush! hush!

Ha! go you ever girt about
 With phantoms, powers? I have created such,
 But these seem real as I!

Par. Whom can you see
 Through the accursed darkness?

Apr. Stay; I know,
 I know them: who should know them well as I? —
 White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!

Par. Let him but live, and I have my reward!

Apr. Yes; I see now — God is the PERFECT POET,
 Who in creation acts his own conceptions.
 Shall man refuse to be aught less than God?
 Man's weakness is his glory — for the strength

Which raises him to heaven and near God's self,
 Came spite of it: God's strength his glory is,
 For thence came with our weakness sympathy
 Which brought God down to earth, a man like us.
 Had you but told me this at first! . . . Hush! hush!

Par. Live! for my sake, because of my great sin,
 To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words
 And their deep import. Live! 'tis not too late:
 I have a quiet home for us, and friends.
 Michal shall smile on you . . . Hear you? Lean thus,
 And breathe my breath: I shall not lose one word
 Of all your speech — no little word, Aprile!

Apr. No, no. . . . Crown me? I am not one of you!
 'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one . . .

Par. Give me thy spirit, at least! Let me love, too!

I have attained, and now I may depart.

III. PARACELSUS

SCENE. *A chamber in the house of Paracelsus at Basel*
 1526

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

Par. Heap logs, and let the blaze laugh out!

Fest. True, true!

'Tis very fit that all, time, chance, and change
 Have wrought since last we sate thus, face to face,
 And soul to soul — all cares, far-looking fears,
 Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
 By your long absence, should be cast away,
 Forgotten in this glad unhop'd renewal
 Of our affections.

Par. Oh, omit not aught

Which witnesses your own and Michal's love!
 I bade you not spare that! Forget alone
 The honors and the glories, and the rest,
 You seemed disposed to tell profusely out.

Fest. Nay, even your honors, in a sense, I waive:
 The wondrous *Paracelsus* — Life's dispenser,
 Fate's commissary, idol of the schools,
 And Courts, shall be no more than Aureole still —
 Still Aureole and my friend, as when we parted
 Some twenty years ago, and I restrained
 As I best could the promptings of my spirit,
 Which secretly advanced you, from the first,
 To the preeminent rank which, since your own
 Adventurous ardor, nobly triumphing,
 Has won for you.

Par. Yes, yes; and Michal's face
 Still wears that quiet and peculiar light,
 Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?

Fest. Just so.

Par. And yet her calm sweet countenance,
 Though saintly, was not sad; for she would sing
 Alone . . . Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
 Not dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt
 In flakes through that old leafy bower built under
 The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice
 Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
 Sate conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves,
 Much wondering notes so simple could divert
 My mind from study. Those were happy days!
 Respect all such as sing when all alone.

Fest. Scarcely alone — her children, you may guess,
 Are wild beside her . . .

Par. Ah, those children quite
 Unsettle the pure picture in my mind:
 A girl — she was so perfect, so distinct . . .
 No change, no change! Not but this added grace

THE POEM, PARACELSUS

May blend and harmonize with its compeers,
And Michal may become her motherhood;
But 'tis a change — and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long since!
So, Michal . . . you have said she thinks of me?

Fest. O very proud will Michal be of you!
Imagine how we sate, long winter-nights,
Scheming and wondering — shaping your presumed
Adventures, or devising their reward;
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
Though it was strange how, even when most secure
In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all; it seemed
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
A sense of something wanting, incomplete —
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
By mute consent — but, said or unsaid, felt
To point to one so loved and so long lost.
And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears —
How you would laugh should I recount them now!
I still predicted your return at last,
With gifts beyond the greatest vaunt of all,
All Tritheim's wondrous troop; did one of which
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled —
As well aware of who would prove his peer.
Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,
As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .

Par. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
Of a raw, restless boy!

Fest. Say, one whose sunrise
Well warranted our faith in this full noon!
Can I forget the anxious voice which said,
“Festus, have thoughts like these e’er shaped them-
selves
In other brains than mine — have their possessors

Existed in like circumstance — were they weak
As I — or ever constant from the first,
Despising youth's allurements, and rejecting
As spider-films the shackles I endure?
Is there hope for me?" — and I answered grave
As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
For all your glorious . . .

Par. Glorious? aye, this hair,
These hands — nay, touch them, they are mine! Recall
With all the said recallings, times when thus
To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale,
As now. Most glorious, are they not?

Fest. Why . . . why . . .
 Something must be subtracted from success
 So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
 Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole,
 You are changed — very changed! 'Twere losing
 nothing

**To look well to it: you must not be stolen
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.**

Par. My friend! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt:
By talking, not of me, but of yourself,
You will best gain your point.

Fest. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children? Sure
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;
And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
Have I that he will honor, the wild imp,
His namesake! Sigh not! 'tis too much to ask
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.
But you are very kind to humor me
By showing interest in my quiet life;
You, who of old could never tame yourself

To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

Par. Festus, strange secrets are let out by Death,
 Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:
 And I am Death's familiar, as you know.
 I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,
 Warped even from his go-cart to one end —
 The living on princes' smiles, reflected from
 A mighty herd of favorites. No mean trick
 He left untried; and truly well nigh wormed
 All traces of God's finger out of him.
 Then died, grown old; and just an hour before —
 Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes —
 He sate up suddenly, and with natural voice
 Said, that in spite of thick air and closed doors
 God told him it was June; and he knew well,
 Without such telling, hare-bells grew in June;
 And all that kings could ever give or take
 Would not be precious as those blooms to him.
 Just so, allowing I am passing wise,
 It seems to me much worthier argument
 Why pansies, eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize
 From violets, eyes that dream — (your Michal's
 choice) —

Than all fools find to wonder at in me,
 Or in my fortunes: and be very sure
 I say this from no prurient restlessness —
 No self-complacency — itching to turn,
 Vary, and view its pleasure from all points,
 And, in this matter, willing other men
 Should argue and demonstrate to itself
 The realness of the very joy it tastes.
 What joy is better than the news of friends
 Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
 As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight?
 Yes, oft than you wasted thought on me
 If you were sage, and rightly valued bliss!

But there's no taming nor repressing hearts:
God knows I need such! — So you heard me speak?

Fest. Speak? when?

Par. When but this morning at my class?
There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.
Surely you know I am engaged to fill
The chair here? — that 'tis part of my proud fate
To lecture to as many thick-sculled youths
As please, each day, to throng the theater,
To my great reputation, and no small
Danger of Basel's benches, long unused
To crack beneath such honor?

Fest. I was there;
I mingled with the throng: shall I avow
I had small care to listen? — too intent
On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd
A full corroboration of my hopes!
What can I learn about your powers? but they
Know, care for nought beyond your actual state —
Your actual value; and yet worship you!
Those various natures whom you sway as one!
But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

Par. Stop, o' God's name: the thing's by no means
 yet
Past remedy! Shall I read this morning's work
— At least in substance? Nought so worth the gaining
As an apt scholar! Thus then, with all due
Precision and emphasis — (you, besides, are clearly
Guiltless of understanding a whit more
The subject than your stool — allowed to be
A notable advantage) . . .

Fest. Surely, Aureole,
You laugh at me!

Par. I laugh? Ha, ha! thank heaven,
I charge you, if't be so! for I forget
Much — and what laughter should be like! No less,

However, I forego that luxury,
 Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.
 True, laughter like my own must echo strange
 To thinking men; a smile were better far —
 So make me smile! If the exulting look
 You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long
 Since I have smiled! Alas, such smiles are born
 Alone of hearts like yours, or shepherds old
 Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
 Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
 In earth a stage for altars, nothing more.
 Never change, Festus: I say, never change!

Fest. My God, if he be wretched after all!

Par. When last we parted, Festus, you declared,
 — Or did your Michal's soft lips whisper words
 I have preserved? She told me she believed
 I should succeed (meaning, that in the search
 I then engaged in, I should meet success),
 And yet be wretched: now, she augured false.

Fest. Thank heaven! but you spoke strangely!
 could I venture

To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
 Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find
 Henceforth less sweetness in his own, awakes
 Such earnest mood in you? Fear not, dear friend,
 That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
 Your lot was not my own!

Par. And this, for ever!

For ever! gull who may, they will be blind!
 They will not look nor think — 'tis nothing new
 In them; but surely he is not of them!
 My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you —
 Though all beside were sand-blind — you, my friend,
 Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye,
 Untroubled by the false glare that confounds
 A weaker vision; would remain serene,

Though singular, amid a gaping throng.
I feared you, or had come, sure, long ere this,
To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
And Rhasis is a sage, and Basel boasts
A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
Past all dispute! 'Tis vain to fret at it.
I have vowed long since that my worshipers
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
All further information, good or bad:
And little risk my reputation runs,
Unless perchance the glance now searching me
Be fixed much longer — for it seems to spell,
Dimly, the characters a simpler man
Might read distinct enough. Old eastern books
Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space
Remained unchanged in feature — nay, his brow
Seemed hued with triumph: every spirit then
Praising; his heart on flame the while: — a tale!
Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray?

Fest. Some foul deed sullies then a life which else
Were raised supreme?

Par. Good: I do well — most well!
Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves
With what 'tis past their power to comprehend?
I would not strive now: only, having nursed
The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,
One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
Of shallow plausibilities alone;
One who, in youth found wise enough to choose
The happiness his riper years approve,
Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
That, ere his friend could rush upon a course
Mad, ruinous, the converse of his own,
His gentler spirit essayed, prejudged for him
The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,

And warned the weak one in such tender words,
 Such accents — his whole heart in every tone —
 That oft their memory comforted that friend
 When rather it should have increased despair:
 — Having believed, I say, that this one man
 Could never lose the wisdom from the first
 His portion — how should I refuse to grieve
 At even my gain if it attest his loss,
 At triumph which so signally disturbs
 Our old relation, proving me more wise?
 Therefore, once more reminding him how well
 He prophesied, I note the single flaw
 That spoils his prophet's title: in plain words
 You were deceived, and thus were you deceived —
 I have not been successful, and yet am
 Most wretched: there — 'tis said at last; but give
 No credit, lest you force me to concede
 That common sense yet lives upon the earth.

Fest. You surely do not mean to banter me?

Par. You know, or (if you have been wise enough
 To cleanse your memory of such matters) knew,
 As far as words of mine could make it clear,
 That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief
 Solely in the fulfilment of my plan,
 Or plot, or whatsoe'er it was; rejoicing
 Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
 Sorrowing alone when any chance retarded
 Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days!
 Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
 I have pursued this plan with all my strength;
 And having failed therein most signally,
 Cannot object to ruin, utter and drear
 As all-excelling would have been the prize
 Had fortune favored me. I scarce do right
 To vex your frank good spirit, late rejoiced
 By my supposed prosperity, I know,

And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
 Would well agree to let your error live,
 Nay, strengthen it with fables of success:
 But mine is no condition to refuse
 The transient solace of so rare a chance,
 My solitary luxury, my Festus —
 Accordingly I venture to put off
 The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,
 Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
 Prone at his mercy — but he is my friend!
 Not that he needs retain his aspect grave;
 That answers not my purpose; for 'tis like,
 Some sunny morning — Basel being drained
 Of its wise population, every corner
 Of the amphitheater crammed with learned clerks,
 Here Æcolampadius, looking worlds of wit,
 Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
 Munsterus here, Frobenius there, — all squeezed,
 And staring, and expectant, — then, I say,
 'Tis like that the poor zany of the show,
 Your friend, will choose to put his trappings off
 Before them, bid adieu to cap and bells
 And motley with a grace but seldom judged
 Expedient in such cases: — the grim smile
 That will go round! It is not therefore best
 To venture a rehearsal like the present
 In a small way? Where are the signs I seek,
 The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
 Due to all quacks? Why, this will never do!

Fest. These are foul vapors, Aureole; nought beside!
 The effect of watching, study, weariness.
 Were there a spark of truth in the confusion
 Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus
 Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard
 These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.
 You would not trust a trouble thus to me,

To Michal's friend.

Par. I have said it, dearest Festus!
The manner is ungracious, probably;
More may be told in broken sobs, one day,
And scalding tears, ere long: but I thought best
To keep that off as long as possible.
Do you wonder still?

Fest. No; it must oft fall out
That one whose labor perfects any work,
Shall rise from it with eyes so worn, that he
Of all men least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished. He alone,
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
Can clearly scan the little he effects:
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.

Par. This worthy Festus
Is one of them, at last! 'Tis so with all!
First, they set down all progress as a dream,
And next, when he, whose quick discomfiture
Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career, — behold,
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread, so sure they judge success!

Fest. Few doubtful steps? when death retires before
Your presence — when the noblest of mankind,
Broken in body, or subdued in mind,
May through your skill renew their vigor, raise
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness?
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams
Of what delights them most — swooning at once
Into a sea of bliss, or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light?
When we may look to you as one ordained
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul?

When. . . .

Par. Rather, when and where, friend, did you get
This notable news?

Fest. Even from the common voice;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute
The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.

Par. Folly? Why not
To magic, pray? You find a comfort doubtless
In holding, God ne'er troubles him about
Us or our doings: once we were judged worth
The devil's tempting . . . I offend: forgive me,
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole
Was fair enough as prophesyings go;
At fault a little in detail, but quite
Precise enough in the main; accordingly
I pay due homage: you guessed long ago
(The prophet!) I should fail — and I have failed.

Fest. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed
Your youth have not been realized as yet?
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto?
Or that their innate . . .

Par. As I said but now,
You have a very decent prophet's fame,
So you but shun details here. Little matters
Whether those hopes were mad, — the aims they
 sought,
Safe and secure from all ambitious fools;
Or whether my weak wits are overcome
By what a better spirit would scorn: I fail.
And now methinks 'twere best to change a theme,
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
I say confusedly what comes uppermost;
But there are times when patience proves at fault,
As now: this morning's strange encounter — you
Beside me once again! you, whom I guessed

Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
 No friend have I among the saints at rest,
 To judge by any good their prayers effect —
 I knew you would have helped me! — So would He,
 My strange competitor in enterprise,
 Bound for the same end by another path,
 Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,
 At our disastrous journey's doubtful close —
 How goes it with Aprile? Ah, your heaven
 Receives not into its beatitudes
 Mere martyrs for the world's sake; heaven shuts fast:
 The poor mad poet is howling by this time!
 Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,
 I could not quite repress the varied feelings
 This meeting wakens; they have had their vent,
 And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
 Hang like a fret-work on the gate (or what
 In my time was a gate) fronting the road
 From Einsiedeln to Lachen?

Fest.

Trifle not!

Answer me — for my sake alone. You smiled
 Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy
 Yourself might blot the else so bright result;
 Yet if your motives have continued pure,
 Your earnest will unfaltering, if you still
 Remain unchanged, and if, in spite of this,
 You have experienced a defeat that proves
 Your aims forever unattainable —
 I say not, you would cheerfully resign
 The contest — mortal hearts are not so fashioned —
 But sure you would resign it ne'ertheless.
 You sought not fame, nor gain, nor even love;
 No end distinct from knowledge, — I repeat
 Your very words: once satisfied that knowledge
 Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,
 Yourself the first. But how is the event?

You are defeated — and I find you here!

Par. As though “here” did not signify defeat!
I spoke not of my little labors here —
But of the break-down of my general aims:
That you, aware of their extent and scope,
Should look on these sage lecturings, approved
By beardless boys, and bearded dotards, — these
As a fit consummation of such aims,
Is worthy notice! A professorship
At Basel! Since you see so much in it,
And think my life was reasonably drained
Of life’s delights to render me a match
For duties arduous as such post demands, —
Far be it from me to deny my power
To fill the petty circle lotted out
From infinite space, or justify the host
Of honors thence accruing: so, take notice.
This jewel dangling from my neck preserves
The features of a prince, my skill restored
To plague his people some few years to come:
And all through a pure whim. He had eased the
earth

For me, but that the droll despair which seized
The vermin of his household, tickled me.
I came to see: here, driveled the physician
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault;
There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope
Had promised him interminable years;
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man’s mouth
With some undoubted relic — a sudary
Of the Virgin; while some other dozen knaves
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
Were actively preparing ’neath his nose
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
I cursed the doctor, and upset the brother;

Brushed past the conjurer; vowed that the first gust
 Of stench from the ingredients just alight
 Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,
 Not easily laid; and ere an hour, the prince
 Slept as he never slept since prince he was.
 A day — and I was posting for my life,
 Placarded through the town as one whose spite
 Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
 Of the doctor's nostrum, which, well seconded
 By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke —
 Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
 Hard by, in the abbey — raised the prince to life;
 To the great reputation of the seer,
 Who, confident, expected all along
 The glad event — the doctor's recompense —
 Much largess from his highness to the monks —
 And the vast solace of his loving people,
 Whose general satisfaction to increase,
 The prince was pleased no longer to defer
 The burning of some dozen heretics,
 Remanded 'till God's mercy should be shown
 Touching his sickness, as a prudent pledge
 To make it surer: last of all were joined
 Ample directions to all loyal folk
 To swell the complement, by seizing me
 Who — doubtless some rank sorcerer — had endeavored
 To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
 The prince's cure, and frustrate Heaven, by help
 Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
 By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
 Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
 Of further favors. This one case may serve
 To give sufficient taste of many such,
 So let them pass: those shelves support a pile
 Of patents, licenses, diplomas, titles,
 From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy:

They authorize some honor: ne'ertheless,
 I set more store by this Erasmus sent;
 He trusts me; our Frobenius is his friend,
 And him "I raised" (nay, read it) "from the dead." . . .
 I weary you, I see; I merely sought
 To show, there's no great wonder after all
 That while I fill the classroom, and attract
 A crowd to Basel, I get leave to stay;
 And therefore need not scruple to accept
 The utmost they can offer — if I please:
 For 'tis but right the world should be prepared
 To treat with favor e'en fantastic wants
 Of one like me, used up in serving her.
 Just as the mortal, whom the Gods in part
 Devoured, received in place of his lost limb
 Some virtue or other — cured disease, I think; ;
 You mind the fables we have read together.

Fest. You do not think I comprehend a word:
 The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough
 To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath;
 But surely you must feel how vague and strange
 These speeches sound.

Par. Well, then: you know my hopes;
 I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain;
 That truth is just as far from me as ever;
 That I have thrown my life away; that sorrow
 On that account is vain, and further effort
 To mend and patch what's marred beyond repairing,
 As useless: and all this was taught to me
 By the convincing, good old-fashioned method
 Of force — by sheer compulsion. Is that plain?

Fest. Dear Aureole! you confess my fears were just?
 God wills not . . .

Par. Now, 'tis this I most admire —
 The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
 Of God's will, as they style it; one would swear

Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
 To see the will in question characterized
 On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to moot
 Such topics: doubts are many and faith is weak.
 I know as much of any will of God's,
 As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,
 His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
 That plague him every way, and there, of course,
 Where least he suffers, longest he remains —
 My case; and for such reasons I plod on,
 Subdued, but not convinced. I know as little
 Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
 Better things in my youth. I simply know
 I am no master here, but trained and beaten
 Into the path I tread; and here I stay,
 Until some further intimation reach me,
 Like an obedient drudge: though I prefer
 To view the whole thing as a task imposed,
 Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done —
 Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
 Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect;
 Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride —
 Pleasures that once were pains: the iron ring
 Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
 Part of the flesh it eats. I hate no more
 A host of petty, vile delights, undreamed of
 Or spurned, before; such now supply the place
 Of my dead aims: as in the autumn woods
 Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
 Springs up a fungous brood, sickly and pale,
 Chill mushrooms, colored like a corpse's cheek.

Fest. If I interpret well what words I seize,
 It troubles me but little that your aims,
 Vast in their dawning, and most likely grown
 Extravagantly since, have baffled you.
 Perchance I am glad; you merit greater praise;

Because they are too glorious to be gained,
You do not blindly cling to them and die;
You fell, but have not sullenly refused
To rise, because an angel worsted you
In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer
And though too harsh and sudden is the change
To yield content as yet — still you pursue
The ungracious path as though t'were rosy-strewn.
'Tis well: and your reward, or soon or late,
Will come from Him whom no man serves in vain.

Par. Ah, very fine! For my part, I conceive
The very pausing from all further toil,
Which you find heinous, would be as a seal
To the sincerity of all my deeds.
To be consistent I should die at once;
I calculated on no after-life;
Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)
Here am I with as passionate regret
For youth, and health, and love so vainly lost,
As if their preservation had been first
And foremost in my thoughts; and this strange fact
Humbled me wondrously, and had due force
In rendering me the more disposed to follow
A certain counsel, a mysterious warning —
You will not understand — but 'twas a man
With aims not mine, but yet pursued like mine,
With the same fervor and no more success,
Who perished in my sight; but summoned me
As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
To serve my race at once; to wait no longer
'Till God should interfere in my behalf,
And let the next world's knowledge dawn on this;
But to distrust myself, put pride away,
And give my gains, imperfect as they were,
To men. I have not leisure to explain
How since, a strange succession of events

Has raised me to the station you behold,
 Wherein I seem to turn to most account
 The mere wreck of the past, — perhaps receive
 Some feeble glimmering token that God views
 And may approve my penance: therefore here
 You find me — doing most good or least harm:
 And if folks wonder much and profit little
 'Tis not my fault; only, I shall rejoice
 When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
 And the curtain falls; I must hold out 'till then.

Fest. 'Till when, dear Aureole?

Par. 'Till I'm fairly thrust
 From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle
 And even professors fall: should that arrive,
 I see no sin in ceding to my bent.
 You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us
 We sin: God's intimations rather fail
 In clearness than in energy: 'twere well
 Did they but indicate the course to take
 Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
 Be spared a further sample! Here I stand,
 And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

Fest. Remain but firm on that head; long ere then
 All I expect will come to pass, I trust:
 The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.
 Meantime, I see small chance of such event:
 They praise you here as one whose lore, divulged
 Already, eclipses all the past can show,
 But whose achievements, marvelous as they be,
 Are faint anticipations of a glory
 About to be revealed. When Basel's crowds
 Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
 That he depart.

Par. This favor at their hands
 I look for earlier than your view of things
 Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day

Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,
The novelty, nought else; and next, the tribe
Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives
That unless miracles (as seem my works)
Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight
To puzzle the devil; next, the numerous set
Who bitterly hate established schools, so help
The teacher that oppugns them, and o'erthrows,
'Till having planted his own doctrine, he
May reckon on their rancor in his turn;
Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue,
But seeks, by flattery and nursing craft,
To force my system to a premature
Short-lived development . . . Why swell the list?
Each has his end to serve, and his best way
Of serving it: remove all these, remains
A scantling — a poor dozen at the best —
That really come to learn for learning's sake;
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Fest. 'Tis no encouraging picture: still these few
Redeem their fellows. Once implant the germ,
Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Par. God grant it so!
I would make some amends: but if I fail,
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
That much is in my method and my manner,
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
Which hinders of reception and result
My doctrine: much to say, small skill to speak!
Those old aims suffered not a looking-off,
Though for an instant; therefore, only when
I thus renounced them and resolved to reap
Some present fruit — to teach mankind some truth
So dearly purchased — only then I found

Such teaching was an art requiring cares
 And qualities peculiar to itself;
 That to possess was one thing — to display,
 Another. Had renown been in my thoughts,
 Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it!
 One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Fest. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
 There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
 To leave a labor to so little use:
 Why not throw up the irksome charge at once?

Par. A task, a task! . . .

But wherefore hide from you

The whole extent of degradation, once
 Engaged in the confession? Spite of all
 My fine talk of obedience, and repugnance,
 Docility, and what not, 'tis yet to learn
 If when the old task really is performed,
 And my will free once more, to choose a new,
 I shall do aught but slightly modify
 The nature of the hated one I quit.
 In plain words, I am spoiled: my life still tends
 As first it tended. I am broken and trained
 To my old habits; they are part of me.
 I know, and none so well, my darling ends
 Are proved impossible: no less, no less,
 Even now what humors me, fond fool, as when
 Their faint ghosts sit with me, and flatter me,
 And send me back content to my dull round?
 How can I change this soul? — this apparatus
 Constructed solely for their purposes,
 So well adapted to their every want,
 To search out and discover, prove and perfect;
 This intricate machine, whose most minute,
 Least obvious motions have their charm to me
 Though to none else — an aptitude I seize,
 An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,

A property, a fitness, I explain,
And I alone: — how can I change my soul.
And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked
Under that soul's dominion — used to care
For its bright master's cares, and quite subdue
Its proper cravings — not to ail, nor pine,
So the soul prosper — whither drag this poor,
Tried, patient body? God! how I essayed,
To live like that mad poet, for awhile,
To catch Aprile's spirit, as I hoped,
And love alone! and how I felt too warped
And twisted and deformed! what should I do,
Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
To my old life — and die as I begun!
I cannot feed on beauty, for the sake
Of beauty only; nor can drink in balm
From lovely objects for their loveliness;
My nature cannot lose her first intent;
I still must hoard, and heap, and class all truths
With one ulterior purpose: I must know!
Would God translate me to his throne, believe
That I should only listen to his words
To further my own aims! For other men,
Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
And I were happy could I quench as they
This mad and thriveless longing, be content
With beauty for itself alone: alas!
I have addressed a frock of heavy mail,
Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights;
And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more!
Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrives
I shall o'ertake the company, and ride
Glittering as they!

Fest.

I think I apprehend

What you would say: if you, in truth, design
To enter once more on the life thus left,
Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
Of failure is assumed.

Par. My friend, my friend,
I speak, you listen; I explain, perhaps
You understand: there our communion ends.
Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse?
When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state
We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
Enough made known? You! who are you, forsooth?
That is the crowning operation claimed
By the arch-demonstrator — heaven the hall,
And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
Secure good places — 'twill be worth your while.

Fest. Are you mad, Aureole? What can I have said
To call for this? I judged from your own words.

Par. Oh, true! A fevered wretch describes the ape
That mocks him from the bed-foot, and you turn
All gravely thither at once: or he recounts
The perilous journey he has late performed,
And you are puzzled much how that could be!
You find me here, half stupid and half mad:
It makes no part of my delight to search
Into these things, much less to undergo
Another's scrutiny; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to you:
And the event is, you combine, contrast,
And ponder on my foolish words, as though
They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here —
Here, loathsome with despair, and hate, and rage!
Is there no fear, no shrinking, or no shame?

Will you guess nothing? will you spare me nothing?
Must I go deeper? Aye or no?

Fest.

Dear friend . . .

Par. True: I am brutal — 'tis a part of it;
The plague's sign — you are not a lazar-haunter,
How should you know? Well then, you think it strange
I should profess to have failed utterly,
And yet propose an ultimate return
To courses void of hope: and this, because
You know not what temptation is, nor how
'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.
You are to understand, that we who make
Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end:
There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
Which if we manage to escape with life,
Though touched and hurt, we straight may slacken
pace

And gather by the way-side herbs and roots
To stanch our wounds, secure from further harm —
No; we are chased to life's extremest verge.
It will be well indeed if I return,
A harmless busy fool, to my old ways!
I would forget hints of another fate,
Significant enough, which silent hours
Have lately scared me with.

Fest.

Another! and what?

Par. After all, Festus, you say well: I stand
A man yet — I need never humble me.
I would have been — something, I know not what;
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl:
There are worse portions than this one of mine;
You say well!

Fest

Ah! . . .

Par.

And deeper degradation!

If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
And vanity, should become the chosen food

Of a sunk mind; should stifle even the wish
 To find its early aspirations true;
 Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath —
 An atmosphere of craft, and trick, and lies;
 Should make it proud to emulate or surpass
 Base natures in the practices which woke
 Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no!
 Utter damnation is reserved for Hell!
 I had immortal feelings — such shall never
 Be wholly quenched — no, no!

My friend, you wear

A melancholy face, and truth to speak,
 There's little cheer in all this dismal work;
 But 'twas not my desire to set abroad
 Such memories and forebodings. I foresaw
 Where they would drive; 'twere better you detailed
 News of Lucerne or Zurich; or I described
 Great Egypt's flaring sky, or Spain's cork-groves.

Fest. I have thought now: yes, this mood will pass
 away.

I know you, and the lofty spirit you bear,
 And easily ravel out a clue to all.
 These are the trials meet for such as you,
 Nor must you hope exemption: to be mortal
 Is to be plied with trials manifold.
 Look round! The obstacles which kept the rest
 Of men from your ambition, you have spurned;
 Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them best,
 Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought
 Avails to awe, save these delusions, bred
 From its own strength, its selfsame strength, dis-
 guised —

Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole! Since
 The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
 The fawn his rustling bough, mortals their cares,
 And higher natures yet their power to laugh

At these entangling fantasies, as you
 At trammels of a weaker intellect.
 Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts!
 I know you.

Par. And I know you, dearest Festus!
 And how you love unworthily; and how
 All admiration renders blind.

Fest. You hold
 That admiration blinds?

Par. Aye, and alas!

Fest. Nought blinds you less than admiration will.
 Whether it be that all love renders wise
 In its degree; from love which blends with love —
 Heart answering heart — to love which spends itself
 In silent mad idolatry of some
 Preeminent mortal, some great soul of souls,
 Which ne'er will know how well it is adored: —
 I say, such love is never blind; but rather
 Alive to every the minutest spot
 Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed
 So vigilant and searching) dreams not of:
 Love broods on such: what then? When first perceived
 Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
 To overflush those blemishes with all
 The glow of general goodness they disturb?
 — To make those very defects an endless source
 Of new affection grown from hopes and fears?
 And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand
 Made even for much proved weak? no shrinking-back
 Lest, rising even as its idol sinks,
 It nearly reach the sacred place, and stand
 Almost a rival of that idol? Trust me,
 If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,
 To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits,
 Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as love,
 Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause;

And least from those who hate, who most essay
 By contumely and scorn to blot the light
 Which will have entrance even to their hearts;
 For thence will our Defender tear the veil
 And show within each heart, as in a shrine,
 The giant image of *Perfection*, grown
 In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned
 In the untroubled presence of its eyes!
 True admiration blinds not; nor am I
 So blind: I call your sin exceptional;
 It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds
Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God!
 I speak of men; to common men like me
 The weakness you confess endears you more —
 Like the far traces of decay in suns:
 I bid you have good cheer!

Par.

Præclarè! Optimè!

Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest
 Instructing *Paracelsus*! yet, 'tis so.
 Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
 'Tis in the advance of individual minds
 That the slow crowd should ground their expectation
 Eventually to follow — as the sea
 Waits ages in its bed, 'till some one wave
 Out of the multitude aspires, extends
 The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
 Over the strip of sand which would confine
 Its fellows so long time: thenceforth the rest,
 Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
 And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
 If all my labors, failing of aught else,
 Suffice to make such inroad, and procure
 A wider range for thought: nay, they do this;
 For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge
 And a legitimate success, may be,
 I am not blind to my undoubted rank

In a new form; no more. Thus: I possess
 Two sorts of knowledge; one, — vast, shadowy,
 Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued:
 The other consists of many secrets, learned
 While bent on nobler prize, — perhaps a few
 First principles which may conduct to much:
 These last I offer to my followers here.
 Now bid me chronicle the first of these,
 My ancient study, and in effect you bid me
 Revert to the wild courses just abjured:
 I must go find them scattered through the world.
 Then, for the principles, they are so simple
 (Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
 That one time is as proper to propound them
 As any other — to-morrow at my class,
 Or half a century hence embalmed in print:
 For if mankind intend to learn at all,
 They must begin by giving faith to them,
 And acting on them; and I do not see
 But that my lectures serve indifferent well:
 No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
 For all their novelty and rugged setting.
 I think my class will not forget the day
 I let them know the gods of Israel,
 Aëtins, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
 Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes, —
 Were blocks!

Fest. And that reminds me, I heard something
 About your waywardness: you burned their books,
 It seems, instead of answering those sages.

Par. And who said that?

Fest. Some I met yesternight
 With Æcolampadius. As you know, the purpose
 Of this short stay at Basel was to learn
 His pleasure touching certain missives sent
 For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he

Apprized me that the famous teacher here
Was my old friend.

Par. Ah, I forgot; you went . . .

Fest. From Zurich with advices for the ear
Of Luther, now at Wittemburg — (you know,
I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolostadius) — and returning sought
Basel and . . .

Par. I remember. Here's a case, now,
Will teach you why I answer not, but burn
The books you mention: pray, does Luther dream
His arguments convince by their own force
The crowds that own his doctrine? No, indeed:
His plain denial of established points
Ages had sanctified and men supposed
Could never be oppugned while earth was under
And heaven above them—points which chance, or time
Affected not — did more than the array
Of argument which followed. Boldly deny!
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening
Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting
The thunderbolt which does not come; and next,
Reproachful wonder and enquiry: those
Who else had never stirred, are able now
To find the rest out for themselves — perhaps
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
— As never will my wise class its instructor.
And you saw Luther?

Fest. 'Tis a wondrous soul!

Par. True: the so-heavy chain which galled mankind
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
Must bow to the deliverer — nay, the worker
Of our own projects — we who long before
Had burst its trammels, but forgot the crowd,
We should have taught, still groaned beneath the load:
This he has done and nobly. Speed that may!

Whatever be my chance or my despair,
 What benefits mankind must glad me too:
 And men seem made, though not as I believed,
 For something better than the times produce:
 Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights
 From Suabia have possessed, whom Munzer leads,
 And whom the duke, the landgrave, and the elector
 Will calm in blood! Well, well — 'tis not my world!

Fest. Hark!

Par. 'Tis the melancholy wind astir
 Within the trees; the embers too are gray,
 Morn must be near.

Fest. Best ope the casement: see,
 The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,
 Is blank and motionless: how peaceful sleep
 The tree-tops all together! Like an asp,
 The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

Par. Aye; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree
 By the hour, nor count time lost.

Fest. So you shall gaze:
 Those happy times will come again . . .

Par. Gone! gone!
 Those pleasant times! Does not the moaning wind
 Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains
 And bartered sleep for them?

Fest. It is our trust
 That there is yet another world to mend
 All error and mischance.

Par. Another world!
 And why this world, this common world, to be
 A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
 To some fine life to come? Man must be fed
 With angel's food, forsooth; and some few traces,
 Of a diviner nature which look out
 Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him
 In a supreme contempt for all provision

For his inferior tastes — some straggling marks
 Which constitute his essence, just as truly
 As here and there a gem would constitute
 The rock, their barren bed, a diamond.
 But were it so — were man all mind — he gains
 A station little enviable. From God
 Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,
 Intelligence exists which casts our mind
 Into immeasurable shade. No, no:
 Love, hope, fear, faith — these make humanity;
 These are its signs, and note, and character;
 And these I have lost! — gone, shut from me forever,
 Like a dead friend, safe from unkindness more!
 See morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
 Diluted; gray and clear without the stars;
 The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as if
 Some snake that weighed them down all night, let go
 His hold; and from the east, fuller and fuller
 Day, like a mighty river, is flowing in;
 But clouded, wintry, desolate, and cold:
 Yet see how that broad, prickly, star-shaped plant,
 Half down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves,
 All thick and glistening with diamond dew.
 And you depart for Einsiedeln this day:
 And we have spent all night in talk like this!
 If you would have me better for your love,
 Revert no more to these sad themes.

Fest. One favor,
 And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved;
 Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
 My friend has changed so sorely: if this mood
 Shall pass away — if light once more arise
 Where all is darkness now — if you see fit
 To hope, and trust again, and strive again;
 You will remember — not our love alone —
 But that my faith in God's desire for man

To trust on his support (as I must think
 You trusted) is obscured and dim through you;
 For you are thus, and this is no reward.
 Will you not call me to your side, dear friend?

IV. PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE. *A House at Colmar, in Alsatia.* 1528

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

*Par. (To John Oporinus, his secretary.) Sic itur ad
 astra! Dear Von Visenburg*
 Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralyzed,
 And every honest soul that Basel holds
 Aghast; and yet we live, as one may say,
 Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
 So true a value on his sorry carcass,
 And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
 We live; and shall as surely start to-morrow
 For Nuremburg, as we drink speedy scathe
 To Basel in this mantling wine, suffused
 With a delicate blush — no fainter tinge is born
 I' th' shut heart of a bud: pledge me, good John —
 “Basel; a hot plague ravage it, with Pütter
 To stop the plague!” Even so? Do you too share
 Their panic — the reptiles? Ha, ha! faint through
them,
 Desist for *them!* — while means enough exist
 To bow the stoutest braggart of the tribe
 Once more in crouching silence — means to breed
 A stupid wonder in each fool again,
 Now big with admiration at the skill
 Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes;
 And, that done, means to brand each slavish brow

So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
 That thenceforth flattery shall not pucker it
 Out of the furrow of that hideous stamp
 Which shows the next they fawn on, what they are,
 This Basel with its magnates one and all,
 Whom I curse soul and limb. And now despatch,
 Despatch my trusty John; and what remains
 To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
 Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
 This night; we'll weather the storm at least: to-morrow
 For Nuremburg! Now leave us; this grave clerk
 Has divers weighty matters for my ear, (*Oporinus*
goes out)

And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,
 I am rid of this arch-knave that follows me
 As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at last
 May give a loose to my delight. How kind,
 How very kind, my first, best, only friend!
 Why this looks like fidelity. Embrace me:
 Not a hair silvered yet! Right: you shall live
 Till I am worth your love; you shall be proud,
 And I — but let time show. Did you not wonder?
 I sent to you because our compact weighed
 Upon my conscience — (you recall the night
 At Basel, which the gods confound) — because
 Once more I aspire! I call you to my side;
 You come. You thought my message strange?

Fest. So strange

That I must hope, indeed, your messenger
 Has mingled his own fancies with the words
 Purporting to be yours.

Par. He said no more,
 'Tis probable, than the precious folks I leave
 Said fifty-fold more roughly. Well-a-day,
 'Tis true; poor *Paracelsus* is exposed
 At last; a most egregious quack he proves,

And those he overreached must spit their hate
 On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
 Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard
 Bare truth; and at my bidding you come here
 To speed me on my enterprise, as once
 Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend?

Fest. What is your purpose, Aureole?

Par. Oh, for purpose,
 There is no lack of precedents in a case
 Like mine; at least, if not precisely mine,
 The case of men cast off by those they sought
 To benefit...

Fest. They really cast you off?
 I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
 Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,
 Knowing his life's worth best; and how the judge
 The matter was referred to, saw no cause
 To interfere, nor you to hide your full
 Contempt of him; nor he, again, to smother
 His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame
 That Basel soon was made no place for you.

Par. The affair of Liechtenfels? the shallowest cause,
 The last and silliest outrage — mere pretense!
 I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
 How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
 For genuine loyalty — a cheering promise
 Of better things to come — would pall and pass;
 And every word comes true. Saul is among
 The prophets! Just so long as I was pleased
 To play off the mere marvels of my art —
 Fantastic gambols leading to no end —
 I got huge praise; but one can ne'er keep down
 Our foolish nature's weakness: there they flocked,
 Poor devils, jostling, swearing, and perspiring,
 Till the walls rang again; and all for me!
 I had a kindness for them, which was right;

But then I stopped not till I tacked to that
A trust in them and a respect — a sort
Of sympathy for them: I must needs begin
To teach them, not amaze them; “to impart
The spirit which should instigate the search
Of truth:” just what you bade me! I spoke out.
Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,
Filed off — “the sifted chaff of the sack,” I said,
Redoubling my endeavors to secure
The rest; when lo! one man had stayed thus long
Only to ascertain if I supported
This tenet of his, or that; another loved
To hear impartially before he judged,
And having heard, now judged; this bland disciple
Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,
Spied error where his neighbors marveled most:
That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,
Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong
And beacons properly, would commend again
The good old ways our sires jogged safely o’er,
Though not their squeamish sons; the other worthy
Discovered divers verses of St. John,
Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,
But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,
The cholic, and what not: — *quid multa?* The end
Was a clear classroom, with a quiet leer
From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance
From those in chief, who, cap in hand, installed
The new professor scarce a year before;
And a vast flourish about patient merit
Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
Sooner or later to emerge in splendor —
Of which the example was some luckless wight
Whom my arrival had discomfited,
But now, it seems, the general voice recalled
To fill my chair, and so efface the stain

Basel had long incurred. I sought no better —
 Nought but a quiet dismissal from my post;
 While from my heart I wished them better suited,
 And better served. Good night to Basel, then!
 But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
 Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them
 The pleasure of a parting kick.

Fest.

You smile:

Despise them as they merit!

Par.

If I smile,

'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned
 Flesh into stone: this courteous recompense;
 This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit
 To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
 At gangrened blotches, eating poisonous blains,
 The ulcered barky scurf of leprosy
 Which finds — a man, and leaves — a hideous thing
 That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
 — I say that, could you see as I could show,
 I would lay bare to you these human hearts
 Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since
 Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.
 O, sages have discovered we are born
 For various ends — to love, to know: has ever
 One stumbled, in his search, on any signs
 Of a nature in him formed to hate? To hate?
 If that be our true object which evokes
 Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate!

Fest. But I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole!

Par. What purpose were the fittest now for me?
 Decide! To sink beneath such ponderous shame —
 To shrink up like a crushed snail — undergo
 In silence and desist from further toil,
 And so subside into a monument
 Of one their censure blasted; or to bow
 Cheerfully as submissively — to lower

Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From summits where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain).

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud,
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
And shred dim perfume, like a cloud
From chamber long to quiet vowed,
With moth and dropping arras hung,
Moldering the lute and books among
Of queen, long dead, who lived there young.

Mine, every word! — and on such pile shall die
My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,
Themselves fair and forgotten; yes, forgotten,
Or why abjure them? So I made this rhyme
That fitting dignity might be preserved:
No little proud was I; though the list of drugs
Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms!

Fest. But, Aureole,
Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here —
Did you know all, indeed! I have traveled far
To learn your wishes. Be yourself again!
For in this mood I recognize you less
Than in the horrible despondency
I witnessed last. You may account this, joy;
But rather let me gaze on that despair
Than hear these incoherent words, and see
This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye!

Par. Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,
I am light-hearted now; what would you have?
Aprile was a poet, I make songs —
'Tis the very augury of success I want!

Why should I not be joyous now as then?

Fest. Joyous! and how? and what remains for joy?
You have declared the ends (which I am sick
Of naming) are impracticable.

Par. Aye,
Pursued as I pursued them — the arch-fool!
Listen: my plan will please you not, 'tis like;
But you are little versed in the world's ways.
This is my plan — (first drinking its good luck) —
I will accept all helps; all I despised
So rashly at the outset, equally
With early impulses, late years have quenched:
I have tried each way singly — now for both!
All helps — no one sort shall exclude the rest.
I seek to KNOW and to ENJOY at once,
Not one without the other as before.
Suppose my labor should seem God's own cause
Once more, as first I dreamed, it shall not balk me
Of the meanest, earthliest, sensualest delight
That may be snatched; for every joy is gain,
And why spurn gain, however small? My soul
Can die then, nor be taunted "what was gained?"
Nor, on the other hand, if pleasure meets me
As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion
With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
Glorious with visions of a full success!

Fest. Success!

Par. And wherefore not? Why not prefer
Results obtained in my best state of being,
To those derived alone from seasons dark
As the thoughts they bred? When I was best — my
youth
Unwasted — seemed success not surest too?
It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
I am a wanderer: I remember well

One journey, how I feared the track was missed,
 So long the city I desired to reach
 Lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar
 Flashed through the circling clouds; conceive my joy!
 Too soon the vapors closed o'er it again,
 But I had seen the city, and one such glance
 No darkness could obscure: nor shall the present
 A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
 Destroy the vivid memories of the past.
 I will fight the battle out! — a little tired,
 Perhaps — but still an able combatant.
 You look at my gray hair and furrowed brow?
 But I can turn even weakness to account:
 Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
 To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
 The fire of vigor trembles scarce alive,
 Into a heap, and send the flame aloft!
 What should I do with age? so sickness lends
 An aid; it being, I fear, the source of all
 We boast of: mind is nothing but disease,
 And natural health is ignorance.

Fest.

I see

But one good symptom in this notable plan:
 I feared your sudden journey had in view
 To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes;
 'Tis not so: I am glad.

Par.

And if I pleased

To spit on them, to trample them, what then?
 'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools
 Provoke it: I had spared their self-conceit,
 But if they must provoke me — cannot suffer
 Forbearance on my part — if I may keep
 No quality in the shade, must needs put forth
 Power to match power, my strength against their
 strength,
 And teach them their own game with their own arms —

Why be it so, and let them take their chance!
 I am above them like a God — in vain
 To hide the fact — what idle scruples, then,
 Were those that ever bade me soften it,
 Communicate it gently to the world,
 Instead of proving my supremacy,
 Taking my natural station o'er their heads,
 Then owning all the glory was a man's,
 And in my elevation man's would be!
 But live and learn, though life's short; learning, hard!
 Still, one thing I have learned — not to despair:
 And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,
 I fear, dear *Pütter*, that your lecture-room
 Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
 The penitent empiric, who set up
 For somebody, but soon was taught his place —
 Now, but too happy to be let confess
 His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
 (*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)
 Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,
 Good *Pütter*!

Fest. He who sneers thus, is a God!

Par. Aye, aye, laugh at me! I am very glad
 You are not gulled by all this swaggering; you
 Can see the root of the matter! — how I strive
 To put a good face on the overthrow
 I have experienced, and to bury and hide
 My degradation in its length and breadth;
 How the mean motives I would, make you think
 Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
 The appetites I modestly allow
 May influence me — as I am mortal still —
 Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant
 My youth's desires: you are no stupid dupe;
 You find me out! Yes, I had sent for you
 To palm these childish lies upon you, *Festus*!

Laugh — you shall laugh at me!

Fest. The past, then, Aureole,
Proves nothing? Is our interchange of love
Yet to begin? Have I to swear I mean
No flattery in this speech or that? For you,
Whate'er you say, there is no degradation,
These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind;
Or wherefore this disorder? You are vexed
As much by the intrusion of base views,
Familiar to your adversaries, as they
Were troubled should your qualities alight
Amid their murky souls: not otherwise,
A stray wolf which the winter forces down
From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales — while foresters
Sleep calm though all night long the famished troops
Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts:
These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

Par. May you be happy, Festus, my own friend!

Fest. Nay, further; the delights you fain would think

The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
Will ne'er content you . . .

Par. Hush! I once despised them,
But that soon passes: we are high at first
In our demands, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value; but time passes o'er,
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse;
In short, when some such comfort is doled out
As these delights, we cannot long retain
The bitter contempt which urges us at first
To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out, and a grave thoroughly earned:
I am just fit for that and nought beside.

I told you once, I cannot now Enjoy,
 Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy;
 Nor can I Know, but straight warm tears reveal
 My need of linking also joy to knowledge:
 So on I drive — enjoying all I can,
 And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
 Confusedly; this will better explain — feel here!
 Quick beating, is it not? — a fire of the heart
 To work off some way, this as well as any!
 So, Festus sees me fairly launched; his calm
 Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,
 But now, far from rejecting, I invite
 What bids me press^r the closer, lay myself
 Open before him, and be soothed with pity;
 And hope, if he command hope; and believe
 As he directs me — satiating myself
 With his enduring love: and Festus quits me
 To give place to some credulous disciple
 Who holds that God is wise, but *Paracelsus*
 Has his peculiar merits. I suck in
 That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
 And then dismiss the fool; for night is come,
 And I betake myself to study again,
 Till patient searchings after hidden lore
 Half wring some bright truth from its prison; my
 frame

Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair
 Tingles for triumph! Slow and sure the morn
 Shall break on my pent room, and dwindling lamp,
 And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores,
 When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
 I must review my captured truth, sum up
 Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
 Its present power with its eventual bearings,
 Latent affinities, the views it opens,
 And its full length in perfecting my scheme;

I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
 From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
 Proved worthless — which, in getting, yet had cost
 Another wrench to this fast-falling frame;
 Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow!
 I lapse back into youth, and take again
 Mere hopes of bliss for proofs that bliss will be,
 — My fluttering pulse, for evidence that God
 Means good to me, will make my cause his own;
 See! I have cast off this remorseless care
 Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,
 And my dim chamber has become a tent,
 Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .
 Why do you start? I say, she listening here,
 (For yonder's Würzburg through the orchard-boughs)
 Motions as though such ardent words should find
 No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,
 But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast
 With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while!
 Ha, ha!

Fest. It seems, then, you expect to reap
 No unreal joy from this your present course,
 But rather . . .

Par. Death! To die! I owe that much
 To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
 To live contented after such a fall —
 To thrive and fatten after such reverse!
 The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
 My time.

Fest. And you have never mused and said,
 "I had a noble purpose, and full strength
 To compass it; but I have stopped half-way,
 And wrongly give the first-fruits of my toil
 To objects little worthy of the gift:
 Why linger round them still? why clench my fault?
 Why seek for consolation in defeat —

In vain endeavors to derive a beauty
From ugliness? Why seek to make the most
Of what no power can change, nor strive instead
With mighty effort to redeem the past,
And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,
To hold a steadfast course till I arrive
At their fit destination, and my own?"
You have never pondered thus?

Par. Have I, you ask?
Often at midnight, when most fancies come,
Would some such airy project visit me:
But ever at the end . . . or will you hear
The same thing in a tale, a parable?
It cannot prove more tedious; listen then!
You and I, wandering over the world wide,
Chance to set foot upon a desert coast:
Just as we cry, "No human voice before
Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks!"
— Their querulous echo startles us: we turn:
What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea?
Some characters remain, too! While we read,
The sharp, salt wind, impatient for the last
Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
This is the record; and my voice, the wind's.

(He sings.)

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave,
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave —
A gallant armament:
Each bark built out of a forest-tree,
Left leafy and rough as first it grew.
And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black-bull hides,
Seethed in fat and suppld in flame,

To bear the playful billows' game;
 So each good ship was rude to see,
 Rude and bare to the outward view,
 But each upbore a stately tent;
 Where cedar-pales in scented row
 Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine:
 And an awning drooped the mast below,
 In fold on fold of the purple fine,
 That neither noon-tide, nor star-shine,
 Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
 Might pierce the regal tenement.
 When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
 We set the sail and plied the oar;
 But when the night-wind blew like breath
 For joy of one day's voyage more,
 We sang together on the wide sea,
 Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;
 Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
 Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
 And in a sleep as calm as death,
 We, the strangers from afar,
 Lay, stretched along, each weary crew
 In a circle round its wondrous tent,
 Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
 And with light and perfume, music too:
 So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
 And at morn we started beside the mast,
 And still each ship was sailing fast!

One morn, the land appeared! — a speck
 Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky —
 “Avoid it,” cried our pilot, “check
 The shout, restrain the longing eye!”
 But the heaving sea was black behind
 For many a night and many a day,
 And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;

So we broke the cedar-pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
And a statue bright was on every deck!
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbor thus,
With pomp and pæan glorious.

An hundred shapes of lucid stone!
All day we built a shrine for each —
A shrine of rock for every one —
Nor paused we till in the westerling sun
We sate together on the beach
To sing, because our task was done;
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!
What laughter all the distance stirs!
What raft comes loaded with its throngs
Of gentle islanders?
“The isles are just at hand,” they cried;
“Like cloudlets faint at even sleeping,
Our temple-gates are opened wide,
Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
“For the lucid shapes you bring” — they cried.
Oh, then we woke with sudden start
From our deep dream; we knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
To which we had flung our precious freight:
Yet we called out — “Depart!
Our gifts, once given, must here abide:
Our work is done; we have no heart
To mar our work, though vain” — we cried.

Fest. In truth?

Par. Nay, wait: all this in tracings faint
May still be read on that deserted rock,
On rugged stones, strewn here and there, but piled
In order once; then follows — mark what follows —

“The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
To their first fault, and withered in their pride!”

Fest. Come back, then, Aureole; as you fear God,
come!

This is foul sin; come back: renounce the past,
Forswear the future; look for joy no more,
But wait death's summons amid holy sights,
And trust me for the event — peace, if not joy!
Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole.

Par. No way, no way: it would not turn to good.
A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss —
'Tis well for him; but when a sinful man,
Envyng such slumber, may desire to put
His guilt away, shall he return at once
To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well
(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)
The fitting course for such; dark cells, dim lamps,
A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm;
No mossy pillow, blue with violets!

Fest. I see no symptom of these absolute
And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.
This verse-making can purge you well enough,
Without the terrible penance you describe.
You love me still: the lusts you fear, will never
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more!
Say but the word!

Par. No, no; those lusts forbid:
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye
Beside you; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself
Between them and their prey; let some fool style me
Or king or quack, it matters not, and try
Your wisdom then, at urging their retreat!
No, no; learn better and look deeper, Festus!
If you knew how a devil sneers within me
While you are talking now of this, now that,
As though we differed scarcely save in trifles!

Fest. Do we so differ? True, change must proceed,
Whether for good or ill; keep from me, which!
God made you and knows what you may become —
Do not confide all secrets: I was born
To hope, and you...

Par. To trust: you know the fruits!

Fest. Listen: I do believe, what you call trust
Was self-reliance at the best: for, see!
So long as God would kindly pioneer
A path for you, and screen you from the world,
Procure you full exemption from man's lot,
Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext
Of your engagement in his service — yield you
A limitless license, make you God, in fact,
And turn your slave — you were content to say
Most courtly praises! What is it, at last,
But selfishness without example? None
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours
Remained implied in it; but now you fail,
And we, who prate about that will, are fools!
In short, God's service is established here
As he determines fit, and not your way,
And this you cannot brook! Such discontent
Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once!
Affirm an absolute right to have and use
Your energies; as though the rivers should say —
“We rush to the ocean; what have we to do
With feeding streamlets, lingering in the marshes,
Sleeping in lazy pools?” Set up that plea,
That will be bold at least!

Par. Perhaps, perhaps!

Your only serviceable spirits are those
The east produces: — lo, the master nods,
And they raise terraces, spread garden-grounds
In one night's space; and, this done, straight begin
Another century's sleep, to the great praise

Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
 Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
 Wake them again. I am of different mold.
 I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him,
 And done him service past my narrow bond,
 And thus I get rewarded for my pains!
 Beside, 'tis vain to talk of forwarding
 God's glory otherwise; this is alone
 The sphere of its increase, as far as men
 Increase it; why, then, look beyond this sphere?
 We are his glory; and if we be glorious,
 Is not the thing achieved?

Fest. Shall one like me
 Judge hearts like yours? Though years have changed
 you much,
 And you have left your first love, and retain
 Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
 Yet I still hold that you have honored God;
 And who shall call your course without reward?
 For, wherefore this repining at defeat,
 Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes?
 I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
 And what success attends me? — simply talk
 Of passion, weakness, and remorse; in short,
 Anything but the naked truth: you choose
 This so-despised career, and rather praise
 Than take my happiness, or other men's.
 Once more, return!

Par. And soon. Oporinus
 Has pilfered half my secrets by this time:
 And we depart by daybreak. I am weary,
 I know not how; not even the wine-cup soothes
 My brain to-night. . . .
 Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus?
 No flattery! One like you needs not be told
 We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.

Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts?
 Me and my cant — my petty subterfuges —
 My rhymes, and all this frothy shower of words —
 My glozing, self-deceit — my outward crust
 Of lies, which wrap, as tetter, morpew, furfur
 Wrap the sound flesh? — so, see you flatter not!
 Why, even God flatters! but my friend, at least,
 Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
 Against all further insult, hate, and wrong
 From puny foes: my one friend's scorn shall brand me —
 No fear of sinking deeper!

Fest. No, dear Aureole!
 No, no; I came to counsel faithfully;
 There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
 By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
 So infinitely low beside your spirit
 Mighty, majestic! — even I can see
 You own some higher law than ours which call
 Sin, what is no sin — weakness, what is strength;
 But I have only these, such as they are,
 To guide me; and I blame you where they blame,
 Only so long as blaming promises
 To win peace for your soul; the more, that sorrow
 Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me
 So that I faint not under my distress.
 But wherefore should I scruple to avow
 In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
 Your fate to me is most inexplicable:
 And should you perish without recompense
 And satisfaction yet — too hastily
 I have relied on love: you may have sinned,
 But you have loved. As a mere human matter —
 As I would have God deal with fragile men
 In the end — I say that you will triumph yet!

Par. Have you felt sorrow, Festus? — 'tis because
 You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours!

Well thought on; never let her know this last
Dull winding-up of all: these miscreants dared
Insult me — me she loved; so grieve her not.

Fest. Your ill success can little grieve her now.

Par. Michal is dead! pray Christ we do not craze!

Fest. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus!
Fool, fool! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof —
I cannot bear those eyes.

Par. Nay, really dead?

Fest. 'Tis scarce a month . . .

Par. Stone dead! — then you have laid her
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.
Know then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:
For I believe we do not wholly die.

Fest. Aureole . . .

Par. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason
For what I say: I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Fest. But not on this account alone? you surely,
— Aureole, you have believed this all along?

Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basel, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away!
Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats,
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport! — Behold!

V. PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE. *A cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian, at
Salzburg. 1541*

FESTUS, PARACELSUS

Fest. No change! The weary night is well nigh
spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
Gray morning glimmers feebly — yet no change!
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discolored mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
Like torch-flame choked in dust: while all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a stronghold where life intrenched itself;
But they are dead now — very blind and dead.
He will drowse into death without a groan!

My Aureole — my forgotten, ruined Aureole!
The days are gone, are gone! How grand thou wert:
And now not one of those who struck thee down —
Poor, glorious spirit — concerns him even to stay
And satisfy himself his little hand
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.
Another night, and yet no change! 'Tis much
That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
And chafe his hands — 'tis much; but he will sure
Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
Once more — but only once! His hollow cheek
Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
At his own state were just about to break
From the dying man: my brain swam, my throat
swelled,

And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
 They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed
 Resolved to live — to lose no faculty;
 Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
 Until they bore him to this stifling cell:
 When straight his features fell — an hour made white
 The flushed face and relaxed the quivering limb;
 Only the eye remained intense awhile,
 As though it recognized the tomb-like place;
 And then he lay as here he lies.

Aye, here!

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded —
 Her bravest champion, with his well-won meed —
 Her best achievement, her sublime amends
 For countless generations, fleeting fast
 And followed by no trace; — the creature-god
 She instances when angels would dispute
 The title of her brood to rank with them —
 Angels, this is our angel! — those bright forms
 We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,
 Are human, but not his: those are but men
 Whom other men press round and kneel before —
 Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;
 Higher provision is for him you seek
 Amid our pomps and glories: see it here!
 Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!

God! Thou art Love! I build my faith on that!
 Even as I watch beside thy tortured child,
 Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
 So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
 Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?
 How has he sinned? How else should he have done?
 Surely he sought thy praise — thy praise, for all
 He might be busied by the task so much
 As to forget awhile its proper end.

Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer
 That I should range myself upon his side —
 How could he stop at every step to set
 Thy glory forth? Hadst Thou but granted him
 Success, thy honor would have crowned success,
 A halo round a star. Or, say he erred —
 Save him, dear God; it will be like thee: bathe
 him

In light and life! Thou art not made like us;
 We should be wroth in such a case; but Thou
 Forgivest — so, forgive these passionate thoughts,
 Which come unsought, and will not pass away!
 I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
 Light for me in the darkness — tempering sorrow,
 So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
 It were too strange that I should doubt thy love:
 But what am I? Thou madest him, and knowest
 How he was fashioned. I could never err
 That way: the quiet place beside thy feet,
 Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts;
 But he — Thou shouldst have favored him as well!

Ah! he wakes! Aureole, I am here — 'tis Festus!
 I cast away all wishes save one wish —
 Let him but know me — only speak to me!
 He mutters — louder and louder; any other
 Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
 What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look!
 Is it talking or singing this he utters fast?
 Misery, that he should fix me with his eye —
 Quick talking to some other all the while!
 If he would husband this wild vehemence,
 Which frustrates its intent! — I heard, I know
 I heard my name amid those rapid words:
 O he will know me yet! Could I divert
 This current — lead it somehow gently back

Into the channels of the past! — His eye,
Brighter than ever! It must recognize!

Let me speak to him in another's name.
I am Erasmus: I am here to pray
That *Paracelsus* use his skill for me.
The schools of *Paris* and of *Padua* send
These questions for your learning to resolve.
We are your students, noble master: leave
This wretched cell; what business have you here?
Our class awaits you; come to us once more.
(O agony! the utmost I can do
Touches him not; how else arrest his ear?)
I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him —
Better be mute, and see what God shall send.

Par. Stay, stay with me!

Fest. I will; I am come here
To stay with you — Festus, you loved of old;
Festus, you know, you must know!

Par. Festus! Where's
Aprile, then? Has he not chanted softly
The melodies I heard all night? I could not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough,
O, well enough! If they have filled him full
With magical music, as they freight a star
With light, and have remitted all his sin,
They will forgive me too, I too shall know!

Fest. Festus, your Festus!

Par. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves — if I shall Love and Know?
I try; but that cold hand, like lead — so cold!

Fest. My hand, see!

Par. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile!
We get so near — so very, very near!
'Tis an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans down

Fest. Dear friend; who are accursed? who has
done . . .

Par. What have I done? Fiends dare ask that? or
you,
Brave men? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed
By the others! What had you to do, sage peers?
Here stand my rivals, truly — Arab, Jew,
Greek, join dead hands against me: all I ask
Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,
And even this poor privilege, it seems,
They range themselves, prepared to disallow!
Only observe: why fiends may learn from them!
How they talk calmly of my throes — my fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings — each one claiming
Its price of blood and brain; how they dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths
Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the while
About my neck, their lies misleading me,
And their dead names browbeating me! Gray crew,
Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
Is there a reason for your hate? My truths
Have shaken a little the palm about each head?
Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than being crowned
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief,
To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect —
Galen, of *Pergamos* and hell; nay speak
The tale, old man! We met there face to face:
I said the crown should fall from thee: once more
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule:
Look to my brow! Have I redeemed my pledge?

Fest. Peace, peace; ah, see!

Par. Oh, emptiness of fame
Oh, *Persic Zoroaster*, lord of stars!
— Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
Could make me overlook the living world

To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,
 But stand no longer? What a warm light life
 After the shade! In truth, my delicate witch,
 My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
 The juggles I had else detected. Fire
 May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours!
 The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
 But that your white limbs dazzled me: Oh, white,
 And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing!
 I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
 But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,
 The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,
 While I remember that quaint dance; and thus
 I am come back, not for those mummeries,
 But to love you, and to kiss your little feet,
 Soft as an ermine's winter coat!

Fest.

A sense

Will struggle through these thronging words at last,
 As in the angry and tumultuous west
 A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.
 These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
 So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
 The past to stand between it and its fate:
 Were he at Einsiedeln — or Michal here!

Par. Cruel! I see her now — I kneel — I shriek —
 I clasp her vesture — but she fades, still fades;
 And she is gone; sweet human love is gone!
 'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
 Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
 Beside you, and lie down at night by you,
 Who care not for their presence — muse or sleep —
 And all at once they leave you and you know them!
 We are so fooled, so cheated! Why, even now
 I am not too secure against foul play:
 The shadows deepen, and the walls contract —
 No doubt some treachery is going on!

'Tis very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile?
 Have they left us in the lurch? This murky, loathsome
 Death-trap — this slaughter-house — is not the hall
 In the golden city! Keep by me, Aprile!
 There is a hand groping amid the blackness
 To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,
 Poet? Hold on me for your life; if once
 They pull you! — Hold!

'Tis but a dream — no more.

I have you still — the sun comes out again;
 Let us be happy — all will yet go well!
 Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,
 That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
 The value of my labors ascertained,
 Just as some stream foams long among the rocks
 But after glideth glassy to the sea,
 So, full content shall henceforth be my lot?
 What think you, poet? Louder! Your clear voice
 Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask
 How could I still remain on earth, should God
 Grant me the great approval which I seek?
 I, you, and God can comprehend each other,
 But men would murmur, and with cause enough;
 For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,
 Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
 They would complain that comfort, shut from them,
 I drank thus unespied; that they live on,
 Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
 For ache, and care, and doubt, and weariness,
 While I am calm; help being vouchsafed to me,
 And hid from them! — 'Twere best consider that!
 You reason well, Aprile; but at least
 Let me know this, and die! Is this too much?
 I will learn this, if God so please, and die!

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please!

We are so weak, we know our motives least
In their confused beginning: if at first
I sought . . . But wherefore bare my heart to thee?
I know thy mercy; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me willingly
Could I resolve to seek them: Thou art good,
And I should be content; yet — yet first show
I have done wrong in daring! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of strength
That fed my youth — one only hour of that
With thee to help — O what should bar me then!

Lost, lost! Thus things are ordered here! God's
creatures,
And yet he takes no pride in us! — none, none!
Truly there needs another life to come!
If this be all — (I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not — for one,
I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it — and I hurl it back with scorn!

Well, onward though alone: small time remains,
And much to do: I must have fruit, must reap
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body
Will hardly serve me through: while I have labored
It has decayed; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast:
A sad thought — a sad fate! How very full
Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
When glory dawns, and all is at the best —
The sacred fire may flicker, and grow faint,
And die, for want of a wood-piler's help!

Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
Is pulled down in the overthrow: well, well —
Let men catch every word — let them lose naught
Of what I say; something may yet be done.

They are ruins! Trust me who am one of you!
All ruins — glorious once, but lonely now.
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
Beside your desolate fane; the arches dim,
The crumbling columns grand against the moon:
Could I but rear them up once more — but that
May never be, so leave them! Trust me, friends,
Why should you linger here when I have built
A far resplendent temple, all your own?
Trust me, they are but ruins! See, Aprile,
Men will not heed! Yet were I not prepared
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is;
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what? you spit at me, you grin and shriek
Contempt into my ear — my ear which drank
God's accents once? you curse me? Why men, men,
I am not formed for it! Those hideous eyes
Follow me sleeping, waking, praying God,
And will not let me even die: spare, spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
That horrible scorn; you thought I could support it,
But now you see what silly fragile creature
Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
Not Christ, nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
From hate like this: let me but totter back,
Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
Eyelids, and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:
 Be not deceived, there is no passion here,
 Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing
 I am calm; I will exterminate the race!
 Enough of that: 'tis said and it shall be.
 And now be merry — safe and sound am I,
 Who broke through their best ranks to get at you;
 And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!

Fest. Have you no thought, no memory for me,
 Aureole? I am so wretched — my pure Michal
 Is gone, and you alone are left to me,
 And even you forget me: take my hand —
 Lean on me, thus. Do you not know me, Aureole?

Par. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last?
 As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise —
 But you believe I shall go through with it:
 'Tis like you, and I thank you; thank him for me,
 Dear Michal! See how bright St. Saviour's spire
 Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint
 Gay in the glancing light: you might conceive them
 A troop of yellow-vested, white-haired Jews,
 Bound for their own land where redemption dawns!

Fest. Not that blest time — not our youth's time,
 dear God!

Par. Ha — stay! true, I forget — all is done since!
 And he is come to judge me: how he speaks,
 How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all true;
 All quackery; all deceit! myself can laugh
 The first at it, if you desire: but still
 You know the obstacles which taught me tricks
 So foreign to my nature — envy, and hate —
 Blind opposition — brutal prejudice —
 Bald ignorance — what wonder if I sunk
 To humor men the way they most approved?
 My cheats were never palmed on such as you,
 Dear Festus! I will kneel if you require me,

Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
 Explain its bounded nature, and avow
 My insufficiency — whate'er you will:
 I give the fight up! let there be an end,
 A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
 I want to be forgotten even by God!
 But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
 When I shall die, within some narrow grave,
 Not by itself — for that would be too proud —
 But where such graves are thickest; let it look
 Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,
 So that the peasant at his brother's bed
 May tread upon my own and know it not;
 And we shall all be equal at the last,
 Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
 Fathers, sons, brothers, friends — not rich, nor wise,
 Nor gifted: lay me thus, then say, "He lived
 Too much advanced before his brother men:
 They kept him still in front; 'twas for their good,
 But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
 That he should tell God he had never ranked
 With men: so, here at least he is a man!"

Fest. That God shall take thee to his breast, dear
 Spirit,
 Unto his breast, be sure! and here on earth
 Shall splendor sit upon thy name forever!
 Sun! all the heaven is glad for thee: what care
 If lower mountains light their snowy phares
 At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
 The source of day? Men look up to the sun:
 For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
 And put aside the crowd of busy ones,
 And worship thee alone — the master-mind,
 The thinker, the explorer, the creator!
 Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes
 With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as well

The winding sheet of subterraneous fire
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering sea!
Behold thy might in me! thou hast infused
Thy soul in mine; and I am grand as thou,
Seeing I comprehend thee — I so simple,
Thou so august! I recognize thee first;
I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
My homage — thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest!

Par. Festus!

Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God!
I am upon his side, come weal or woe!
His portion shall be mine! He has done well!
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
As he has sinned! Reward him or I waive
Reward! If thou canst find no place for him,
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave for ever! There are two of us!

Par. Dear Festus!

Fest. Here, dear Aureole! ever by you!

Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on!
Some story, anything — only your voice.
I shall dream else. Speak on! aye, leaning so!

Fest. Softly the Mayne river glideth
Close by where my love abideth;
Sleep's no softer: it proceeds
On through lawns, on through meads,
On and on, whate'er befall,
Meandering and musical,
Though the niggard pasture's edge
Bears not on its shaven ledge
Aught but weeds and waving grasses
To view the river as it passes,
Save here and there a scanty patch

Of primroses, too faint to catch

A weary bee . . .

Par. More, more; say on!

Fest. The river pushes
 Its gentle way through strangling rushes,
 Where the glossy kingfisher
 Flutters when noon-heats are near,
 Glad the shelving banks to shun,
 Red and steaming in the sun,
 Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
 Burrows, and the speckled stoat,
 Where the quick sandpipers flit
 In and out the marl and grit
 That seems to breed them, brown as they.
 Nought disturbs the river's way,
 Save some lazy stork that springs,
 Trailing it with legs and wings,
 Whom the shy fox from the hill
 Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Par. My heart! they loose my heart, those simple
 words;

Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch;
 Like some dark snake that force may not expel,
 Which glideth out to music sweet and low.
 What were you doing when your voice broke through
 A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!
 Are you alone here?

Fest. All alone: you know me?
 This cell?

Par. An unexceptionable vault —
 Good brick and stone — the bats kept out, the rats
 Kept in — a snug nook: how should I mistake it?

Fest. But wherefore am I here?

Par. Ah! well remembered:
 Why, for a purpose — for a purpose, Festus!
 'Tis like me: here I trifle while time fleets,

And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return!
You are here to be instructed. I will tell
God's message; but I have so much to say,
I fear to leave half out: all is confused
No doubt; but doubtless you will learn in time.
He would not else have brought you here: no doubt
I shall see clearer soon.

Fest. Tell me but this —
You are not in despair?

Par. I? and for what?

Fest. Alas, alas! he knows not, as I feared!

Par. What is it you would ask me with that earnest, Dear, searching face?

Fest. How feel you, Aureole?

Par. Well!

Well: 'tis a strange thing. I am dying, Festus,
And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
I first perceive how great the whirl has been:
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now —
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
A partner of its motion, and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is spent
And the good boat speeds through the brightening
weather;

But is it earth or sea that heaves below?
For the gulf rolls like a meadow, overstrewn
With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore;
And now some islet, loosened from the land,
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean;
And now the air is full of up-torn canes,
Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life
Drifts by me. I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once: that is, those past conditions

Float back at once on me. If I select
 Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but
 To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
 And only that particular state is present,
 With all its long-forgotten circumstance,
 Distinct and vivid as at first — myself
 A careless looker-on, and nothing more!
 Indifferent and amused, but nothing more!
 And this is death: I understand it all.
 New being waits me; new perceptions must
 Be born in me before I plunge therein;
 Which last is Death's affair; and while I speak,
 Minute by minute he is filling me
 With power; and while my foot is on the threshold
 Of boundless life — the doors unopened yet,
 All preparations not complete within —
 I turn new knowledge upon old events,
 And the effect is . . . But I must not tell;
 It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
 One day. Wait, Festus! You will die like me!

Fest. 'Tis of that past life that I burn to hear!

Par. You wonder it engages me just now?
 In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me?
 Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
 Music, and where I tend bliss overmore.
 Yet how can I refrain? 'Tis a refined
 Delight to view those chances — one last view.
 I am so near the perils I escape,
 That I must play with them and turn them over,
 To feel how fully they are past and gone.
 Still it is like some further cause exists
 For this peculiar mood — some hidden purpose;
 Did I not tell you something of it, Festus?
 I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
 Away from me; it will return anon.

Fest. (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice

Complete with its old tones: that little laugh
 Concluding every phrase, with upturned eye,
 As though one stooped above his head, to whom
 He looked for confirmation and applause —
 Where was it gone so long, being kept so well?
 Then, the forefinger pointing as he speaks,
 Like one who traces in an open book
 The matter he declares; 'tis many a year
 Since I remarked it last: and this in him,
 But now a ghastly wreck!)

And can it be,

Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
 That worldly things are utter vanity?
 That man is made for weakness, and should wait
 In patient ignorance till God appoint . . .

Par. Ha, the purpose; the true purpose: that is it!
 How could I fail to apprehend! You here,
 I thus! But no more trifling; I see all,
 I know all: my last mission shall be done
 If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay; this posture
 Hardly befits one thus about to speak:
 I will arise.

Fest. Nay, Aureole, are you wild?
 You cannot leave your couch.

Par. No help; no help;
 Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once more!
 Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus.
 My gown — the scarlet, lined with fur; now put
 The chain about my neck; my signet-ring
 Is still upon my hand, I think — even so;
 Last, my good sword; ha, trusty Azoth, leapest
 Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?
 This couch shall be my throne: I bid these walls
 Be consecrate; this wretched cell become
 A shrine; for here God speaks to men through me!
 Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

Fest. I am dumb with wonder.

Par. Listen, therefore, Festus!
There will be time enough, but none to spare.
I must content myself with telling only
The most important points. You doubtless feel
That I am happy, Festus; very happy.

Fest. 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him thus!
Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?

Par. Aye, pardoned! yet why pardoned?

Fest. 'Tis God's praise
That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

Par. Have lived!
We have to live alone to set forth well
God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much, as I thought,
And in effect need mercy, for I strove
To do that very thing; but, do your best
Or worst, praise rises, and will rise forever.
Pardon from Him, because of praise denied —
Who calls me to Himself to exalt Himself?
He might laugh as I laugh!

Fest. Then all comes
To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind
To fret themselves with what concerns them not;
They are no use that way: they should lie down
Content as God has made them, nor go mad
In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Par. No, no; mistake me not; let me not work
More harm than I have done! This is my case:
If I go joyous back to God, yet bring
No offering, if I render up my soul
Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,
If I appear the better to love God
For sin, as one who has no claim on him —
Be not deceived: it may be surely thus
With me, while higher prizes still await
The mortal persevering to the end.

For I too have been something, though too soon
I left the instincts of that happy time!

Fest. What happy time? For God's sake, for man's
sake,

What time was happy? All I hope to know
That answer will decide. What happy time?

Par. When, but the time I vowed my help to man?

Fest. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable!

Par. Yes, it was in me; I was born for it —
I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right.

Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
Might learn from its own motions that some task
Like this awaited it about the world;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
For fit delights to stay its longings vast;
And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
To fill the creature full she dared to frame
Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow — bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretense
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
As an extreme, last boon, from Destiny,
Into occasion for new covetings,
New strifes, new triumphs: — doubtless a strong soul
Alone, unaided might attain to this,
So glorious is our nature, so august
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
His naked spirit so majestic!
But this was born in me; I was made so;
Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,
The tumult of unproved desires, the unaimed
Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
Were saved me; thus I entered on my course!

You may be sure I was not all exempt
 From human trouble; just so much of doubt
 As bade me plant a surer foot upon
 The sun-road — kept my eye unruined mid
 The fierce and flashing splendor — set my heart
 Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
 On sufferance — not to idly gaze, but cast
 Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt,
 I stood at first where all aspire at last
 To stand; the secret of the world was mine.
 I knew, I felt (perception unexpressed,
 Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
 But somehow felt and known in every shift
 And change in spirit — nay, in every pore
 Of the body, even) — what God is, what we are,
 What life is — how God tastes an infinite joy
 In infinite ways — one everlasting bliss,
 From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
 Yet whom existence in its lowest form
 Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is He!
 With still a flying point of bliss remote,
 A happiness in store afar, a sphere
 Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever!
 The center-fire heaves underneath the earth,
 And the earth changes like a human face;
 The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
 Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
 In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
 Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask —
 God joys therein! The wroth sea's waves are edged
 With foam, white as the bitten lip of Hate,
 When in the solitary, waste, strange groups
 Of young volcanoes come up, cyclops-like,
 Staring together with their eyes on flame; —

God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride!
 Then all is still: earth is a wintry clod;
 But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
 Over its breast to waken it; rare verdure
 Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
 The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
 Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face;
 The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with
 blooms,
 Like chrysalids impatient for the air;
 The shining dorrs are busy; beetles run
 Along the furrows, ants make their ado;
 Above, birds fly in merry flocks — the lark
 Soars up and up, shivering for very joy:
 Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls
 Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
 Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek
 Their loves in wood and plain; and God renews
 His ancient rapture! Thus he dwells in all,
 From life's minute beginnings, up at last
 To man — the consummation of this scheme
 Of being, the completion of this sphere
 Of life: whose attributes had here and there
 Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
 Asking to be combined — dim fragments meant
 To be united in some wondrous whole —
 Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
 Suggesting some one creature yet to make —
 Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
 Convergent in the faculties of man.
 Power; neither put forth blindly, nor controlled
 Calmly by perfect knowledge; to be used
 At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear:
 Knowledge; not intuition, but the slow
 Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
 Strengthened by love: love; not serenely pure,

But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
 Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds,
 And softer stains, unknown in happier climes;
 Love which endures, and doubts, and is oppressed,
 And cherished, suffering much, and much sustained,
 A blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
 A half-enlightened, often-checkered trust: —
 Hints and previsions of which faculties,
 Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
 The inferior natures; and all lead up higher,
 All shape out dimly the superior race,
 The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
 And Man appears at last: so far the seal
 Is put on life; one stage of being complete,
 One scheme wound up; and from the grand result
 A supplementary reflux of light,
 Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
 Each back step in the circle. Not alone
 For their possessor dawn those qualities,
 But the new glory mixes with the heaven
 And earth: Man, once descried, imprints forever
 His presence on all lifeless things; the winds
 Are henceforth voices, in a wail or shout,
 A querulous mutter, or a quick gay laugh —
 Never a senseless gust now man is born!
 The herded pines commune, and have deep thoughts,
 A secret they assemble to discuss,
 When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
 Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat
 Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
 Swims bearing high above her head: no bird
 Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
 That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
 A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
 Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye:
 The morn has enterprise — deep quiet droops

With evening; triumph takes the sun-set hour,
 Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
 Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:
 — And this to fill us with regard for man,
 With apprehension for his passing worth,
 Desire to work his proper nature out,
 And ascertain his rank and final place:
 For these things tend still upward — progress is
 The law of life — man's self is not yet Man!
 Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
 Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
 While only here and there a star dispels
 The darkness, here and there a towering mind
 O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host
 Is out at once to the despair of night,
 When all mankind alike is perfected,
 Equal in full-blown powers — then, not till then,
 I say, begins man's general infancy!
 For wherefore make account of feverish starts
 Of restless members of a dormant whole —
 Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
 Slumbers as in a grave? O, long ago
 The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
 The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-uttered speech
 Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
 The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand
 clenched stronger,
 As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;
 The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!
 But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
 Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
 He shall start up, and stand on his own earth,
 And so begin his long triumphant march,
 And date his being thence — thus wholly roused,
 What he achieves shall be set down to him!
 When all the race is perfected alike

As Man, that is: all tended to mankind,
 And, man produced, all has its end thus far;
 But in completed man begins anew
 A tendency to God. *Prognostics* told
 Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
 August anticipations, symbols, types
 Of a dim splendor ever on before,
 In that eternal circle run by life:
 For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
 And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
 Their proper joys and griefs; and outgrow all
 The narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
 Before the unmeasured thirst for good; while peace
 Rises within them ever more and more.
 Such men are even now upon the earth,
 Serene amid the half-formed creatures round,
 Who should be saved by them and joined with them.
 Such was my task, and I was born to it —
 Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
 Spirits, high-dowered, but limited and vexed
 By a divided and delusive aim.
 A shadow mocking a reality
 Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
 The flitting mimic called up by itself,
 And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
 By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
 I, from the first, was never cheated so;
 I never fashioned out a fancied good
 Distinct from man's; a service to be done,
 A glory to be ministered unto,
 With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
 From laboring in his behalf; a strength
 Denied that might avail him! I cared not
 Lest his success ran counter to success
 Elsewhere: for God is glorified in man,
 And to man's glory, vowed I soul and limb,

Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
 I failed: I gazed on power till I grew blind —
 On power; I could not take my eyes from that —
 That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased
 At any risk, displayed, struck out at once —
 The sign, and note, and character of man.
 I saw no use in the past: only a scene
 Of degradation, imbecility —
 The record of disgraces best forgotten,
 A sullen page in human chronicles
 Fit to erase: I saw no cause why man
 Should not be all-sufficient even now;
 Or why his annals should be forced to tell
 That once the tide of light, about to break
 Upon the world, was sealed within its spring;
 I would have had one day, one moment's space,
 Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
 To mastery o'er the elemental world
 At once to full maturity, then roll
 Oblivion o'er the tools, and hide from man,
 What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child
 Of after-days, wilt thou reject the *Past*,
 Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
 By which thou hast the earth: the *Present* for thee
 Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
 Beside that *Past's* own shade, whence, in relief,
 Its brightness shall stand out: nor on thee yet
 Shall burst the *Future*, as successive zones
 Of several wonder open on some spirit
 Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven;
 But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
 While hope, and fear, and love, shall keep thee man!
 All this was hid from me: as one by one
 My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,
 As actual good within my reach decreased,
 While obstacles sprung up this way and that,

To keep me from effecting half the sum,
 Small as it proved; as objects, mean within
 The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
 Itself a match for my concentered strength —
 What wonder if I saw no way to shun
 Despair? The power I sought for man, seemed God's!
 In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
 A strange adventure made me know, One Sin
 Had spotted my career from its uprise;
 I saw Aprile — my Aprile there!
 And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
 His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
 I learned my own deep error; love's undoing
 Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
 And what proportion love should hold with power
 In his right constitution; love preceding
 Power, and with much power, always much more love;
 Love still too straitened in its present means,
 And earnest for new power to set it free.
 I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned;
 And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
 My first revealings, would have worshiped me,
 And I despised and loathed their proffered praise —
 When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
 For past credulity in casting shame
 On my real knowledge, and I hated them —
 It was not strange I saw no good in man,
 To overbalance all the wear and waste
 Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
 To prosper in some better sphere: and why?
 In my own heart love had not been made wise
 To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
 To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
 To see a good in evil, and a hope
 In ill-success; to sympathize, be proud
 Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim

Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
 Their prejudice, and fears, and cares, and doubts;
 Which all touch upon nobleness, despite
 Their error, all tend upwardly though weak,
 Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
 But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
 And do their best to climb and get to him.
 All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men
 Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
 Who once loved rashly; and shape forth a third,
 And better tempered spirit, warned by both:
 As from the over-radiant star too mad
 To drink the light-springs, beamless thence itself —
 And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
 Engulfed in icy night — might have its course
 A temperate and equidistant world.
 Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
 As yet men cannot do without contempt —
 'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile
 That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
 Rather than praise the strong and true, in me.
 But after, they will know me! If I stoop
 Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
 It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
 Close to my breast — its splendor, soon or late,
 Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day!
 You understand me? I have said enough?

Fest. Now die, dear Aureole!

Par. Festus, let my hand —
 This hand, lie in your own — my own true friend!
 Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

Fest. And this was Paracelsus!

GENERAL REVIEW OF THE POEM

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PARACELSUS THE POEM PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE 1

PARACELSUS, a student, and pupil of the learned Abbot Trithemius, resolves to give up the monastery cell and ancient books, and go out into the world to seek knowledge of a wider sort. On the eve of his departure, he is talking with his friends Festus and the latter's wife Michal.

Par. Come close to me, dear friends; still closer; thus!

Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats — perchance a long, long time —
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours —
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!

For if you would remember me aright —
 As I was born to be — you must forget
 All fitful, strange, and moody waywardness
 Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
 Only on moments such as these, dear friends!
 — My heart no truer, but my words and ways
 More true to it: as Michal, some months hence,
 Will say, “this autumn was a pleasant time,”
 For some few sunny days; and overlook
 Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.

Michal weeps at this, and in the next few
 lines that Paracelsus speaks, we have painted
 for us a landscape of exquisite charm.

Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
 Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow
 down,
 Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,
 That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
 Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among!
 Then for the winds — what wind that ever raved
 Shall vex that ash that overlooks you both,
 So proud it wears its berries? Ah! at length,
 The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
 Sequestered nest! This kingdom, limited
 Alone by one old populous green wall,
 Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
 Gray crickets, and shy lizards, and quick spiders,
 Each family of the silver-threaded moss —
 Which, look through, near, this way, and it appears
 A stubble-field, or a cane-brake — a marsh
 Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh now!
 Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
 Looking out, wondering at the world — or best,
 Yon painted snail, with his gay shell of dew,

Traveling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps!

Both Festus and Michal are fearful of Paracelsus' methods of gaining wider knowledge; they advise him to seek it in the conventional way and not to venture into untried paths and places "where God meant no man should intrude." But Paracelsus feels that these vast longings that fill his soul are proof of a commission from God. God's command must be fulfilled — new hopes, new light dawn on him; he is set apart for a great work.

Festus says: "Such the aim, then, God set before you," presume not to serve him apart from the appointed channel as he wills shall gather imperfect tributes.

Paracelsus answers: "No, I have nought to fear! Who will may know

The secret'st workings of my soul."

Be sure that God

Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart!
Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
What full-grown power informs her from the first,
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
The silent boundless regions of the sky!

Festus proves the true friend and cautious adviser when he says, "Call this truth? Why

not pursue it in a fast retreat, some one of Learning's many palaces after approved example?" Then Paracelsus, in what is one of the most pregnant passages of the poem, is made to tell of the development in himself of cosmic consciousness.¹

And I smiled as one never smiles but once;
 Then first discovering my own aim's extent,
 Which sought to comprehend the works of God,
 And God himself, and all God's intercourse
 With the human mind; I understood, no less,
 My fellow's studies, whose true worth I saw,
 But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.
 And softer came the voice — "There is a way —
 'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
 With frailty — hopeless, if indulgence first
 Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength:
 Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,
 Apart from all reward?" And last it breathed —
 "Be happy, my good soldier; I am by thee,
 Be sure, even to the end!" — I answered not,
 Knowing Him. As He spoke, I was endued
 With comprehension and a steadfast will;
 And when He ceased, my brow was sealed His own.
 If there took place no special change in me,
 How comes it all things wore a different hue
 Thenceforward? — pregnant with vast consequence —
 Teeming with grand results — loaded with fate;

¹ Cosmic consciousness or the enlargement of nature, is in contradistinction to the sense consciousness. In religion, it has been called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Walt Whitman, who had developed this consciousness, spoke of it in the same way: "All things wore a different hue — Everything in nature seemed so much grander."

So that when quailing at the mighty range
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste
 To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
 Its bearings and effects alone — at once
 What was a speck expands into a star,
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
 Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul!
 I see my way as birds their trackless way —
 I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
 I ask not: but unless God send his hail
 Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
 In some time — his good time — I shall arrive:
 He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

His friends think this a delusion. Festus
 says:

And yet

As strong delusions have prevailed ere now:
 Men have set out as gallantly to seek
 Their ruin; I have heard of such — yourself
 Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

To which Paracelsus answers in what is
 another and subtle passage of the poem:

Aye, sounds it not like some old well-known tale?
 For me, I estimate their works and them
 So rightly, that at times I almost dream
 I too have spent a life the sages' way,
 And tread once more familiar paths. *Perchance*
 I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
 An age ago; and in that act, a prayer
 For one more chance went up so earnest, so
 Instinct with better light let in by Death,
 That life was blotted out — not so completely
 But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,

Dim memories; as now, when seems once more
The goal in sight again: all which, indeed,
Is foolish, and only means — the flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
Than my belief, explained to you or no.¹

Festus advises him that one who dares
effect life's service to his kind, cannot thrive
if cut off from them, unbound by any tie.
That a being not knowing what love is,
would be a monstrous spectacle on earth
beneath the pleasant sun. He says:

You are endowed with faculties which bear
Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
To summon meaner spirits to do their will,
And gather round them at their need; inspiring
Such with a love themselves can never feel —
Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
I know not if you joy in this or no,
Or ever dream that common men can live
On objects you prize lightly, but which make
Their heart's sole treasure: the affections seem
Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste
Or die: and this strange quality accords,
I know not how, with you; sits well upon
That luminous brow, though in another it scowls
An eating brand — a shame. I dare not judge you:
The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
There's no alternative — I own you one
Of higher order, under other laws
Than bind us; therefore, curb not one bold glance!
'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all. . . .

¹ This suggests Paracelsus' belief in the soul's past births.

And Michal in her gentle way beseeches him to give up such hopes and stay with them, tells him he is too proud, and says: “You will find all you seek, and perish so!” Paracelsus protests that he does not lightly disesteem the labors and precepts of old time and the love they so much praise — that he believes truth is within ourselves, that often hemmed in as it is by the gross flesh “a baffling and perverting carnal mesh.” Knowing then consists in opening a way “where the imprisoned splendor may escape.”

He believes then that in discovering the true laws by which the flesh accloys the spirit and how the soul might be set free alike in all, he was working, not against God, but with Him.

See this soul of ours!

How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
 In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
 By age and waste, set free at last by death:
 Why is it, flesh enthralls it or enthrones?
 What is this flesh we have to penetrate?
 Oh, not alone when life flows still do truth
 And power emerge, but also when strange chance
 Ruffles its current; in unused conjuncture,
 When sickness breaks the body — hunger, watching,
 Excess, or languor — oftenest death’s approach —
 Peril, deep joy, or woe. One man shall crawl
 Through life, surrounded with all stirring things,
 Unmoved — and he goes mad; and from the wreck

Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
 You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
 Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
 Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
 Bars in the spirit! We may not be doomed
 To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
 Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God!
 But elevate the race at once! We ask
 To put forth just our strength, our human strength,
 All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
 Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted —
 See if we cannot beat thy angels yet!
 Such is my task. I go to gather this
 The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed
 About the world, long lost or never found.
 And why should I be sad, or lorn of hope?
 Why ever make man's good distinct from God's?
 Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust? ¹

He asks:

Do you believe I shall accomplish this?

Fest. I do believe!

Mich. I ever did believe!

¹ This brings out Paracelsus' belief in the divine principle of man. He says, "The divine principle in man, which constitutes him a human being, and by which he is eminently distinguished from the animals, is not a product of the earth, nor is it generated by the animal kingdom, but it comes from God; it is God, and is immortal, because, coming from a divine source, it cannot be otherwise than divine. Man should, therefore, live in harmony with his divine parent, and not in the animal elements of his soul.

"Man has an eternal Father, who sent him to reside and gain experience in the animal principles, but not for the purpose of being absorbed by them, because in the latter case man would become an animal, while the animal principle would have nothing to gain."

Par. Those words shall never fade from out my
brain!

This earnest of the end shall never fade!

Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,

Two points in the adventure of the diver:

One — when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge?

One — when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?

Festus, I plunge!

Fest. I wait you when you rise!

SCENE 2

PARACELSUS ATTAINS

Over the waters in the vaporous west
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold,
Behind the outstretched city, which between,
With all that length of domes and minarets,
Athwart the splendor, black and crooked runs
Like a Turk verse along a scimeter.

There lie, thou saddest writing, and awhile
Relieve my aching sight. 'Tis done at last!
Strange — and the juggles of a sallow cheat
Could win me to this act!

The scene is laid in a Greek conjurer's house at Constantinople, nine years later. Paracelsus is mentally taking stock of the gains and losses of the past nine years. He has gained some knowledge, but on the whole he has not accomplished what he had hoped. He decides to learn by magic the knowledge he sought, but failed to learn otherwise.

He can seek no longer; his overwrought brain and overtasked body need rest, and he will have it even in failure. He consoles himself by thinking, at the worst he performed his share of the task, that the rest was God's concern, that he had subdued his life to the one purpose whereto he had ordained it.

There was a time
When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
Set not remorselessly love's claims aside;
This heart was human once, or why recall
Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg, which the Mayne
Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm?

But love and strength are gone now, and his life's one ambition, which has been all-absorbing, has not been realized.

And yet 'tis surely much, 'tis very much,
Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
Arrive with inexhaustible light; and lo,
I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not!
While I am left with gray hair, faded hands,
And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast?
Knowledge it seemed, and *Power*, and *Recompense*!
Was she who glided through my room of nights, —
Who laid my head on her soft knees, and smoothed
The damp locks, — whose sly soothings just began
When my sick spirit craved repose awhile —
God! was I fighting Sleep off for Death's sake?

God! Thou art Mind! Unto the Master-Mind
 Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!
 All else I will endure: if, as I stand
 Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,
 I bow me; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will;
 I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die:
 And if no trace of my career remain,
 Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
 In these bright chambers, level with the air,
 See thou to it! But if my spirit fail,
 My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
 Hast thou done well by me? So do not thou!
 Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed!
 Hold me before the frequency of thy seraphs,
 And say — "I crushed him, lest he should disturb
 My law. Men must not know their strength: behold,
 Weak and alone, how near he raised himself!"

From within he hears a voice; it is that of
 Aprile, the spirit of a departed poet who was
 a lover of beauty and beauty alone — a soul
 immoderately possessed with the desire to
 love, as Paracelsus was with the desire to
 know.

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
 Long ago, but all too low,
 So that scarce a thought was stirred
 If really spoke the voice or no:
 I heard it in my youth, when first
 The waters of my life outburst:
 But now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
 The voice, still low, but fatal-clear —
 As if all *Poets*, that God meant
 Should save the world, and therefore lent

Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
To do his work, or lightly used
Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavor,
And mourn, cast off by him forever, —
As if these leaned in airy ring
To call me; this the song they sing.

“Lost, lost! yet come,
With our wan troupe make thy home:
Come, come! for we
Will not breathe, so much as breathe
Reproach to thee!
Knowing what thou sink’st beneath:
So we sank in those old years,
We who bid thee, come! thou last
Who, a living man, hast life o’erpast,
And all together we, thy peers,
Will pardon ask for thee, the last
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
With those who watch, but work no more —
Who gaze on life, but live no more:
And yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
God’s message which our lips, too weak,
Refused to utter, — shouldst redeem
Our fault: such trust, and all, a dream!
So we chose thee a bright birth-place
Where the richness ran to flowers —
Couldst not sing one song for grace?
Nor make one blossom man’s and ours?
Must one more recreant to his race
Die with unexerted powers
And join us, leaving as he found
The world, he was to loosen, bound?
Anguish! ever and for ever;
Still beginning, ending never!
Yet, lost and last one, come!

How couldst understand, alas,
 What our pale ghosts strove to say,
 As their shades did glance and pass
 Before thee, night and day?
 Thou wert blind, as we were dumb;
 Once more, therefore, come, O come!
 How shall we better arm the spirit
 Who next shall thy post of life inherit —
 How guard him from thy ruin?
 Tell us of thy sad undoing
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
 Our weary task, ever renewing
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
 Our powers, and man they could not save!”

Paracelsus demands that Aprile acknowledge him as king and do obeisance to him, but Aprile refuses to acknowledge the kingship of one who knows not the beauties of nature.

Paracelsus:

Be calm, I charge thee, by thy fealty!
 Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

Aprile:

I would love infinitely, and be loved.
 First: I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
 The forms of earth. No ancient hunter, raised
 Up to the gods by his renown; no nymph
 Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree,
 Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,
 Should be too hard for me; no shepherd-king,
 Regal with his white locks; no youth who stands
 Silent and very calm amid the throng,

His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
 Until the tyrant pass; no law-giver;
 No swan-soft woman, rubbed with lucid oils,
 Given by a god for love of her — too hard!
 Each passion sprung from man, conceived by man,
 Would I express and clothe it in its right form,
 Or blend with others struggling in one form,
 Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
 For, if you marveled at some mighty spirit
 With a fit frame to execute his will —
 Aye, even unconsciously to work his will —
 You should be moved no less beside some strong,
 Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
 Endeavoring to subdue it, and inform it
 With its own splendor! All this I would do,
 And I would say, this done, “God’s sprites being
 made,
 He grants to each a sphere to be its world,
 Appointed with the various objects needed
 To satisfy its spiritual desires;
 So, I create a world for these my shapes
 Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength!”
 And, at their word, I would contrive and paint
 Woods, valleys, rocks, and plains, dells, sands, and
 wastes,
 Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering
 bed,
 Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun;
 And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
 A dead whale, who should find them, would swim
 thrice
 Around them, and fare onward — all to hold
 The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone —
 Bronze labyrinths, palace, pyramid, and crypt,
 Baths, galleries, courts, temples, and terraces,
 Marts, theaters, and wharfs — all filled with men!

Men everywhere! And this performed in turn,
 When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes,
 And fears, and hates, and loves which moved the
 crowd, —

I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
 And I would speak: no thought which ever stirred
 A human breast should be untold; no passions,
 No soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
 Within a heart fed with desires like mine —
 To the last comfort, shutting the tired lids
 Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
 Beneath the tent-tree by the way-side well:
 And this in language as the need should be,
 Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
 Now piled up in a grand array of words.
 This done, to perfect and consummate all,
 Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
 I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
 Mysterious notions of the soul, no way
 To be defined save in strange melodies.
 Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
 And having received all love bestowed on it,
 I would die: so preserving through my course
 God full on me, as I was full on men:
 And He would grant my prayer — “I have gone
 through

All loveliness of life; make more for me,
 If not for men — or take me to thyself,
 Eternal, infinite Love!”

If thou hast ne’er

Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
 Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art
 No king of mine.

Paracelsus now realizes the error into
 which they both fell, that they were halves

of a dissevered world, and learning now in what he failed, he feels that he has attained.

Paracelsus:

Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
 To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!
 We wake at length from weary dreams; but both
 Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and drear
 Appears the world before us, we no less
 Wake with our wrists and ankles jeweled still.
 I, too, have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE —
 Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
 Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake:
 What penance canst devise for both of us?

SCENE 3

A CHAMBER IN THE HOUSE OF PARACELSUS AT BASEL, FIVE YEARS LATER

Par. Heap logs, and let the blaze laugh out!

Fest. True, true!

'Tis very fit that all, time, chance, and change
 Have wrought since last we sate thus, face to face,
 And soul to soul — all cares, far-looking fears,
 Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
 By your long absence, should be cast away,
 Forgotten in this glad unhopèd renewal
 Of our affections.

Festus on his way from Wittenberg, where he carried news to Luther, stops at Basel to ask the pleasure of *Œcolampadius* concerning certain missives sent to him and *Zuinglius*.

He learned from Æcolampadius that the famous teacher at the University was his friend, “the wondrous Paracelsus, life’s dispenser, fate’s commissary, idol of the schools and courts.” Together they talk over the old days at Würzburg. The only change is Michal’s added grace of motherhood. Festus speaks of his children and his hopes for his boy whom he has named Aureole after his friend. He tells Paracelsus how kind he is in showing interest in his quiet life, “you, who of old could never tame yourself to tranquil pleasures.”

Paracelsus answers:

Festus, strange secrets are let out by Death,
 Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:
 And I am Death’s familiar, as you know.
 I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,
 Warped even from his go-cart to one end —
 The living on princes’ smiles, reflected from
 A mighty herd of favorites. No mean trick
 He left untried; and truly well nigh wormed
 All traces of God’s finger out of him.
 Then died, grown old; and just an hour before —
 Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes —
 He sate up suddenly, and with natural voice
 Said, that in spite of thick air and closed doors
 God told him it was June; and he knew well,
 Without such telling, hare-bells grew in June;
 And all that kings could ever give or take
 Would not be precious as those blooms to him.

Festus has heard Paracelsus lecture from his professor's chair; has seen the number of eager listeners, has gathered from their faces and murmurs full corroboration of his hopes — his pupils worship him. Paracelsus admits his outward success, but confides to his friend his disappointment and his misery.

He aspired to know God; he attained a professorship at Basel. He has worked certain cures by drugs he has discovered; he has patents, licenses, diplomas, titles from Germany, France, Spain, and Italy, and that which he values most of all, the acknowledgment of his ability from Erasmus of Rotterdam. Yet he feels in all this the turning to most account, the mere wreck of the past. He says:

Well, then: you know my hopes
I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain;
That truth is just as far from me as ever;
That I have thrown my life away; that sorrow
On that account is vain, and further effort
To mend and patch what's marred beyond repairing,
As useless: and all this was taught to me
By the convincing, good old-fashioned method
Of force — by sheer compulsion. Is that plain?

He has fallen in his self-esteem; he is now ambitionless.

“I simply know

I am no master here, but trained and beaten
Into the path I tread.”

He feels that he has preceded his age, and has become intolerant of the teachings of those who had worked on the same path before him. He has burned in public the books of Aëti¹us, Ôribasius, Galen, Rhases, Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes.¹

Festus:

One favor,

And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved;
Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
My friend has changed so sorely: if this mood
Shall pass away — if light once more arise
Where all is darkness now — if you see fit
To hope, and trust again, and strive again;
You will remember — not our love alone —
But that my faith in God’s desire for man
To trust on his support (as I must think
You trusted) is obscured and dim through you;
For you are thus, and this is no reward.
Will you not call me to your side, dear friend?

¹ That modern science owes much to the labors and researches of Paracelsus has been but lately understood.

SCENE 4

TWO YEARS LATER

Paracelsus to Johannes Oporinus, his secretary: "Such is the way to immortality!"

Dear Von Visenburg

Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralyzed,
And every honest soul that Basel holds
Aghast; and yet we live, as one may say,
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
We live; and shall as surely start to-morrow
For Nuremberg, as we drink speedy scathe
To Basel in this mantling wine, suffused
With a delicate blush — no fainter tinge is born
I' th' shut heart of a bud: pledge me, good John —
"Basel; a hot plague ravage it, with Pütter
To stop the plague!" Even so? Do you too share
Their panic — the reptiles?

Paracelsus has been forced to leave Basel; with his secretary he is at an inn at Colmar, in Alsatia. He has sent for his friend Festus to tell him of his exposure as an egregious quack — about his being cast off by those who lately worshiped him, and how when he tried to teach, not amaze them 'to impart the spirit which should instigate the secret of truth," he found himself with an empty classroom, how the faculty turned their backs on

him when they found their conservative methods interfered with, and how he had saved the life of a church dignitary, Liechtenfels by name, who not only refused to pay his fee, but made Basel impossible for him. Festus asks his plans for the future, to which Paracelsus answers:

But I, but I — now Festus shall divine!
 — Am merely setting out in life once more,
 Embracing my old aims! What thinks he now?

.

The aims — not the old means. You know what made
 me

A laughing-stock; I was a fool; you know
 The when and the how: hardly those means again!
 Not but they had their beauty — who should know
 Their passing beauty, if not I? But still
 They were dreams, so let them vanish: yet in beauty,
 If that may be. Stay — thus they pass in song!

(He sings.)

Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes
 Of labdanum, and aloe-balls
 Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
 From out her hair: (such balsam falls
 Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
 From summits where tired winds are fain,
 Spent with the vast and howling main,
 To treasure half their island-gain).

And strew faint sweetness from some old
 Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud,

Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
 And shred dim perfume, like a cloud
 From chamber long to quiet vowed,
 With moth'd and dropping arras hung,
 Moldering the lute and books among
 Of queen, long dead, who lived there young.

And so he is going to set out once more with the old aims but not the same methods; he is going to live his life out seeking knowledge gained through joy, and believing joy should be linked to knowledge. He acknowledges his degraded appetites and his base delights. Festus warns him that the delights that supersede his nobler aims will never content him. Paracelsus declares that he has cast away all remorseless care that clogged his spirit, born to soar so free, and he sings the song:

Over the sea our galleys went,
 With cleaving prows in order brave,
 To a speeding wind and a bounding wave —
 A gallant armament:
 Each bark built out of a forest-tree,
 Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
 And nailed all over the gaping sides,
 Within and without, with black-bull hides,
 Seethed in fat and suppl'd in flame,
 To bear the playful billows' game;
 So each good ship was rude to see,
 Rude and bare to the outward view,
 But each upbore a stately tent;

Where cedar-pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine:
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noon-tide, nor star-shine,
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
Might pierce the regal tenement.

When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar;
But when the night-wind blew like breath
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the strangers from afar,

Lay, stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent,
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
And with light and perfume, music too:
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast!

One morn, the land appeared! — a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky.

“Avoid it,” cried our pilot, “check
The shout, restrain the longing eye!”
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;
So we broke the cedar-pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,

And a statue bright was on every deck!
We shouted, every man of us,

And steered right into the harbor thus,
With pomp and pæan glorious.

An hundred shapes of lucid stone!

All day we built a shrine for each —

A shrine of rock for every one —

Nor paused we till in the westering sun

We sate together on the beach

To sing, because our task was done;

When lo! what shouts and merry songs!

What laughter all the distance stirs!

What raft comes loaded with its throngs

Of gentle islanders?

“The isles are just at hand,” they cried;

“Like cloudlets faint at even sleeping,

Our temple-gates are opened wide,

Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping

For the lucid shapes you bring” — they cried.

Oh, then we woke with sudden start

From our deep dream; we knew, too late,

How bare the rock, how desolate,

To which we had flung our precious freight:

Yet we called out — “Depart!

Our gifts, once given, must here abide:

Our work is done; we have no heart

To mar our work, though vain” — we cried.

Festus, alarmed at his impiety, beseeches him to renounce the past and give up the future, and to return with him to Einsiedeln and wait death amidst holy sights. Paracelsus declares that his lusts forbid such a thing, that he feels sneering devils possess him. He has sunken to the lowest depths. Festus

advises him kindly and again asks him to return to Einsiedeln with him; he tells him of his wife's, Michal's, death, which seems to rouse Paracelsus, and here he expresses his belief in the immortality of the soul.

Par. Stone dead! — then you have laid her
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.
Know then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:
For I believe we do not wholly die.

Fest. Aureole . . .

Par. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason
For what I say: I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Fest. But not on this account alone? you surely,
— Aureole, you have believed this all along?

Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basel, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away!
Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats,
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport! — Behold!

SCENE 5

PARACELSUS ATTAINS

Salzburg, a cell in the hospital at St. Sebastian, thirteen years later.

Paracelsus lies dying. His faithful friend Festus is by his side, and as he watches, he sends up this prayer:

God! Thou art Love! I build my faith on that!
Even as I watch beside thy tortured child,
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?
How has he sinned? How else should he have done?
Surely he sought thy praise — thy praise, for all
He might be busied by the task so much
As to forget awhile its proper end.
Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer
That I should range myself upon his side —
How could he stop at every step to set
Thy glory forth? Hadst Thou but granted him
Success, thy honor would have crowned success,
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred —
Save him, dear God; it will be like thee: bathe him
In light and life! Thou art not made like us;
We should be wroth in such a case; but Thou
Forgivest — so, forgive these passionate thoughts,
Which come unsought, and will not pass away!
I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness — tempering sorrow,
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love:

But what am I? Thou madest him, and knowest
 How he was fashioned. I could never err
 That way: the quiet place beside thy feet,
 Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts;
 But he — Thou shouldst have favored him as well!

Paracelsus now wakens. Festus uses various means to make himself known, and tries to rouse physical consciousness. Paracelsus, in his semi-delirium, goes over the old trouble at Basel; the scorn that was heaped upon him when they called him quack, cheat, and liar. He is still seeking love, but she eludes him, "but she fades, still fades," sweet human love is gone. He dreams of Aprile. He prays God for one hour of the supernatural consciousness of strength that fed his youth to set his heart on God and love. He now with a clearer consciousness recognizes Festus, who assures him that God will take him to his breast, and that splendor shall sit upon his name on earth for ever. Then Festus sings the song:

Softly the Mayne river glideth
 Close by where my love abideth;
 Sleep's no softer: it proceeds
 On through lawns, on through meads,
 On and on, whate'er befall,
 Meandering and musical,
 Though the niggard pasture's edge
 Bears not on its shaven ledge

Aught but weeds and waving grasses
 To view the river as it passes,
 Save here and there a scanty patch
 Of primroses, too faint to catch
 A weary bee . . .

Par. More, 'more; say on!

Fest. The river pushes
 Its gentle way through strangling rushes,
 Where the glossy king-fisher
 Flutters when noon-heats are near,
 Glad the shelving banks to shun,
 Red and steaming in the sun,
 Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
 Burrows, and the speckled stoat,
 Where the quick sand-pipers flit
 In and out the marl and grit
 That seems to breed them, brown as they.
 Nought disturbs the river's way,
 Save some lazy stork that springs,
 Trailing it with legs and wings,
 Whom the shy fox from the hill
 Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

These simple words seem to arouse in
 Paracelsus' full consciousness: he wishes to
 speak; he will arise, he will not speak from
 a couch:

Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus.
 My gown — the scarlet, lined with fur; now put
 The chain about my neck; my signet-ring
 Is still upon my hand, I think — even so;
 Last, my good sword; ha, trusty Azoth, leapest
 Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?
 This couch shall be my throne: I bid these walls

Be consecrate; this wretched cell become
A shrine; for here God speaks to men through me!

Then we have Paracelsus' dying speech which has been said, and justly, to contain some of the most beautiful passages in the English language as well as a foreshadowing of the science which to-day is dawning on the horizon of humanity.

Par. Yes, it was in me; I was born for it —
I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right.
Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
Might learn from its own motions that some task
Like this awaited it about the world;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
For fit delights to stay its longings vast;
And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
To fill the creature full she dared to frame
Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow —bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretense
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
As an extreme, last boon, from Destiny,
Into occasion for new covetings,
New strifes, new triumphs: — doubtless a strong soul
Alone, unaided might attain to this,
So glorious is our nature, so august
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
His naked spirit so majestic!
But this was born in me; I was made so;
Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,
The tumult of unproved desires, the unaimed

Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
 Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
 Were saved me; thus I entered on my course!
 You may be sure I was not all exempt
 From human trouble; just so much of doubt
 As bade me plant a surer foot upon
 The sun-road — kept my eye unruined mid
 The fierce and flashing splendor — set my heart
 Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
 On sufferance — not to idly gaze, but cast
 Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt,
 I stood at first where all aspire at last
 To stand; the secret of the world was mine.
 I knew, I felt (perception unexpressed,
 Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
 But somehow felt and known in every shift
 And change in spirit — nay, 'in every pore
 Of the body, even) — what God is, what we are,
 What life is — how God tastes an infinite joy
 In infinite ways — one everlasting bliss,
 From whom all being emanates, all power
 Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
 Yet whom existence in its lowest form
 Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is He!
 With still a flying point of bliss remote,
 A happiness in store afar, a sphere
 Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs
 Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever!
 The center-fire heaves underneath the earth,¹

¹ Of the passage beginning with this line and ending with "His ancient rapture," Mr. Sharp, in his "Life of Robert Browning," says: "And where in modern poetry is there a superber union of the scientific and the poetic vision than in this magnificent passage — the quintessence of the poet's conception of the rapture of life."

In these lines, particularly in their close, is manifest the

And the earth changes like a human face;
 The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
 Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
 In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
 Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask —
 God joys therein! The wroth sea's waves are edged
 With foam, white as the bitten lip of Hate,
 When in the solitary, waste, strange groups
 Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
 Staring together with their eyes on flame; —
 God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride!
 Then all is still: earth is a wintry clod;
 But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
 Over its breast to waken it; rare verdure
 Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
 The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
 Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face;
 The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with
 blossoms,
 Like chrysalids impatient for the air;
 The shining dorrs are busy; beetles run
 Along the furrows, ants make their ado;
 Above, birds fly in merry flocks — the lark
 Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;
 Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls
 Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
 Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek
 Their loves in wood and plain; and God renews
 His ancient rapture! Thus he dwells in all,²

influence of the noble Hebraic poetry. It must have been at this period that Browning conned over and over with an exultant delight the simple but lordly diction of Isaiah and the other prophets, preferring this Biblical poetry to that even of his beloved Greeks.

² The passage beginning here and ending with the line on page 227, "Who should be saved by them and joined with

From life's minute beginnings, up at last
 To man — the consummation of this scheme
 Of being, the completion of this sphere
 Of life: whose attributes had here and there
 Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
 Asking to be combined — dim fragments meant
 To be united in some wondrous whole —
 Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
 Suggesting some one creature yet to make —
 Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
 Convergent in the faculties of man.
 Power; neither put forth blindly, nor controlled
 Calmly by perfect knowledge; to be used
 At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear:
 Knowledge; not intuition, but the slow
 Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
 Strengthened by love: love; not serenely pure,

them," brings out so well Paracelsus' knowledge of the Secret Doctrine, and his understanding of the cosmic order of the universe. He says: "Man, as such, is the highest being in existence, because in him Nature has reached the culmination of her evolutionary efforts. In him are contained all the powers and all the substances that exist in the world, and he constitutes a world of his own. In him wisdom may become manifest, and the powers of his soul — good as well as evil — may be developed to an extent little dreamed of by our speculative philosophers." "In him are contained all the Coelestia, Terrestria, Undosa, and Aeria" — that is to say, all the forces and beings and forms that may be found in the four elements out of which the Universe is constructed. Man is the Microcosm containing in himself the types of all the creatures that exist in the world, "and it is a great truth, which you should seriously consider, that there is nothing in heaven or upon earth which does not also exist in Man, and God who is in heaven, exists also in man, and the two are but One." "Man is a being and contains many beings within his constitution; nevertheless he is only one individual. These

But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
 Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds,
 And softer stains, unknown in happier climes;
 Love which endures, and doubts, and is oppressed,
 And cherished, suffering much, and much sustained,
 A blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
 A half-enlightened, often-checkered trust: —
 Hints and previsions of which faculties,
 Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
 The inferior natures; and all lead up higher,
 All shape out dimly the superior race,
 The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
 And Man appears at last: so far the seal
 Is put on life; one stage of being complete,
 One scheme wound up; and from the grand result
 A supplementary reflux of light,
 Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
 Each back step in the circle. Not alone

beings within him are himself, and yet they are not his true self. They are many distinct lives within one life, and in the same sense there are many deities in the world, but only one God. Each man in his capacity as a member of the great organism of the world can be truly known only if looked upon in his connection with universal Nature, and not as a separate being isolated from Nature. Man is dependent for his existence on Nature, and the state of Nature depends on the condition of mankind as a whole. If we know Nature, we know Man, and if we know Man, we know Nature.” “Whoever desires to be a practical philosopher ought to be able to indicate heaven and hell in the Microcosm, and to find everything in Man that exists in heaven or upon the earth; so that the corresponding things of the one and the other appear to him as one, separated by nothing else but the form. He must be able to turn the exterior into the interior, but this is an art which he can only acquire by experience and by the light of Nature, which is shining before the eyes of every man, but which is seen by few.”

For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth: Man, once descried, imprints forever
His presence on all lifeless things; the winds
Are henceforth voices, in a wail or shout,
A querulous mutter, or a quick gay laugh —
Never a senseless gust now man is born!
The herded pines commune, and have deep thoughts,
A secret they assemble to discuss,
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head: no bird
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye:
The morn has enterprise — deep quiet droops
With evening; triumph takes the sun-set hour,
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:
— And this to fill us with regard for man,
With apprehension for his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place;
For these things tend still upward — progress is
The law of life — man's self is not yet Man!
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers — then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy!

For wherefore make account of feverish starts
 Of restless members of a dormant whole —
 Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
 Slumbers as in a grave? O, long ago
 The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
 The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-uttered speech
 Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
 The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand
 clenched stronger,
 As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;
 The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!
 But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
 Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
 He shall start up, and stand on his own earth,
 And so begin his long triumphant march,
 And date his being thence — thus wholly roused,
 What he achieves shall be set down to him!
 When all the race is perfected alike
 As Man, that is: all tended to mankind,
 And, man produced, all has its end thus far;
 But in completed man begins anew
 A tendency to God. *Prognostics* told
 Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
 August anticipations, symbols, types
 Of a dim splendor ever on before,
 In that eternal circle run by life:
 For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
 And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
 Their proper joys and griefs; and outgrow all
 The narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
 Before the unmeasured thirst for good; while peace
 Rises within them ever more and more.
 Such men are even now upon the earth,
 Serene amid the half-formed creatures round,
 Who should be saved by them and joined with them.
 Such was my task, and I was born to it —

Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
Spirits, high-dowered, but limited and vexed
By a divided and delusive aim,
A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The flitting mimic called up by itself,
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated so;
I never fashioned out a fancied good
Distinct from man's; a service to be done,
A glory to be ministered unto,
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
From laboring in his behalf; a strength
Denied that might avail him! I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere: for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory, vowed I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed: I gazed on power till I grew blind —
On power; I could not take my eyes from that —
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once —
The sign, and note, and character of man.
I saw no use in the past: only a scene
Of degradation, imbecility —
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase: I saw no cause why man
Should not be all-sufficient even now;
Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring;
I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
To mastery o'er the elemental world

At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the tools, and hide from man,
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the *Past*,
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth: the *Present* for thee
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that *Past's* own shade, whence, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out: nor on thee yet
Shall burst the *Future*, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven;
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope, and fear, and love, shall keep thee man!
All this was hid from me: as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,
As actual good within my reach decreased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and that,
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved; as objects, mean within
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
Itself a match for my concentrated strength —
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair? The power I sought for man, seemed God's!
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, One Sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise;
I saw Aprile — my Aprile there!
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
I learned my own deep error; love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution; love preceding
Power, and with much power, always much more love;
Love still too straitened in its present means,

And earnest for new power to set it free.
I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned:
And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
My first revealings, would have worshiped me,
And I despised and loathed their proffered praise —
When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge, and I hated them —
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere: and why?
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success; to sympathize, be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice, and fears, and cares, and doubts;
Which all touch upon nobleness, despite
Their error, all tend upwardly though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who once loved rashly; and shape forth a third,
And better tempered spirit, warned by both:
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the light-springs, beamless thence itself —
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Engulfed in icy night — might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world.
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt —

'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile
 That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
 Rather than praise the strong and true, in me.
 But after, they will know me! If I stoop
 Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
 It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
 Close to my breast — its splendor, soon or late,
 Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day!
 You understand me? I have said enough?

Fest. Now die, dear Aureole!

Par. Festus, let my hand —
 This hand, lie in your own — my own true friend!
 Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

Fest. And this was Paracelsus!

GLOSSARY

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NOTES TO SCENE 1

Würzburg: The capital of Lower Franconia, Bavaria, situated on the Main. The University of Würzburg was founded in 1403, but was soon discontinued, and was refounded in 1582. It became noted especially for its medical department.

Trithemius of Spanheim was abbot of Würzburg, and was a great astrologer and alchemist.

Einsiedeln: A town in the canton of Schwyz, Switzerland, twenty-two miles east of Lucerne. It is one of the most celebrated of pilgrim resorts. The monastery was founded in the ninth century, and in 1294 received the standing of a principality from the emperor Rudolph. In its portraits, library, and material resources, the venerable monastery is still rich.

Zwingli was a priest here in 1515–19, and not far from the town is the house where Paracelsus was born. Population in 1888 was 8506.

Gier-eagle: A vulture. A bird mentioned in the authorized version of Leviticus xi. 18 (vulture in the revised version), supposed to be the *Neophron percnopterus*.

The Stagirite: Aristotle, who was born at Stagira in Macedon.

NOTES TO SCENE 2

“A Turk verse along a scimitar.” The Arabic, Persian, and Turkish letters lend themselves well to decorative pur-

poses. The Arabs use verses and quotations from the Koran for decorating their homes, pottery, and arms, etc.

Arch-genethliac: A genethliac is a caster of nativities — an astrologer.

NOTES TO SCENE 3

Rhasis or Rhazes: Born at Raj, Persia: died about 932. An Arabian physician, author of an encyclopedia on medicine.

Æcolampadius: A Divinity Professor at Basel.

Castellanus: A French prelate who was bishop of Tulle in 1539, of Maçon in 1544, and of Orleans in 1551. While at Basel he was corrector of the press with Frobenius.

Munsterus: A Christian socialist connected with the Peasants' War; executed 1525.

Frobenius was a famous printer at Basel. He was a friend of Erasmus.

“Cross-grained devil in my sword.” This famous sword of Paracelsus was no laughing matter in those days, and it is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus.

Bumbastus kept a devil's bird,
Shut in the pummel of his sword,
That taught him all the cunning pranks
Of past and future mountebanks.

Hudibras, Part II, Cant. 3.

The mysterious power of the sword was thought to be in Azoth or “laudanum suum,” which he usually carried with him, and with which he worked wonderful cures.

“Sudary of the Virgin:” A handkerchief, relic of the Virgin Mary.

Erasmus: Born at Rotterdam about 1465: died at Basel, 1536. A famous Dutch classical and theological scholar and satirist. He aimed to reform without dismembering the Roman Catholic Church, and at first favored, but subsequently opposed the Reformation, and engaged in a controversy with Luther.

Præclare! Optime! Bravo! Well done!

Aëtius: Born at Amida, Mesopotamia: flourished about 500 A.D. A Greek writer, author of a medical work in sixteen books (Latin translation, 1542). Though essentially a compilation, it is one of the most valuable books of antiquity on medicine.

Oribasius: Court physician of Julian the Apostate (325–403).

Galen: Born at Pergamum, Mysia, about 130 A.D. A celebrated Greek physician and philosophical writer.

Serapion: An Alexandrian physician.

Avicenna: The most celebrated Arabian physician and philosopher. Surnamed “Prince of Physicians.” Born at Afshena, Bokhara, 980: died at Hamadan, Persia, 1037.

Averröes: Born at Cordova about 1120 or 1126. Died at Morocco, 1198. A distinguished Spanish-Arabian philosopher, physician, and commentator on Aristotle.

Zuinglius-Zwingli: A famous Swiss reformer; with Calvin founder of the Reformed Church. Born, 1484: killed at the battle of Kappel, 1531.

Carolstadius: A Professor of Divinity at Wittemberg, who early joined Luther in the new religion.

Suabia: The name of an ancient duchy in the southwest part of Germany.

NOTES TO SCENE 4

Oporinus: Famulus and secretary for two years to Paracelsus. He has been suspected of defaming his memory.

“*Sic itur ad astra!*” Such is the way to immortality.

Liechtenfels: A canon who was rescued *in extremis* by the laudanum of Paracelsus, and who afterwards refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities whose interference Paracelsus would not brook.

“*Quid multa?*” Why say more?

Cassia: A coarse variety of cinnamon; cassia-bark.

Sandal-buds: The most important species of the sandal tree is an evergreen twenty or thirty feet high, with the aspect of privet. Its wood is very fragrant; it is systematically cultivated in India, where it is used for making perfumes and for medicinal purposes.

“Stripes of labdanum” or ladanum, is a resinous juice that exudes from the *Cestus ladaniferus*, a shrub which grows in Spain and Portugal, and from *C. Creticus* and *C. salvifolius*, which grow in Crete, Syria, etc. An inferior sort is in long rolls curled up. It is used in perfumery, and in fumigating-pastils.

Aloe-balls: Aloes. There are several kinds known to commerce. The term here probably means the fragrant resin of the agallochum; lign-aloes the usual meaning in the Bible.

Nard: Indian spikenard. An aromatic unguent prepared from this plant.

“Sweetness from some old Egyptian’s fine worm-eaten shroud.” The odors from the spices which embalm the mummy.

Arras tapestry, specifically the use as hangings or curtains.

Fiat experientia corpore vili. Let the experiment be made on a body of no value (a hospital patient, *e.g.*!).

NOTES TO SCENE 5

Salzburg: Capital of the crownland of Salzburg in Austria; noted for its picturesque location.

“Jove strikes the Titans down:” In Greek mythology a race of primordial deities, children of Uranus and Gæa (Heaven and Earth). While they were of gigantic size and enormous strength, after a terrible war they were overcome by the thunderbolts of Zeus (Jupiter).

Phæton: In Greek mythology the name of the sun-god Helios; also the son of Helios and Prote. The latter obtained

permission from his father to drive his chariot (the sun) across the heavens, but being unable to check his horses, nearly set the earth on fire, and was slain by Zeus with a thunderbolt.

Persic Zoroaster or Zarathushtra: The founder of the Perso-Iranian national religion, which prevailed at the time of the Achæmenidæ (559–330 B.C.), to the close of the Sassanian dynasty (226–641 A.D.). The Zend-Avesta is the Zoroastrian bible.