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THE
TEMPLE
CLASSICS



Edited by
ISRAEL
GOLLANCZ
M.A.



AVREOLVS PHILIPPVS
AB HOHENHEIM,

*Stemmata nobilium genibus PARACELSVS
aurosum,
Qua vetus Helvetia claret Eremitus humo,
Sic oculos sic ora tulit, cum plurima longum
Ducendi stulto per loca ficut iter*

I. Tintoret ad vivum pinxit.



THEOPHRASTVS BOMBAST
DICTVS PARACELSVS

*Lustra novem et medicina vixit, lastro ante
Lutherum,
Postque tuos lastro sanctus, Erasme, rogas,
Asra quater Jena, septembres luce subivit:
Ossa, Sulstburgae nunc cineresque jacent.*

F. Chauveau sculpsit

*Reproduction of the Tintoretto portrait of Paracelsus
referred to in Robert Brownings note.*



PARACELSUS



BY 



ROBERT



BROWNING

2

• M D C C C X C V I I I • P U B L I S H E D • B Y • J • M • D E N T •
• A N D • C O : A L D I N E • H O U S E • L O N D O N • E • C •

PR
4222
P37
1898

PARACELSUS

1835

PART I

PARACELSUS ASPIRES

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

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL

Paracelsus. 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 !

Para-
celsus
takes
leave of
his friend

10

He dis- —My heart no truer, but my words and ways
 courses More true to it: as Michal, some months
 of hence,

autumn 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 20
 Liker my nature's truth: and both are frail,
 And both beloved, for all our frailty.

Michal. Aureole!

Paracelsus. 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 ~~rose~~ after-birth 30
 Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among!
 Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved
 Shall vex that ash which 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,
 Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick spiders,
 Each family of the silver-threaded moss— 40
 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,
 Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
 Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.

He
 pictures
 the life
 of his
 friends
 during his
 absence

Michal. In truth we have lived carelessly
 and well.

Paracelsus. And shall, my perfect pair!—
 each, trust me, born 50

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: that
 plant

Shall never wave its tangles lightly and softly,
 As a queen's languid and imperial arm
 Which scatters crowns among her lovers, but you
 Shall be reminded to predict to me
 Some great success! Ah, see, the sun sinks
 broad

Behind Saint Saviour's: wholly gone, at last! 60

Festus. Now, Aurcole, stay those wandering
 eyes awhile!

You are ours to-night, at least; and while you
 spoke

Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
 Could willing 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?

and *Paracelsus.* I but spoke
 strives to And looked alike from simple joy to see 70
 re-assure The beings I love best, shut in so well
 them 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,—
 Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
 Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
 Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
 And fashion even a wish in their behalf
 Beyond what they possess already here ; 80
 But, unobstructed, may at once forget
 Itself in them, assured how well they fare.
 Beside, this Festus knows he holds me one
 Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain,
 One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
 Too filled with airy hopes to make account
 Of soft delights his own heart garners up :
 Whereas behold how much our sense of all
 That 's beauteous proves alike ! When Festus
 learns
 That every common pleasure of the world 90
 Affects me as himself ; that I have just
 As varied appetite 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.

Festus. True : and the eve is deepening, and we sit
 100 *Festus*
remon-
strates
 with him

As little anxious to begin our talk
 As though to-morrow I could hint of it
 As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
 At sun-dawn ; or could whisper it by fits
 (Trithemius busied with his class the while)
 In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
 Half-frightened by the awful tomes around ;
 Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
 From even-blush to midnight : but, to-morrow !
 Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind ? 110
 We have been brothers, and henceforth the world
 Will rise between us :—all my freest mind ?
 'Tis the last night, dear Aureole !

Paracelsus. 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 120
 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 !

Festus. 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 win

Para- The favour of an eastern king, and how 130
 celsus The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
 protests 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
 Has part.

Paracelsus. Once more ? Alas ! As I fore-
 told.

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

Paracelsus. Dear Festus, hear me. What is
 it you wish ? 140

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 patient cherishing of the self-same 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 : 151

I would have lived their life, and died their death,
 Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny :
 But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
 Taught me to know mankind and know myself :
 And now that I am strong and full of hope,
 That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
 Save those your earnest words made plain to me,
 Now that I touch the brink of my design,

When I would have a triumph in their eyes, 160
 A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
 And Festus ponders gravely!

He chides
 the
 caution
 of Festus

Festus. When you deign

To hear my purpose . . .

Paracelsus. Hear it? I can say

Beforehand all this evening's conference!

'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses: first,

Or he declares, or I, the leading points

Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end

And what God's will; no two faiths e'er agreed

As his with mine. Next, each of us allows

Faith should be acted on as best we may; 170

Accordingly, I venture to submit

My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing

The path which God's will seems to authorise.

Well, he discerns much good in it, avows

This motive worthy, that hope plausible,

A danger here to be avoided, there

An oversight to be repaired: in fine

Our two minds go together—all the good

Approved by him, I gladly recognise,

All he counts bad, I thankfully discard, 180

And naught forbids my looking up at last

For some stray comfort in his cautious brow.

When, lo! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks

Some innate and inexplicable germ

Of failure in my scheme; so that at last

It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof

That we devote ourselves to God, is seen

In living just as though no God there were;

A life which, prompted by the sad and blind

Folly of man, Festus abhors the most; 190

But which these tenets sanctify at once,

Festus Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
 persists Consider it how they may.
 in his *Michal.* Is it so, Festus?
 warning He speaks so calmly and kindly: is it so?

Paracelsus. 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 . . .

Festus. . . . Wearies so 200
 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,
 Had share in your undoing.

Paracelsus. 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 210
 A peril where they most ensure success.

Festus. Prove that to me—but that! Prove
 you abide
 Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
 God's labour 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— 220

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.

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

Festus. 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 230

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 239

Our childhood's home to join the favoured few

Whom, here, Trithemius condescends to teach

A portion of his lore: and not one youth

Of those so favoured, 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.

Now, this new ardour which supplants the old

I watched, too; 'twas significant and strange,

In one matched to his soul's content at length

He
recalls
early
days

traces With rivals in the search for wisdom's prize, 250
 the To see the sudden pause, the total change ;
 growing From contest, the transition to repose—
 ambition From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,
 of Para- To a blank idleness, yet most unlike
 celsus The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
 Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
 That careless bearing, free from all pretence
 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 and
 brief, 261
 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 270
 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 280
 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,—that in itself alone
 Shall its reward be, not an alien end
 Blending 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.

and de-
 signates
 his aim

Paracelsus. You shall not state it thus : 290
 I should not differ from the dreamy crew
 You speak of. I profess no other share
 In the selection of my lot, than this
 My 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 the sages.

Festus. 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 300
 With you, the setting forth such praise to be
 The natural end and service of a man,
 And hold 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. 310
 Suppose this, then ; that God selected you
 To KNOW (heed well your answers, for my faith

but questions his single-ness of purpose 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 endeavour. Now, dare
 you search

Your inmost heart, and candidly avow 320
 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?

Paracelsus [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 330
 Eclipse the aim in me?—if splendour 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,
 Without success forever in its eyes!
 How know I else such glorious fate my own,
 But in the restless irresistible force 340
 That works within me? Is it for human will
 To institute such impulses?—still less,
 To disregard their promptings! What should I

Festus All are passed o'er—it lights on me! 'Tis
 questions time

his New hopes should animate the world, new light
 method Should dawn from new revealings to a race
 Weighed down so long, forgotten so long; thus
 shall

The heaven reserved for us at last receive
 Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,
 But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
 Whose beams not seldom blessed their pilgrimage,
 Not seldom glorified their life below. 380

Festus. 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,
 Unravelling the knots their baffled skill 390
 Pronounced inextricable, true!—but left
 Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
 Might do much at their vigour's waning-point;
 Succeeding with new-breathed new-hearted
 force,

As at old games the 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 401

Where yours will fall the first of human feet? and
 Has wisdom sat there and recorded aught reproves
 You press to read? Why turn aside from her his
 To visit, where her vesture never glanced, rejection
 Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness of the
 By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn? wisdom
 Now—ruins where she paused but would not stay, of the
 Old ravished cities that, renouncing her, past
 She called an endless curse on, so it came: 410
 Or worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
 Ignoblest troops who 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 Stagirite
 Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!
 Whatever you may protest, knowledge is not
 Paramount in your love; or for her sake 420
 You would collect all help from every source—
 Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would merge
 In the broad class of those who showed her
 haunts,
 And those who showed them not.

Paracelsus.

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 would I convey: but rather
 I will believe an angel ruled me thus, 430
 Than that my soul's own workings, own high
 nature,
 So became manifest. I knew not then

Paracelsus tells of his intimations of a great destiny

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 light 440
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 everlasting concourse of mankind!
Believe that ere I joined them, ere I knew 450
The purpose of the pageant, or the place
Consigned me in its ranks—while, just awake,
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 460
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 470
 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 479
 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 !

Describes
 his early
 enthu-
 siasm

Festus.

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

Paracelsus. I touch on that ; these words but
 analyse

The 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. 490

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

his To do, these have accomplished : we are peers.
 unfitness They know and therefore rule : I, too, will
 for lower know !'
 aims

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, 500
 But since they strove I strove. Then came a
 slow

And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
 Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim counts
 A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong,
 Or staggered only at his own vast 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 510
 Within me ; and this lasted till one night
 When, as I sat revolving it and more,
 A still voice from without said—'Seest thou not,
 Desponding child, whence spring defeat and loss?
 Even from thy strength. Consider : hast thou
 gazed

Presumptuously on wisdom's countenance,
 No veil between ; and can thy faltering hands,
 Unguided by the brain the sight absorbs,
 Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do
 Whom radiance ne'er distracted ? Live their
 life 520

If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their
 eyes

Unfed by splendour. 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 for ever ;
 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 !' 530
 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 fellows' 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 540
 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.

and his
 sense of
 his true
 task

If there took place no special change in me,
 How comes it all things wore a different hue 550
 'Thenceforward ?—pregnant with vast conse-
 quence,
 Teeming with grand result, loaded with fate ?
 So that when, quailing at the mighty range
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste

He rejects
the
wisdom of
the past

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. 560
I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God sent his hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In his good time!
Michal. Vex him no further, Festus; it is so!
Festus. 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 marcher gone that way. 570
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.

Paracelsus. Their light! the sum of all is
briefly this:

They laboured and grew famous, and the fruits
Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth 580
Given over to a blind and endless strife
With evils, what of all their lore abates?
No; I reject and spurn them utterly
And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside 590
Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye
While in the distance heaven is blue above
Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns?

Festus. 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 Festus
 Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen. yields

Michal. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims
 faint

Through the drear way, do you expect to see
 Their city dawn amid the clouds afar? 590

Paracelsus. Ay, 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
 Ages 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 600
 But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
 Dim memories, as now, when once more seems
 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.

Festus. And who am I, to challenge and dispute
 That clear belief? I will divest all fear.

Michal. Then Aureole is God's commissary!
 he shall

Be great and grand—and all for us!

Paracelsus. No, sweet! 610

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.

Festus. Look well to this ; here is a plague-
 spot, here,

but Disguise it how you may! 'Tis true, you utter
 reproves This scorn while by our side and loving us ;
 his 'Tis but a spot as yet : but it will break
 contempt Into a hideous blotch if overlooked
 of love

How can that course be safe which from the first
 Produces carelessness to human love? 620

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 631
 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, 640
 How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach !

Michal. 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 !

Paracelsus. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims,
 at length

Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need **and**
 A further strengthening in these goodly helps! **makes**
 My course allures for its own sake, its sole **a last**
 Intrinsic worth; and ne'er shall boat of mine **appeal** 650
 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.

Festus. But do not cut yourself from human
 weal! 660

You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
 To spend his life in service to his kind
 For no reward of theirs, unbound 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!'

Paracelsus. And who but lately 670
 Was to rejoice in my success like you?
 Whom should I love but both of you?

Festus. I know not:
 But know this, you, that 'tis no will of mine
 You should abjure the lofty claims you make;
 And this the cause—I can no longer seek
 To overlook the truth, that there would be
 A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,

Michal Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees :
 warns —A being knowing not what love is. Hear me !
 Para- You are endowed with faculties which bear 680
 celsus Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
 against To summon meaner spirits to do their will
 success 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 690
 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 . . .

Michal. Stay with us, Aureole ! cast those
 hopes away, 700

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 !

—Warns me to have in dread no quick repulse,
 No slow defeat, but a complete success :
 You will find all you seek, and perish so !

Paracelsus [*after a pause*]. Are these the
 barren firstfruits of my quest ?

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 711
 To justify 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 720
 Sufficient to sustain my soul: for thus
 I understand these fond fears just expressed.
 And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,
 The labours and the precepts of old time,
 I have not lightly disesteemed. But, friends,
 Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
 From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
 There is an inmost centre in us all,
 Where truth abides in fulness; and around,
 Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in, 730
 This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.
 A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
 Binds it, and makes all error: and to KNOW
 Rather consists in opening out a way
 Whence the imprisoned splendour 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, 740

He tells
 how truth
 dwells
 within

till To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
 chance Shall favour : chance—for hitherto your sage
 makes an Even as he knows not how those beams are
 outlet 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 labour ne'er performed ;
 While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
 To autumn loiterers just as fancy free 750
 As the midges in the sun, gives birth at last
 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 a soul
 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 760
 In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
 By age and waste, set free at last by death :
 Why is it, flesh enthral's 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, watch-
 ing,
 Excess or languor—oftenest death's approach,
 Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall crawl 770
 Through life surrounded with all stirring things,

Unmoved; and he goes mad: and from the wreck **It is his**
 Of what he was, by his wild talk alone, **task to**
 You first collect how great a spirit he hid. **set free**
 Therefore, set free the soul alike in all, **the soul**
 Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
 Accloys 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 780
 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 thine 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? 790
 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 its narrow sphere,
 But chose to figure forth another world
 And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
 And all a dream! Thus was life scorned; but
 life 800
 Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth! I am
 priest!
 And all for yielding with a lively spirit

An earnest of the end
 A poor existence, parting with a youth
 Like those 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 811
 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, see, they look on me: I triumph now! 821
 But one thing, Festus, Michal! I have told
 All I shall e'er disclose to mortal: say—
 Do you believe I shall accomplish this?

Festus. I do believe!

Michal. I ever did believe!

Paracelsus. 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, 830
 One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?
 Festus, I plunge!

Festus. We wait you when you rise!

PART II

PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE.—*Constantinople ; the house of a Greek
Conjurer. 1521*

PARACELSUS

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

There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
Possess my aching sight ! 'Tis done at last.
Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat
Have won me to this act ! 'Tis as yon cloud
Should voyage unwrecked 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 reached, without regard
To the extent above ; fairly compute
All I have clearly gained ; for once excluding
A brilliant future to supply and perfect

Para-
celsus
reckons
his gains

and All half-gains and conjectures and crude hopes :
 inscribes And all because a fortune-teller will 19
 his life's His credulous seekers should inscribe thus much
 results Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,
 Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
 Make up the sum : and here amid the scrawled
 Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
 Old arch-genethliac, lie my life's results !

A 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, 30
 In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
 Confusedly massed as when acquired ; he was
 Intent on gain to come too much to stay
 And scrutinise the little gained : the whole
 Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber
 And a mad lover's ditty—there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
 A whole life, and my life ! Nothing to do,
 No problem for the fancy, but a life
 Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve 40
 Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does this
 Remembrancer set down concerning 'life' ?
 "Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty
 dream,"

It is the 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 pass o'er him

Till some one hour's experience shows what ⁴⁹He con-
 nothing, ^{rest}templated
 It seemed, 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." "

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

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 but some assurance beam, some close
 To my toil grow visible, and I proceed ⁶⁰
 At any price, though closing it, to die.
 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 sang it o'er the sea?

An end, a rest! strange how the notion, once
 Encountered, gathers strength by moments! Rest!
 Where has it kept so long? this throbbing brow
 To cease, this beating heart to cease, all cruel
 And gnawing thoughts to cease! To dare let
 down ⁷⁰

My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare unnerve
 My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know my place,
 My portion, my reward, even my failure,
 Assigned, made sure for ever! To lose myself
 Among the common creatures of the world,

leaving
the event
to God

To draw some gain from having been a man,
Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length!
Even in failure, rest! But rest in truth
And power and recompense . . . I hoped that
once!

What, sunk insensibly so deep? Has all 80
Been undergone for this? This the request
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal? Had I gone
Slightly through my task, and so judged fit
To moderate my hopes; nay, were it now
My sole concern to exculpate myself,
End things or mend them,—why, I could not
choose

A humbler mood to wait for the event!
No, no, there needs not this; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the
task: 90

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-court so far
That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten now
Upon him, fairly past their power; no, no—
He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,
Having a charm to baffle them; behold, 100
He bares his front: a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams and glooms!
If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up
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 purpose
 Whereto I ordained it; there alone I spy
 No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.

He tells
 of his
 sacrifices

Yes, well have I subdued my life! beyond
 The obligation of my strictest vow, 110
 The contemplation of my wildest bond,
 Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,
 But in its actual state, consenting fully
 All passionate impulses its soil was formed
 To rear, should wither; but foreseeing not
 The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,
 Would seem one day, remembered as it was,
 Beside the parched sand-waste which now it is,
 Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
 I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail 120
 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
 With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride? 131
 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

of the Tyranny of his aim
 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 : 140
 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 my future plans,
 Since I had just determined to become
 The greatest and most glorious man on earth.
 And since that morn all life has been forgotten ;
 All is one day, one only step between 151
 The outset and the end : one tyrant all-
 Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,
 One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
 Through a career apparently adverse
 To its existence : life, death, light and shadow,
 The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
 Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
 Not ministers of sorrow or delight :
 A wondrous natural robe in which she went. 160
 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 ;
 I see the robe now—then I saw the form.
 So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
 So much is good, then, in this working sea 170

Which parts me from that happy strip of land : and of
 But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too ! the bitter-
 And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough, ness of
 And still more faint as the sea widens ; last failure
 I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light
 From its own putrefying depths alone.
 Then, God was pledged to take me by the hand ;
 Now, any miserable juggle can bid
 My pride depart. All is alike at length :
 God may take pleasure in confounding pride 180
 By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—
 I am here, in short : so little have I paused
 Throughout ! I never glanced behind to know
 If I had kept my primal light from wane,
 And thus insensibly am—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. Let me weep 189
 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 supreme and pure as ever !
 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 ? 200
 O God, the despicable heart of us !
 Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart !

He fears some-thing worse '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. 210
 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 much, surely 'tis very much,
 Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
 To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
 Arrived with inexhaustible light ; and lo,
 I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not !
 And I am left with grey hair, faded hands, 220
 And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
 Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?
 Knowledge it seemed, and power, and recom-
 pense !
 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 231

Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down, and cries
 I bow me ; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will ; to God to
 I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die ; renew
 And if no trace of my career remain him
 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, 239
 Hast thou done well by me ? So do not thou !
 Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be
 crushed !

Hold me before the frequence 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 he had raised himself ! '

But if delusions trouble me, and thou,
 Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
 Throughout my toils and wanderings, dost
 intend
 To work man's welfare through my weak
 endeavour,
 To crown my mortal forehead with a beam 250
 From thine own blinding crown, to smile, and
 guide
 This puny hand and let the work so wrought
 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, but only one !
 That I may cover with an eagle-glance

Aprile The truths I have, and spy some certain way 260
speaks To mould 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 : a fire-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, 270
 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 !
 No man could ever offend as I have done . . . 280

[*A voice from within.*]

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
 Long ago, but all too low,
 So that scarce a care it stirred
 If the voice were real or no :
 I heard it in my youth when first
 The waters of my life outburst :
 But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
 That voice, still low, but fatal-clear—
 As if all poets, God ever meant

Should save the world, and therefore lent and tells
 Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused 291 of the
 To do his work, or lightly used poets who
 Those gifts, or failed through weak en- failed
 deavour,

So, mourn cast off by him for ever,—
 As if these leaned in airy ring
 To take me ; this the song they sing.

‘ Lost, lost ! yet come,
 With our wan troop make thy home.
 Come, come ! for we
 Will not breathe, so much as breathe 300
 Reproach to thee,
 Knowing what thou sink’st beneath.
 So sank we in those old years,
 We who bid thee, come ! thou last
 Who, living yet, hast life o’erpast.
 And altogether we, thy peers,
 Will pardon crave 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. 310
 Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
 The message which our lips, too weak,
 Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem
 Our fault : such trust, and all a dream !
 Yet we chose thee a birthplace
 Where the richness ran to flowers :
 Couldst not sing one song for grace ?
 Not make one blossom man’s and ours ?
 Must one more recreant to his race
 Die with unexerted powers, 320
 And join us, leaving as he found

He
greet
s
Para-
celsus

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 wast blind as we were dumb: 330
 Once more, therefore, come, O come!
 How should we clothe, how arm the spirit
 Shall next thy post of life inherit—
 How guard him from thy speedy 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.

Ha, ha! our king that wouldst be, here at last?
 Art thou the poet who shall save the world? 341
 Thy hand to mine! Stay, fix thine eyes on
 mine!
 Thou wouldst be king? Still fix thine eyes on
 mine!
Paracelsus. 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 robes him in my robe and grasps my crown
 For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect? 351
 I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
 That such might come, and thou didst hear the
 while!

Each
 miscon-
 ceives the
 other

Aprile. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine; my
 hair
 Is soft, nay silken soft: to talk with thee
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.
 Truly, thou hast laboured, 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 360
 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.

Paracelsus. Ah fiend, I know thee, I am not
 thy dupe!
 Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
 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 hast searched
 or striven!

Ay, tell the world! Degrade me after all, 370
 To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
 To all but envy of thy fate, be sure!

Aprile. Nay, sing them to me; I shall envy
 not:
 Thou shalt be king! Sing thou, and I will sit

Aprile Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
 tells his And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
 fate To fill thy throne : but none shall ever know !
 Sing to me ; for already thy wild eyes
 Unlock my heart strings, as some crystal-shaft
 Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount 380
 After long time : so thou reveal'st my soul.
 All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear !

Paracelsus. (His secret ! I shall get his
 secret—fool !)

I am he that aspired to KNOW : and thou ?

Aprile. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved !

Paracelsus. Poor slave ! I am thy king indeed.

Aprile. 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, but neglected all the means 390
 Of realising 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. 400
 I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

Oh ye who armed me at such cost,

How shall I look on all of ye

With your gifts even yet on me ?

Paracelsus. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck creature
 after all !)

Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den : how he
 They spread contagion, doubtless : yet he seemed would
 To echo one foreboding of my heart fain have
 So truly, that . . . no matter ! How he stands carved
 With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair 410
 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 the brow
 And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-set
 In slow despondency's eternal sigh !
 Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the
 cause ?)

I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm !

Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

Aprile. I would love infinitely, and be loved. 420
 First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
 The forms of earth. No ancient hunter lifted
 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 for 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 lawgiver, 430
 No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid oils
 Given by a god for love of her—too hard !
 Every 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.
 Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit

and With a fit frame to execute its will—
 painted, Even unconsciously to work its will—
 and sung You should be moved no less beside some strong
 Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body, 441
 Endeavouring to subdue it and inform it
 With its own splendour! All this I would do:
 And I would say, this done, 'His sprites created,
 God grants to each a sphere to be its world,
 Appointed with the various objects needed
 To satisfy its own peculiar want;
 So, I create a world for these my shapes
 Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength!'

And, at the word, I would contrive and paint 450
 Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells, sands
 and wastes,
 Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quiver-
 ing 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 labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt,
 Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces, 459
 Marts, theatres 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; all passions,

All 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 470
 Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside 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 motions of the soul, no way
 To be defined save in strange melodies.
 Last, having thus revealed all I could love, 480
 Having received all love bestowed on it,
 I would die : preserving so throughout my course
 God full on me, as I was full on men :
 He would approve my prayer, ' I have gone
 through
 The loveliness of life ; create for me
 If not for men, or take me to thyself,
 Eternal, infinite love ! '

express-
 ing in
 art, 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. Ah me !

Aprile. But thou art here ! 490
 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 !

He should have made the best of his means
 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, 500
 And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
 We will be 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 goodwill
 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
 Answering to our mind! But now I seem 510
 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 pass them. Serpents'
 scales,
 And painted birds' down, 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, 520
 Cressets should hang, by right: this way we set
 The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
 Woven of fern and rush and blossoming flag.'
 Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
 Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight
 sample
 Of the prouder workmanship my own home
 boasts,

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 ! 530
 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 to them, worthless or true. 540
 ' 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 tracts 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, 549
 They are scarce lovely: plait and wear them, you !
 And guess, from what they are, the springs that
 fed them,
 'The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,
 'The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew !'
 Thus for my higher loves ; and thus even weakness
 Would win me honour. But not these alone
 Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants

prizing
 the
 smallest
 gain of
 good

not And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :
 ruined, as The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
 now, by A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
 excess of Than he his own heart's language. I would live
 treasure For ever in the thoughts I thus explored, 561
 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. 571

But, master, poet, who hast done all this,
 How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming me ?
 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 580
 By thee for ever, 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, wast 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 590
 'Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
 And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever
 Could tempt thee to forsake them? Or when years
 Had passed and still their love possessed thee
 wholly,

His fall
 and his
 excuse

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, 600
 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 snow-drifts blind a man who treads
 A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through
 storm?

Yay, though I fell, I had excuse to fall;
 Yay, I was tempted sorely: say but this,
 Dear lord, Aprile's lord!

Paracelsus. Clasp me not thus, 609
 Aprile! That the truth should reach me thus!
 We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not or I faint:

Aprile. 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?

Para- Tears in the darkness, and from thee to me?
 celsus *Paracelsus.* Love me henceforth, Aprile, while
 awakens I learn 618

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 jewelled 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?

Aprile. I hear thee faintly. The thick dark-
 ness! Even

Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew: I speak,
 And now I die. But I have seen thy face! 630
 O poet, think of me, and sing of me!
 But to have seen thee and to die so soon!

Paracelsus. 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!

Aprile. To speak but once, and die! yet by
 his side. 640

Hush! hush!

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

Paracelsus. Whom can you see

Through the accursed darkness?

Aprile.

Stay; I know, Para-
celsus
attains

I know them: who should know them well as I?

White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!

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

Aprile. Yes; I see now. God is the perfect poet,

Who in his person acts his own creations. 649

Had you but told me this at first! Hush! hush!

Paracelsus. 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, one little word, Aprile!

Aprile. No, no. Crown me? I am not one of you!

'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one.

Paracelsus. Thy spirit, at least, Aprile! Let me love! 660

I have attained, and now I may depart.

PART III

PARACELSUS

SCENE.—*Basil ; a chamber in the house
of PARACELSUS. 1526*

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

A renewal
of affec-
tions

Paracelsus. Heap logs and let the blaze laugh
out!

Festus. True, true!
'Tis very fit all, time and chance and change
Have wrought since last we sat 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.

Paracelsus. Oh, omit not aught
Which witnesses your own and Michal's own
Affection: spare not that! Only forget 10
The honours and the glories and what not,
It pleases you to tell profusely out.

Festus. Nay, even your honours, 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 best I could the promptings of my spirit
 Which secretly advanced you, from the first, 20
 To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own
 Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
 Has won for you.

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

Festus. Just so.

Paracelsus. And yet her calm sweet counten-
 ance,
 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 31
 Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
 Sat 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!

Festus. Scarcely alone: her children, you may
 guess,
 Are wild beside her.

Paracelsus. Ah, those children quite
 Unsettle the pure picture in my mind:
 A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct: 40
 No change, no change! Not but this added grace
 May blend and harmonise 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.

Festus So, Michal—you have said she thinks of me ?
recalls *Festus.* O very proud will Michal be of you !
their Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,
early Scheming and wondering, shaping your presumed
hopes of Adventure, or devising its reward ; 50
Para- Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
celsus For 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. 59
 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 of them 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 . . .
 Paracelsus. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so
 much
 In the fantastic projects and day-dreams 70
 Of a raw restless boy !
 Festus. Oh, no : the sunrise
 Well warranted our faith in this full noon !
 Can I forget the anxious voice which said
 'Festus, have thoughts like these ere shaped
 themselves
 In other brains than mine ? have their possessors

Existed in like circumstance? were they weak and
 As I, or ever constant from the first, notes the
 Despising youth's allurements and rejecting change
 As spider-films the shackles I endure? he finds
 Is there hope for me?'—and I answered gravely in him
 As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser, 81
 More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
 For all your glorious . . .

Paracelsus. Glorious? ay, 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?

Festus. 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, 90
 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.

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

Festus. 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 100

Para- Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
 celsus Have I that he will honour (the wild imp)
 makes His namesake. Sigh not! 'tis too much to ask
 light of That all we love should reach the same proud
 his own achievement fate.

But you are very kind to humour me
 By showing interest in my quiet life ;
 You, who of old could never tame yourself
 To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

Paracelsus. Festus, strange secrets are let out
 by death

Who blabs so oft the follies of this world : 110
 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 favourites. 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 sat up suddenly, and with natural voice 120

Said that in spite of thick air and closed doors
 God told him it was June ; and he knew well,

Without such telling, harebells 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 sage,

It seems to me much worthier argument

Why pansies,¹ eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize
 From violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's
 choice)—

¹ Citrinula (flammula) herba Paracelso multum familiaris.—DORN.

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 instance, willing other men
 May be at pains, demonstrate to itself
 The realness of the very joy it tastes.
 What should delight me like the news of friends
 Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
 As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight?
 Offer than you had wasted thought on me 141
 Had you been wise, and rightly valued bliss.
 But there's no taming nor repressing hearts:
 God knows I need such!—So, you heard me
 speak?

Festus. Speak? when?

Paracelsus. 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-skulled youths
 As please, each day, to throng the theatre, 150
 To my great reputation, and no small
 Danger of Basil's benches long unused
 To crack beneath such honour?

Festus.

I was there;

I mingled with the throng: shall I avow
 Small care was mine 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

130 He
 speaks
 of his
 lectures

and Know, care for nought beyond your actual state,
 perplexes Your actual value ; yet they worship you, 160
 Festus Those various natures whom you sway as one !
 with his But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .
 irony

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

Festus. Surely, Aureole, 170
 You laugh at me !

Paracelsus. 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 strangely
 To thinking men ; a smile were better far ;
 So, make me smile ! If the exulting looks
 You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long
 Since I have smiled ! Alas, such smiles are
 born 180

Alone of hearts like yours, or herdsmen's souls
 Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
 Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
 And in the earth a stage for altars only.
 Never change, Festus : I say, never change !

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

Paracelsus. When last we parted, Festus, you
 declared, Festus
cannot
com-
prehend
 —Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered words
 I have preserved. She told me she believed
 I should succeed (meaning, that in the search 190
 I then engaged in, I should meet success)
 And yet be wretched: now, she augured false.

Festus. 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, could move
 Such earnest mood in you? Fear not, dear
 friend,
 That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
 Your lot was not my own!

Paracelsus. And this for ever!
 For ever! gull who may, they will be gulled! 200
 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 I had come, sure, long ere this,
 To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end, 210
 And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
 A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
 Past all dispute! 'Tis vain to fret at it.
 I have vowed long ago my worshippers
 Shall owe to their own deep sagacity

Para- All further information, good or bad.
 celsus Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
 explains Unless perchance the glance now searching me
 Be fixed much longer ; for it seems to spell
 Dimly the characters a simpler man 220
 Might read distinct enough. Old Eastern books
 Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space
 Remained unchanged in semblance ; nay, his brow
 Was hued with triumph : every spirit then
 Praising, *his* heart on flame the while :—a tale !
 Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray ?

Festus. Some foul deed sullies then a life
 which else

Were raised supreme ?

Paracelsus. Good : I do well, most well ;
 Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret them-
 selves 229

With what is past their power to comprehend ?
 I should 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 mad
 And ruinous course, the converse of his own, 240
 His gentle 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 it by right should have increased despair :

—Having believed, I say, that this one man
 Could never lose the light thus from the first
 His portion—how should I refuse to grieve
 At even my gain if it disturb our old
 Relation, if it make me out more wise? 250

He
 asserts
 that he
 has failed

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 miserable; 'tis said at last; nor you
 Give credit, lest you force me to concede
 That common sense yet lives upon the world!

Festus. You surely do not mean to banter me?

Paracelsus. You know, or—if you have been
 wise enough 261

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 then only when mischance retarded
 Its progress. That was in those Würzburg
 days!

Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate, 270
 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 favoured me. I scarce have right
 To vex your frank good spirit late so glad
 In my supposed prosperity, I know,
 And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,

and pro-
 phesies
 his own
 exposure

Would well agree to let your error live,
 Nay, strengthen it with fables of success. 280
 But mine is no condition to refuse
 The transient solace of so rare a godsend,
 My solitary luxury, my one friend :
 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—Basil being drained 290
 Of its wise population, every corner
 Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,
 Here Ecolampadius, looking worlds of wit,
 Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
 Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all squeezed
 And staring,—that the zany of the show,
 Even Paracelsus, shall put off before them
 His trappings with a grace but seldom judged
 Expedient in such cases :—the grim smile
 That will go round ! Is it not therefore best 300
 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 !
Festus. These are foul vapours, 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. 310

'Tis not thus you would trust a trouble to me,
To Michal's friend.

Festus
still
protests

Paracelsus. I have said it, dearest Festus!
For the manner, 'tis ungracious probably;
You may have it 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?

Festus. No; it must oft fall out
That 'one whose labour perfects any work,
Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he
Of all men least can measure the extent 320
Of what he has accomplished. He alone
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
May clearly scan the little he effects:
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.

Paracelsus. 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, 330
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread, so sure they spy success!

Festus. Few doubtful steps? when death re-
tires before
Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,
Broken in body or subdued in soul,
May through your skill renew their vigour, 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 340

Para- As in a flying sphere of turbulent light ?
 celsus When we may look to you as one ordained
 insists To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
 Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul ?
 When . . .

Paracelsus. When and where, the devil, did
 you get
 This notable news ?

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

Paracelsus. Folly ? Why not
 To magic, pray ? You find a comfort doubtless
 In holding, God ne'er troubles him about 351
 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 ; and hereupon
 I pay due homage : you guessed long ago
 (The prophet !) I should fail—and I have failed.

Festus. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes
 which fed 360
 Your youth have not been realised as yet ?
 Some obstacle has barred them hitherto ?
 Or that their innate . . .

Paracelsus. As I said but now,
 You have a very decent prophet's fame,
 So you but shun details here. Little matter
 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. 371

He
 wishes
 to change
 the theme

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 peace,
 To judge by any good their prayers effect.
 I knew you would have helped me—why not he,
 My strange competitor in enterprise, 380
 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, they miss
 Your lone sad sunny idleness of heaven,
 Our 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 389
 This meeting wakens ; they have had their vent,
 And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
 Hang like a fretwork on the gate (or what
 In my time was a gate) fronting the road
 From Einsiedeln to Lachen ?

Festus.

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 will unflinching, and in spite of this,

but You have experienced a defeat, why then 400
 Festus is I say not you would cheerfully withdraw
 still un- From contest—mortal hearts are not so
 satisfied fashioned—

But surely you would ne'ertheless withdraw.
 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 !

Paracelsus. As though 'here' did not signify
 defeat ! 410

I spoke not of my little labours here,
 But of the break-down of my general aims :
 For you, aware of their extent and scope,
 To look on these sage lecturings, approved
 By beardless boys, and bearded dotards worse,
 As a fit consummation of such aims,
 Is worthy notice. A professorship
 At Basil ! Since you see so much in it,
 And think my life was reasonably drained
 Of life's delights to render me a match 420
 For duties arduous as such post demands,—
 Be it far from me to deny my power
 To fill the petty circle lotted out
 Of infinite space, or justify the host
 Of honours 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 429
 For me, but that the droll despair which seized

The vermin of his household, tickled me.
 I came to see. Here, drivelled 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 another piebald knave
 Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
 Was actively preparing 'neath his nose 440
 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

Para-
 celsus
 relates
 an ex-
 perience

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, 449
 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, 460
 Whose general satisfaction to increase,
 The prince was pleased no longer to defer
 The burning of some dozen heretics

typical Remanded till God's mercy should be shown
of many Touching his sickness : last of all were joined
such Ample directions to all loyal folk
To swell the complement by seizing me
Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—endea-
voured

To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
The prince's cure, and frustrate heaven by help
Of certain devils dwelling in his sword. 471

By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
Of further favours. This one case may serve
To give sufficient taste of many such,
So, let them pass. Those shelves support a pile
Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles
From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy ;
They authorise some honour ; ne'ertheless,
I set more store by this Erasmus sent ; 480
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 class-room and attract
A crowd to Basil, 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 favour e'en fantastic wants 490
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.

Festus. You do not think I comprehend a word. He is provoked into plain speaking

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. 499

Paracelsus. 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 idle, and further effort
To mend and patch what's marred beyond
repairing,

As useless : and all this was taught your friend
By the convincing good old-fashioned method
Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?

Festus. Dear Aureole, can it be my fears were
just ?

God wills not . . . 509

Paracelsus. 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,
And see the will in question charactered
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
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what
Man,

His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows
That plague him every way ; but there, of course,
Where least he suffers, longest he remains— 521
My case ; and for such reasons I plod on,
Subdued but not convinced. I know as little

He Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
 confesses Better things in my youth. I simply know
 to certain I am no master here, but trained and beaten
 vile Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,
 delights Until some further intimation reach me,
 Like an obedient drudge. Though I prefer
 To view the whole thing as a task imposed 530
 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
 Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
 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 540
 Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
 Springs up a fungous brood sickly and pale,
 Chill mushrooms coloured like a corpse's check.

Festus. If I interpret well your words, I own
 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 ; 550
 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 'twere rosy-strewn.

'Tis well : and your reward, or soon or late,
Will come from him whom no man serves in vain.

Paracelsus. Ah, very fine ! For my part, I
conceive

The very pausing from all further toil, 560
Which you find heinous, would become 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 lavished,
As if their preservation had been first

And foremost in my thoughts ; and this strange
fact

Humbled me wondrously, and had due force 570
In rendering me the less averse to follow

A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—

You will not understand—but 'twas a man

With aims not mine and yet pursued like mine,

With the same fervour and no more success,

Perishing in my sight ; who summoned me

As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,

To serve my race at once ; to wait no longer

That God should interfere in my behalf,

But to distrust myself, put pride away, 580

And give my gains, imperfect as they were,

To men. I have not leisure to explain

How, since, a singular series 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

He
tells of
Aprile's
dying
charge

which has brought him to Basil
 You find me, doing most good or least harm.
 And if folks wonder much and profit little 590
 '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.
Festus. Till when, dear Aureole?

Paracelsus. 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 600
 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.

Festus. Be you 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, already
 Divulged, eclipses all the past can show, 610
 But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
 Are faint anticipations of a glory
 About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds
 Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
 That he depart.

Paracelsus. This favour 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,
 Mere novelty, nought else; and next, the tribe

Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives 620 He
 That unless miracles (as seem my works) analyses
 Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight his
 To puzzle the devil; next, the numerous set audience
 Who bitterly hate established schools, and help
 The teacher that oppugns them, till he once
 Have planted his own doctrine, when the teacher
 May reckon on their rancour in his turn;
 Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
 Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue
 But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing, 630
 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,
 Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
 And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Festus. 'Tis no encouraging picture: still these
 few

Redeem their fellows. Once the germ implanted,
 Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Paracelsus. God grant it so! 640
 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!
 These 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 651

It is too
late to
change

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

Festus. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
To leave a labour of so little use. 660

Why not throw up the irksome charge at once ?

Paracelsus. A task, a task !

But wherefore hide the whole
Extent of degradation, once engaged
In the confessing vein ? Despite of all
My fine talk of obedience and repugnance,
Docility and what not, 'tis yet to learn
If when the task shall really be performed,
My inclination free to choose once more,
I shall do aught but slightly modify
The nature of the hated task I quit. 670

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 humours 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, 680
So well adapted to their every want,
To search out and discover, prove and perfect ;
This intricate machine whose most minute

And meanest 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

His aim
 must still
 be know-
 ledge

Under that soul's dominion—used to care 690
 For its bright master's cares and quite subdued
 Its proper cravings—not to ail nor pine
 So he but prosper—whither drag this poor
 Tried patient body? God! how I essayed
 To live like that mad poet, for a while,
 To 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 began? 700
 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 imprint;
 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 word
 To further my own aim! For other men,
 Beauty is prodigally strewn around, 710
 And I were happy could I quench as they
 This mad and thriveless longing, and content me
 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,

Festus The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no
cannot more.
com- Best follow, dreading that ere night arrive,
prehend I shall o'ertake the company and ride
Glittering as they!

Festus. I think I apprehend 720
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!

Paracelsus. My friend, my friend,
I toil, 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, 730
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 the
while.

Festus. Are you mad, Aurcole? What
can I have said
To call for this? I judged from your own
words. 740

Paracelsus. Oh, doubtless! A sick wretch
describes the ape

That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all
 gravely
 You thither turn 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 matters, much less undergo
 Another's scrutiny ; but so it chances
 That I am led to trust my state to you : 750
 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 and no shame ?
 Will you guess nothing ? will you spare me
 nothing ?

Must I go deeper ? Ay or no ?

Festus. Dear friend . . .

Paracelsus. 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 760

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 'scaped with life, though hurt, we
 slacken pace

Para-
 celsus
 explains
 further

He And gather by the wayside herbs and roots 770
 hints at To staunch our wounds, secure from further
 a deeper harm :
 degrada- We are assailed to life's extremest verge.
 tion

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.

Festus. Another ! and what ?

Paracelsus. After all, Festus, you say well :
 I am

A man yet : I need never humble me.
 I would have been—something, I know not
 what ; 780

But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl.
 There are worse portions than this one of mine.
 You say well !

Festus. Ah !

Paracelsus. And deeper degradation !
 If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
 If 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, surpass 790
 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 certain 'tis
 'There's little cheer in all this dismal work.
 But was it my desire to set abroad
 Such memories and forebodings? I foresaw
 Where they would drive. 'Twere better we
 discuss 800

News from Lucerne or Zurich; ask and tell
 Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-groves.

Festus. I have thought: trust me, 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 809

From your ambition, have been spurned by you;
 Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind
 them all,

Were flax before your resolute soul, which
 nought

Avails to awe save these delusions bred
 From its own strength, its selfsame strength
 disguised,

Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole!
 Since

The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
 The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,
 And higher natures yet would slight and laugh
 At these entangling fantasies, as you
 At trammels of a weaker intellect,— 820

Measure your mind's height by the shade it
 casts!

Festus
 suggests
 that these
 are delu-
 sions

He denies I know you.
that love
has made
him blind

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

Festus. You hold
That admiration blinds?

Paracelsus. Ay and alas!

Festus. Nought blinds you less than ad-
miration, friend!

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 830

Pre-eminent 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? 840

—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 shrink-
ing-back

Lest, since all love assimilates the soul

To what it loves, it should at length become
 Almost a rival of its 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, 850

He
 sees the
 weak-
 ness, but
 only
 loves the
 more

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 forces 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 860
 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 reveal endears you more,
 Like the far traces of decay in suns.
 I bid you have good cheer !

Paracelsus.

Præclare ! Optime !

Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest
 Instructing Paracelsus ! yet 'tis so.
 Come, I will show you where my merit lies. 870
 '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

Para- Out of the multitudinous mass, extends
 celsus The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
 shows Over the strip of sand which could confine
 where his Its fellows so long time : thenceforth the rest,
 merit Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
 lies And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
 If all my labours, failing of aught else, 881
 Suffice to make such inroad and procure
 A wider range for thought : nay, they do this ;
 For, whatso'er my notions of true knowledge
 And a legitimate success, may be,
 I am not blind to my undoubted rank
 When classed with others : I precede my age :
 And whoso wills is very free to mount
 These labours as a platform whence his own
 May have a prosperous outset. But, alas ! 890
 My followers—they are noisy as you heard ;
 But, for intelligence, the best of them
 So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
 And they extol, that I begin to doubt
 Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-
 stones
 Would not do better service than my arms
 Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall
 Sooner before the old awkward batterings
 Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.
Festus. I would supply that art, then, or
 withhold 900
 New arms until you teach their mystery.
Paracelsus. Content you, 'tis my wish ;
 I have recourse
 To the simplest training. Day by day I seek
 To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
 Can make those arms of any use to men.

Of course they are for swaggering forth at once explains
 Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles' shield— what he
 Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles! has to
 Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step! teach

A proper sight to scare the crows away! 910

Festus. Pity you choose not then some
 other method

Of coming at your point. The marvellous art

At length established in the world bids fair

To remedy all hindrances like these :

Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore

Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit

For raw beginners ; let his types secure

A deathless monument to after-time ;

Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy

The ultimate effect : sooner or later 920

You shall be all-revealed.

Paracelsus. The old dull question

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, caught

While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few

Prime 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 930

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,

and Or half a century hence embalmed in print.
 defends For if mankind intend to learn at all,
 his They must begin by giving faith to them
 method of And acting on them: and I do not see 940
 lecturing 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,
 Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
 Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes,
 Were blocks!

Festus. And that reminds me, I heard
 something
 About your waywardness: you burned their
 books,

It seems, instead of answering those sages. 950

Paracelsus. And who said that?

Festus. Some I met yesternight
 With Ecolampadius. As you know, the
 purpose

Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
 His pleasure touching certain missives sent
 For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he
 Apprised me that the famous teacher here
 Was my old friend.

Paracelsus. Ah, I forgot: you went . . .

Festus. From Zurich with advices for the ear
 Of Luther, now at Wittenberg—(you know,
 I make no doubt, the differences of late 960
 With Carolostadius)—and returning sought
 Basil and . . .

Paracelsus. I remember. Here's a case, now,
 Will teach you why I answer not, but burn

The books you mention. Pray, does Luther and of
 dream bold
 His arguments convince by their own force denial,
 The crowds that own his doctrine? No, indeed! instancing
 His plain denial of established points Luther
 Ages had sanctified and men supposed
 Could never be oppugned while earth was under
 And heaven above them—points which chance
 or time 970

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 inquiry: 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. 980
 And you saw Luther?

Festus. 'Tis a wondrous soul!

Paracelsus. 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 project—we who long before
 Had burst our trammels, but forgot the crowd,
 We should have taught, still groaned beneath
 their load:

'This he has done and nobly. Speed that may!
 Whatever be my chance or my mischance,
 What benefits mankind must glad me too; 990
 And men seem made, though not as I believed,
 For something better than the times produce.

Festus speaks of a world to come Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights
From Suabia have possessed, whom Münzer
leads,
And whom the duke, the landgrave and the
elector
Will calm in blood! Well, well; 'tis not my
world!

Festus. Hark!

Paracelsus. 'Tis the melancholy wind astir
Within the trees; the embers too are grey:
Morn must be near.

Festus. Best ope the casement: see,
The night, late strewn with clouds and flying
stars, 1000

Is blank and motionless: how peaceful sleep
The tree-tops altogether! Like an asp,
The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

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

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

Paracelsus. Gone, gone,
Those pleasant times! Does not the moaning
wind

Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains
And bartered sleep for them?

Festus. It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend 1010
All error and mischance.

Paracelsus. Another world!
And why this world, this common world, to be
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
T'o some fine life to come? Man must be fed

Para-
celsus
rejects
such
comfort

With angels' food, forsooth ; and some few traces
 Of a diviner nature which look out
 Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him
 In a supreme contempt of all provision
 For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks
 Which constitute his essence, just as truly 1020
 As here and there a gem would constitute
 The rock, their barren bed, one 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 sign and note and character,
 And these I have lost !—gone, shut from me for
 ever, 1030
 Like a dead friend safe from unkindness more !
 See, morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
 Diluted, grey 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, 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 glittering with diamond dew. 1041
 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.

Festus.

One favour,

They And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved ;
part 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 1050
To hope and trust again, and strive again,
You will remember—not our love alone—
But that my faith in God's desire that man
Should 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 Aureole ?

PART IV

PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE—*Colmar in Alsatia : an Inn.* 1528

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

Paracelsus [to JOHANNES OPORINUS, *his* Paracelsus
Secretary]. *Sic itur ad astra!* Dear pledges
 Von Visenburg Basil

Is scandalised, and poor Torinus paralysed,
 And every honest soul that Basil 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 Basil in this mantling wine, suffused 10
 A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
 I' the shut heart of a bud. Pledge me, good
 John—

‘Basil; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter
 Oppose the plague!’ Even so? Do you too
 share

‘Their panic, the reptiles? Ha, ha; faint
 through these,

Desist for these! They manage matters so
 At Basil, ’tis like: but others may find means

He greets Festus To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe
 Festus Once more to crouch in silence—means to breed
 A stupid wonder in each fool again, 20
 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 henceforth flattery shall not pucker it
 Out of the furrow ; there that stamp shall stay
 To show the next they fawn on, what they are,
 This Basil with its magnates,—fill my cup,—
 Whom I curse soul and limb. And now despatch,
 Despatch, my trusty John ; and what remains 30
 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 Nuremberg ! 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 dogs my heels
 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 ! 40
 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 Basil, which the gods confound !)—because

Once more I aspire. I call you to my side : tells him
 You come. You thought my message strange? how Basil
Festus. So strange has cast
 him off

That I must hope, indeed, your messenger 50
 Has mingled his own fancies with the words
 Purporting to be yours.

Paracelsus. He said no more,
 'Tis probable, than the precious folk I leave
 Said fiftyfold 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 60
 To speed me on my enterprise, as once
 Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend!

Festus. What is your purpose, Aureole?

Paracelsus. 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.

Festus. '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 71
 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 Basil soon was made no place for you.

Paracelsus. The affair of Liechtenfels? the
 shallowest fable,

the The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence !
 reason I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
 for it How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
 For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise 80
 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 antics 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 ; 90
 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 endeavours to secure
 The rest. When lo ! one man had tarried so
 long 100
 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 neighbours marvelled most ;
 That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,
 Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong

Festus asks to know his purpose At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-blains,
 The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy 140
 Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing
 That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
 —I would lay bare to you the human heart
 Which God cursed long ago, and devils make
 since

Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.
 Oh, 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 us formed to hate? To hate?
 If that be our true object which evokes 150
 Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate!
 Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest
 Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.
 I had not the monopoly of fools,
 It seems, at Basil.

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

Paracelsus. Whether 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 160
 Of one their censure blasted? or to bow
 Cheerfully as submissively, to lower
 My old pretensions even as Basil dictates,
 To drop into the rank her wits assign me
 And live as they prescribe, and make that use
 Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow,
 Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
 To practise the true posture for receiving
 The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance

When they shall condescend to tutor me? 170
 Then, one may feel resentment like a flame
 Within, and deck false systems in truth's garb,
 And tangle and entwine mankind with error,
 And give them darkness for a dower and falsehood
 For a possession, ages : or one may mope
 Into a shade through thinking, or else drowse
 Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.

Para-
 celsus
 reverts
 to his
 old aims

But I,—now Festus shall divine!—but I
 Am merely setting out once more, embracing
 My earliest aims again! What thinks he now?

Festus. Your aims? the aims?—to Know? and
 where is found 181

The early trust . . .

Paracelsus. Nay, not so fast ; I say,
 The aims—not the old means. You know they
 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 ? Still, dreams
 They were, 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 190

Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,

Smear'd with dull nard an Indian wipes

From out her hair : such balsam falls

Down sea-side mountain pedestals,

From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,

Spent with the vast and howling main,

To treasure half their island-gain.

Festus. Joyous! and how? and what remains
for joy? Para-

You have declared the ends (which I am sick
Of naming) are impracticable. celsus
will seek
to enjoy
and know
at once

Paracelsus. Ay, 230

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, 240
Not one without the other as before.

Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause
Once more, as first I dreamed,—it shall not baulk
me

Of the meanest earthliest sensualest delight
That may be snatched; for every joy is gain,
And gain is gain, however small. My soul
Can die then, nor be taunted—'what was gained?'
Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure follow
As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt com-
munion 250

With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
Glorious with visions of a full success.

Festus. Success!

Paracelsus. And wherefore not? Why
not prefer

Results obtained in my best state of being,
To those derived alone from seasons dark

and so fight the battle out 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 261

Lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar

Flashed through the circling clouds; you may
conceive

My transport. Soon the vapours closed 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 spent

Perhaps, but still an able combatant. 270

You look at my grey 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 vigour 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.

Festus.

I see 280

But one good symptom in this notable scheme.

I feared your sudden journey had in view

To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes;

'Tis not so: I am glad.

Paracelsus.

And if I please

To spit on them, to trample them, what then? He
 'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools sneers
 Provoke it. I would spare their self-conceit; at his
 But if they must provoke me, cannot suffer enemies
 Forbearance on my part, if I may keep
 No quality in the shade, must needs put forth 290
 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, there 's no
 Hiding 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 head,
 Then owning all the glory was a man's! 300
 —And in my elevation man's would be.
 But live and learn, though life 's short, learning,
 hard!

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*) 310
 Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,
 Good Pütter!

Festus. He who sneers thus, is a god!

Paracelsus. Ay, ay, laugh at me! I am very
 glad

Festus You are not gulled by all this swaggering ; you
 remains Can see the root of the matter !—how I strive
 unshaken To put a good face on the overthrow
 in his I have experienced, and to bury and hide
 faith My degradation in its length and breadth ;
 How the mean motives I would make you think
 Just mingle as is due with nobler aims, 320
 The appetites I modestly allow
 May influence me as being 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 !

Festus. 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, 330
 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 340
 Sleep calm, though all night long the famished
 troop

Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts.
 These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

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

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

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

Para-
celsus
confesses
his need
of the
joys of
the flesh

Paracelsus. Hush ! I once despised them,
But that soon passes. We are high at first
In our demand, nor will abate a jot 350
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
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, 360
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, 370

But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay myself
Open before him, and be soothed with pity ;
I hope, if he command hope, and believe
As he directs me—satiating myself

and With his enduring love. And Festus quits me
 describes To give place to some credulous disciple
 his Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
 present Has his peculiar merits : I suck in
 way of That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration, 380
 life 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 390
 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 400
 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—Wüirzburg through the orchard-
bough!) Festus
would
have him
strive to
redeem
the past
Motions as though such ardent words should find
No echo in a maiden's quiet soul, 410
But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast
With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while!
Ha, ha!

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

Paracelsus. 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.

Festus. And you have never mused and said,
'I had a noble purpose, and the strength 421
To compass it; but I have stopped half-way,
And wrongly given 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 endeavours 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 430
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?

Paracelsus. Have I, you ask?

He Often at midnight, when most fancies come,
 answers Would some such airy project visit me :
 in a But ever at the end . . . or will you hear
 parable The same thing in a tale, a parable ?
 You and I, wandering over the world wide,
 Chance to set foot upon a desert coast. 440
 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, 450
 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 suppled in flame,
 To bear the playful billows' game :
 So, each good ship was rude to see, 460
 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,

His song

We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone! 500

All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused till in the westering sun

We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!
What laughter all the distance stirs!

A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders!

'Our isles are just at hand,' they cried, 510

'Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping;
Our temple-gates are opened wide,
Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
For these majestic forms'—they cried.

Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight:

Yet we called out—'Depart!
Our gifts, once given, must here abide. 520
Our work is done; we have no heart
To mar our work,'—we cried.

Festus. In truth?

Paracelsus. Nay, wait: all this in tracings faint
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.'

Festus. 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, 530
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 !

Paracelsus. 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) 540
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 !

Festus. 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 !

Paracelsus. No, no ; those lusts forbid :
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut
eye 551
Beside you ; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself
Between them and their prey ; let some fool
style me

Or king or quack, it matters not—then try
Your wisdom, urge them to forego their treat !

It is
too late
to turn
back

Festus No, no ; learn better and look deeper, Festus !
 charges If you knew how a devil sneers within me
 him with While you are talking now of this, now that,
 seeking As though we differed scarcely save in trifles !
 his own
 glory, not *Festus.* Do we so differ ? True, change must
 God's proceed, 560

Whether for good or ill ; keep from me, which !
 Do not confide all secrets : I was born
 To hope, and you . . .

Paracelsus. To trust : you know the fruits !

Festus. Listen : I do believe, what you call
 trust

Was self-delusion 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 569

Of your engagement in his service—yield you
 A limitless licence, 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, 579
 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 vales,
 Sleeping in lazy pools?' Set up that plea,
 That will be bold at least!

He
 replies
 that
 God's
 glory is
 one with
 man's

Paracelsus. 'Tis like enough.
 The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
 The East produces: lo, the master bids,—
 They wake, raise terraces and garden-grounds
 In one night's space; and, this done, straight
 begin 591

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 mould.
 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 600
 '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?

Festus. 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 honoured God.
 And who shall call your course without reward?
 For, wherefore this repining at defeat 610
 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,

He invokes Festus' contempt
 Anything but the naked truth—you choose
 This so-despised career, and cheaply hold
 My happiness, or rather other men's.
 Once more, return!

Paracelsus. And quickly. John the thief
 Has pilfered half my secrets by this time :
 And we depart by daybreak. I am weary, 620
 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, each petty subterfuge,
 My rhymes and all this frothy shower of words,
 My glozing self-deceit, my outward crust 629
 Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morpew, furfair
 Wrapt the sound flesh ?—so, see you flatter not !
 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 !

Festus. No, dear Aurcole !
 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 mighty 640
 Majestic spirit !—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 bid,

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.

Festus
 tells
 him of
 Michal's
 death

But wherefore should I scruple to avow 650

In spite of all, as brother judging brother,

Your fate is most inexplicable to me?

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!

Paracelsus. Have you felt sorrow, Festus?—

'tis because

659

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!

Festus. Your ill success can little grieve her

now.

Paracelsus. Michal is dead! pray Christ we

do not craze!

Festus. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on

me thus!

Fool, fool! this is the heart grown sorrow-

proof—

I cannot bear those eyes.

Paracelsus.

Nay, really dead?

Festus, 'Tis scarce a month.

Paracelsus.

Stone dead!—then you

have laid her

669

Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,

Para- I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
 celsus Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
 reveals To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.
 a secret Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love
 for his To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:
 comfort To I believe we do not wholly die.

Festus. Aureole!

Paracelsus. Nay, do not laugh; there is
 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 680
 In an intelligible dress of words;
 But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Festus. But not on this account alone? you
 surely,

—Aureole, you have believed this all along?

Paracelsus. And Michal sleeps among the
 roots and dews,

While I am moved at Basil, 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 691
 And leave a clear arena for the brave
 About to perish for your sport!—Behold!

PART V

PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE.—*Salsburg ; a cell in the Hospital
of St. Sebastian. 1541*

FESTUS, PARACELSUS

Festus. No change! The weary night is well-nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the case-ment-bars
Grey morning glimmers feebly : yet no change!
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discoloured 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.

*Festus
watches
at the
death-
bed of
Para-
celsus*

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole !
The days are gone, are gone! How grand
thou wast !
And now not one of those who struck thee
down—

hoping for a word of recognition
 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 21
 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: 30
 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 recognised the tomb-like place,
 And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here!

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—
 Her bravest champion with his well-won prize—
 Her best achievement, her sublime amends
 For countless generations fleeting fast
 And followed by no trace;—the creature-god 40
 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, **He**
 Are human, but not his; those are but men **pleads**
 Whom other men press round and kneel before; **with God**
 Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind; **for him**
 Higher provision is for him you seek
 Amid our pomps and glories: see it here! 49
 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 half forget awhile its proper end.

Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but
 prefer 60

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 honour 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! 70
 I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
 Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow

Para-
celsus
awakes in
delirium

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 favoured him as well !

Ah ! he wakens ! Aureole, I am here ! 'tis
Festus ! 80

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. 91
Oh, 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 recognise me !

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 100
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.

His
thoughts
are with
Aprile

Paracelsus. Stay, stay with me!

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

Paracelsus. Festus! Where's
Aprile, then? Has he not chanted softly 110
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!

Festus. Festus, your Festus!

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

Festus. My hand, see! 120

Paracelsus. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile!
We get so near—so very, very near!
'Tis an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans down,
Not when they set about their mountain-piling
But when another rock would crown the work.
And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
Astonished mortals, though the gods were calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder: all old tales!

Festus. And what are these to you?

Paracelsus. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well! most like I never 130
Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,

He But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
 triumphs To see me toil and drop away by flakes!
 in his Hell-spawn! I am glad, most glad, that thus I
 own ill- fail!
 fame

Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,
 One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn!
 You should have curbed your spite awhile. But
 now,

Who will believe 'twas you that held me back?
 Listen: there's shame and hissing and contempt,
 And none but laughs who names me, none but spits
 Measureless scorn upon me, me alone, 141
 The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me!
 And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
 In silence and despair, by teaching them
 One of their race had probed the inmost truth,
 Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—
 Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair?
 Ha, ha! why, they are hooting the empiric,
 The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed
 Madly upon a work beyond his wits; 150
 Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves
 Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.
 So, pick and choose among them all, accursed!
 Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
 To ruin body and soul to work your ends!
 No, no; I am the first and last, I think.

Festus. Dear friend, who are accursed? who
 has done . . .

Paracelsus. 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; Latin, Arab, Jew, 161

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 170
 Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the while
 About my neck, their lies misleading me
 And their dead names browbeating me! Grey
 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 prince?
 Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
 Were bent on nothing less than to be 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 181
 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?

Festus. Peace, peace; ah, see!

Paracelsus. 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, 190

But stand no longer? What a warm light life
 After the shade! In truth, my delicate witch,

and
 exults
 over his
 rivals of
 old time

He regrets the loss of human love
 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, 201
 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!

Festus.

A light

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 210
 The past to stand between it and its fate.
 Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here!

Paracelsus. Cruel! I seek 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!

220

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

and clings
 to Aprile
 in his
 dreams

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 230
 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 labours 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 ? 240
 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, 250
 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,

He feels the need of a life to come And hid from them.—'T were 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 260
 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
 Which fed my youth! Only one hour of that 270
 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. 279

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
 laboured

as his
 body
 fails him

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 290
 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 nought
 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, 299
 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 310
 Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank

He de-precates
the scorn
of men

God's accents once? you curse me? Why,
men, men,
I am not formed for it? Those hideous eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying,
They will not let me even die. Spare, spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
The horrible scorn! You thought I could sup-
port 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 ³²⁰
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 ³³⁰
Who broke through their best ranks to get at you.
And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!

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

Paracelsus. 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 : 340 He
 'Tis like you, and I thank you. Thank him gives the
 for me, fight up

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.

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

Paracelsus. 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; 350
 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 humour 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, 360
 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

and asks Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round, 370
 to be So that the peasant at his brother's bed
 ranked May tread upon my own and know it not ;
 with men And we shall all be equal at the last,
 in his And Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
 death Or 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 380
 With men : so, here at least he is a man.'

Festus. That God shall take thee to his breast,
 dear spirit,

Unto his breast, be sure ! and here on earth
 Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever.
 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 ? Their theft shall be their bale :
 For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
 And put aside the crowd of busy ones 390
 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 sheet of winding 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, 400

Thou so august. I recognise 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.

Paracelsus. Festus !

Festus. 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.

Paracelsus. Dear Festus !

Festus. Here, dear Aureole !
 ever by you !

Paracelsus. Nay, speak on, or I dream again.
 Speak on !

Some story, anything—only your voice.

I shall dream else. Speak on ! ay, leaning so !

Festus. Thus the Mayne glideth

Where my Love abideth.

Sleep's no softer : it proceeds 420

On through lawns, on through meads,

On and on, whate'er befall,

Meandering and musical,

Though the niggard pasturage

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.

He
 awakes
 from his
 delirium

Festus
speaks
soothing
words

Paracelsus. More, more ; say on ! 430

Festus. And scarce it 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 440
That seems to breed them, brown as they :
Nought disturbs its quiet 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.

Paracelsus. 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. 450
What were you doing when your voice broke
through

A chaos of ugly images ? You, indeed !
Are you alone here ?

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

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

Festus. But wherefore am I here ?

Paracelsus. 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. 460
 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

Para-
 celsus
 describes
 his sensa-
 tions

I shall see clearer soon.

Festus.

Tell me but this—

You are not in despair ?

Paracelsus.

I ? and for what ?

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

Paracelsus. What is it you would ask me with
 that earnest

Dear searching face ?

Festus. How feel you, Aureole ?

Paracelsus.

Well : 470

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 brighten-
 ing weather ;

But is it earth or sea that heaves below ? 479
 The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'erstrewn
 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 uptorn canes,
 Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks

at the
approach
of death

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 491
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 500
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 thresh-
old

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 509
One day. Wait, Festus ! You will die like me.

Festus. 'Tis of that past life that I burn to hear.

Paracelsus. 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 evermore.
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. 520
 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.

He is
 reminded
 of God's
 message

Festus. (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 approval, 530
 Where was it gone so long, so well preserved ?
 Then, the fore-finger 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 . . . 540

Paracelsus. 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.

and *Festus.* Nay, Aureole, are you wild?
prepares You cannot leave your couch.
to deliver it

Paracelsus. No help; no help;
Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once
more!

Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus. 550
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; ah, 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.

Festus. I am dumb with wonder.

Paracelsus. Listen, therefore, Festus! 560
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.

Festus. 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him
thus!

Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?

Paracelsus. Ay, pardoned: yet why pardoned?

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

Paracelsus. 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 for ever.
 Pardon from him, because of praise denied—
 Who calls me to himself to exalt himself?
 He might laugh as I laugh!

He lays
 his case
 before
 Festus

Festus. But 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 580
 In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Paracelsus. No, no; mistake me not; let me
 not work
 More harm than I have worked! 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 590
 The mortal persevering to the end.

Beside I am not all so valueless:
 I have been something, though too soon I left
 Following the instincts of that happy time.

Festus. 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?

Paracelsus. When but the time I vowed my-
 self to man?

Festus. Great God, thy judgments are in-
 scrutable!

He
started in
advance
of other
men

Paracelsus. Yes, it was in me ; I was born
for it—

600

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 thus frame
Hungry for joy ; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more, 610
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow—bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
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, 620
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 desire, 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 630
The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid

The fierce and flashing splendour, set my heart knowing
 Trembling so much as warned me I stood there from the
 On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast first the
 Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt, nature
 I stood at first where all aspire at last of God
 To stand: the secret of the world was mine. and of
 I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed, life
 Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
 But somehow felt and known in every shift 640
 And change in the 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 650
 Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs
 Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever.
 The centre-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, 660
 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.

Creation is consummated in the faculties of man

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 ; 670
 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 679
 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, 690
 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 700
 And softer stains, unknown in happier climes ;
 Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed
 And cherished, suffering much and much
 sustained,
 And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
 A half-enlightened, often-chequered 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, 710
 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 for
 ever
 His presence on all lifeless things : the winds 720
 Are henceforth voices, wailing or a 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,

and
 receives
 from him
 new
 illumina-
 tion

yet man A secret they assemble to discuss
 is not yet When the sun drops behind their trunks which
 completed 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 730
 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 sunset 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 of his passing worth,
 Desire to work his proper nature out, 740
 And ascertain his rank and final place,
 For these things tend still upward, progress is
 The law of life, man is not Man as yet.
 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, 750
 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? Oh long ago

He describes his own task and how it was marred

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, 790

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 thus ;
 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, with-
 drawn 800

From labouring 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.
 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— 810
 The sign and note and character of man.
 I saw no use in the past : only a scene
 Of degradation, ugliness and tears,
 The record of disgraces best forgotten,

A sullen page in human chronicles
 Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
 Should not stand 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: 820
 I would have had one day, one moment's space,
 Change man's condition, push each slumbering
 claim

by his
 insistence
 on Power
 at the
 cost of
 Love

Of mastery o'er the elemental world
 At once to full maturity, then roll -
 Oblivion o'er the work, 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: for thee the
 present 829

Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
 Beside that past's own shade when, in relief,
 Its brightness shall stand out: nor yet on thee
 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 circum-
 scribed,

As actual good within my reach decreased, 830
 While obstacles sprung up this way and that
 To keep me from effecting half the sum,
 Small as it proved; as objects, mean within

How he learned the worth of love
 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; 850
 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 his present means,
 And earnest for new power to set love free. 860
 I learned this, and supposed the whole was
 learned:

And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
 My first revealings, would have worshipped 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 870
 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 sympathise, be proud
 Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
 Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
 Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts ;
 All with a touch of nobleness, despite 880
 Their error, upward tending all 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 loved too rashly ; and shape forth a third
 And better-tempered spirit, warned by both :
 As from the over-radiant star too mad
 To drink the life-springs, beamless thence
 itself— 890

And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
 Ingulfed 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, 900
 It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
 Close to my breast ; its splendour, soon or late,
 Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one
 day.

You understand me ? I have said enough ?

but not
 love itself,
 and so
 failed

He dies *Festus.* Now die, dear Aureole!
in hope *Paracelsus.* Festus, let my hand—
This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend!
Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

Festus. And this was Paracelsus!

THE END

NOTE

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. To prove this, I subjoin a popular account, translated from the *Biographie Universelle*, Paris, 1822, which I select, not as the best, certainly, but as being at hand, and sufficiently concise for my purpose. I also append a few notes, in order to correct those parts which do not bear out my own view of the character of Paracelsus; and have incorporated with them a notice or two, illustrative of the poem itself.

‘PARACELSUS (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln (1), a little town in the canton of Schwyz, some leagues distant from Zurich. His father, who exercised the profession of medicine at Villach in Carinthia, was nearly related to George Bombast de Hohenheim, who became afterwards Grand Prior of the Order of Malta: consequently Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his sworn enemy, pretends.¹ It appears that his elementary education was

¹ I shall disguise M. Renauldin's next sentence a little. ‘Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum trimum a milite quodam, alii a sue exectum ferunt: constat imberbem illum, mulierumque ovorem fuisse.’ A standing High-Dutch joke in those days at the expense of a number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish as Melander's *Jocoseria*, etc. In the prints from his portrait by Tintoretti, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatulus*, at all events. But Erastus was never without a good reason for his faith—e.g. ‘Helvetium fuisse (Paracelsum) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit’ (*De Medicina Nova*)

much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age ; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future by astrology and cheiromancy, evoking apparitions, and practising the different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated whether by his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularises the Abbot Tritheim (2), and many German bishops.

‘As Paracelsus displays everywhere an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that he ever studied seriously in the schools : he contented himself with visiting the Universities of Germany, France, and Italy ; and in spite of his boasting himself to have been the ornament of those institutions, there is no proof of his having legally acquired the title of Doctor, which he assumes. It is only known that he applied himself long, under the direction of the wealthy Sigismund Fugger of Schwatz, to the discovery of the *Magnum Opus*.

‘Paracelsus travelled among the mountains of Bohemia, in the East, and in Sweden, in order to inspect the labours of the miners, to be initiated in the mysteries of the Oriental adepts, and to observe the secrets of nature and the famous mountain of loadstone (3). He professes also to have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Poland, and Transylvania ; everywhere communicating freely, not merely with the physicians, but the old women, charlatans and conjurers of these several lands. It is even believed that he extended his journeyings as far as Egypt and Tartary, and that he accompanied the son of the Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople, for the purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of *Trismegistus* from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

‘The period of his return to Germany is unknown : it

is only certain that, at about the age of thirty-three, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such a celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of Œcolampadius (4), to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latches of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians; that all Universities, all writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head; and that, in a word, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. "You shall follow me," cried he, "you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesues; you, gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna,¹ and whomsoever the Rhine and the Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew: all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine."²

‘But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic

¹ Erastus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, ‘mirum quod non et Garamantos, Indos et *Anglos* adjunxit.’ Not so wonderful neither, if we believe what another adversary ‘had heard somewhere,’—that all Paracelsus’ system came of his pillaging ‘*Anglum* quendam, Rogerium Bacchonem.’

² See his works *passim*. I must give one specimen:—Somebody had been styling him ‘Luther alter.’ ‘And why not?’ (he asks, as he well might). ‘Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me; but we are at least a match for you.—*Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, etc. me satis superque munitum esse novi. Et vertex iste meus calvus ac depilis multo plura et sublimiora novit quam vester vel Avicenna vel universæ academise. Prodite, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, pediculos pectentes et fricantes pedicem.*’ (*Frag. Med.*)

jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication: if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water (5).

‘At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate (6), he fled from Basil towards the end of the year 1527, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chemical apparatus.

‘He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist.¹ Accordingly we find him at Colmar in 1528; at Nuremberg in 1529; at St. Gall in 1531; at Pfeffers in 1535; and at Augsburg in 1536: he next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him to betake himself to Vienna; from thence he passed into Hungary; and in 1538 was at Villach, where he dedicated his *Chronicle* to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honoured

¹ ‘So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets: in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the Bible, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts.’

his father. Finally, from Mindelheim, which he visited in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hospital of St. Stephen (*Sebastian* is meant), Sept. 24, 1541.—(Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

(1) *Paracelsus* would seem to be a fantastic version of *Von Hohenheim*; *Einsiedeln* is the Latinised *Eremitus*, whence *Paracelsus* is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of *Erasmus*, *Eremita*; *Bombast*, his proper name, probably acquired, from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of *Spanheim*, and residing at *Wurzburg* in *Franconia*; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, *Herbipolis*. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his *Epistolæ Familiæres*, Hag. 1536: among others, by his staunch friend *Cornelius Agrippa*, to whom he dates thence, in 1510, a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise *De Occult. Philosoph.*, which last contains the following ominous allusion to *Agrippa's* sojourn: 'Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cœnobio tuo apud *Herbipolim* aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissemus,' etc.

(3) 'Inexplebilis illa aviditas naturæ perscrutandi secreta et reconditarum supellectile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno eodemque loco diu persistere non patiebatur, sed *Mercurii* instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supposebat, ut cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenuis con-

ferret, et quæ diuturnis laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis invenerant una vel altera communicatione obtineret.' (*Bitiskius in Præfat.*) 'Patris auxilio primum, deinde propria industria doctissimos viros in Germania, Italia, Gallia, Hispania, aliisque Europæ regionibus, nactus est præceptores; quorum liberali doctrina, et potissimum propria inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo ac fere divino, tantum profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universa philosophia, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortalium neminem.' (*Melch. Adam. in Vit. Germ. Medic.*) 'Paracelsus qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit, ad morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles percurandum; ut cum Theophrasto nata primum medicina perfecta que videatur.' (*Petri Rami Orat. de Basilea.*) His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: 'Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris haud piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel fæminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cujuslibet tædii pigebit?' etc. (*Defensiones Septem adversus æmulos suos.* 1573. Def. 4ta. 'De peregrinationibus et exilio.')

(4) The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with Œcolampadius, then Divinity Professor at Basil, that Zuinglius published in 1528 an answer to Luther's Confession of Faith; and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melancthon at Marburg. Their letters fill a large volume.—*D.D. Johannis Œcolampadii et Huldrichi Zuinglii Epistolarum lib. quatuor.* Bas. 1536. It must be also observed that Zuinglius began to preach in 1516, and at Zurich in 1519, and that in 1525 the Mass was abolished in the

cantons. The tenets of Œcolampadius were supposed to be more evangelical than those up to that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave Bishop Fisher attacked them as the fouler heresy:—‘About this time arose out of Luther’s school one Œcolampadius, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar), who denied the real presence; him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the see of Rochester twenty years.’ (*Life of Bishop Fisher*, 1655.) Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, etc., but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso (*Elogj d’Huomini Letterati*, Ven. 1666) informs us that his books were excommunicated by the Church. Quenstedt (*de Pat. Doct.*) affirms ‘nec tantum novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologiæ autor est.’ Delrio, in his *Disquisit. Magicæ*, classes him among those ‘partim atheos, partim hæreticos’ (lib. i. cap. 3). ‘Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olent, ac duriuscule sonant in auribus vere Christiani.’ (*D. Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma de Tinct. Univ.*, Norimb. 1736.) I shall only add one more authority:—‘Oporinus dicit “se (Paracelsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minus quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hactenus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleum recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hærerere.”’ (*Th. Erastus, Disputat. de Med. Nova.*) These and similar

notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his *Theatrum*, ‘longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso), ne ob præceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias ipse quoque aliquando pœnas Deo Opt. Max. lueret.’

(5) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses : ‘Gentis hoc, non viri vitium est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ coævum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum.’ (*Bitiskius*.) The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus : ‘Domi, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus sæpe narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columnam *τετυφωμένος* adsistens, apprehenso manibus capulo ensis, cujus *κόλωμα* hospitium præbuit, ut aiunt, spiritui familiari, imaginationes aut concepta sua protulit :—alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum, medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant.’ (*Melch. Adam*.) This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and it is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.

Volpone, act ii. scene 1.

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.

This Azoth was simply ‘*laudanum suum*.’ But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture—the power of curing diseases and transmuted metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Para-

celsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his keeping. For the other quality, let the following notice vouch among many others :—‘Degebat Theophrastus Norimbergæ procitus a medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam authoritatis summæ in Republica illa adit, et infamiæ amoliendæ, artique suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communione hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remediorum suorum Theophrastus a sæda Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinaeque sanitati restituit ; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivis suis testimonium.’ (*Bitiskius.*)¹ It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterwards repented of his treachery : ‘Sed respicit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiæ conversi pœnitentia, heu nimis tarda, vulnera clausere exanimi quæ spiranti inflixerant.’ For these ‘bites’ of Oporinus, see *Disputat. Erasti*, and *Andreae Jocisci Oratio de Vit. et Ob. Opori* ; for the ‘remorse’ *Mic. Toxites in pref. Testamenti*, and Conringius (otherwise an enemy

¹ The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vitæ: the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries :—‘Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas. vitæ nimirum abbreviationem fortasse talibus accidere posse, ob ïnecuriam frequentiore ac largiore dosi sumiam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur.’ (Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma)

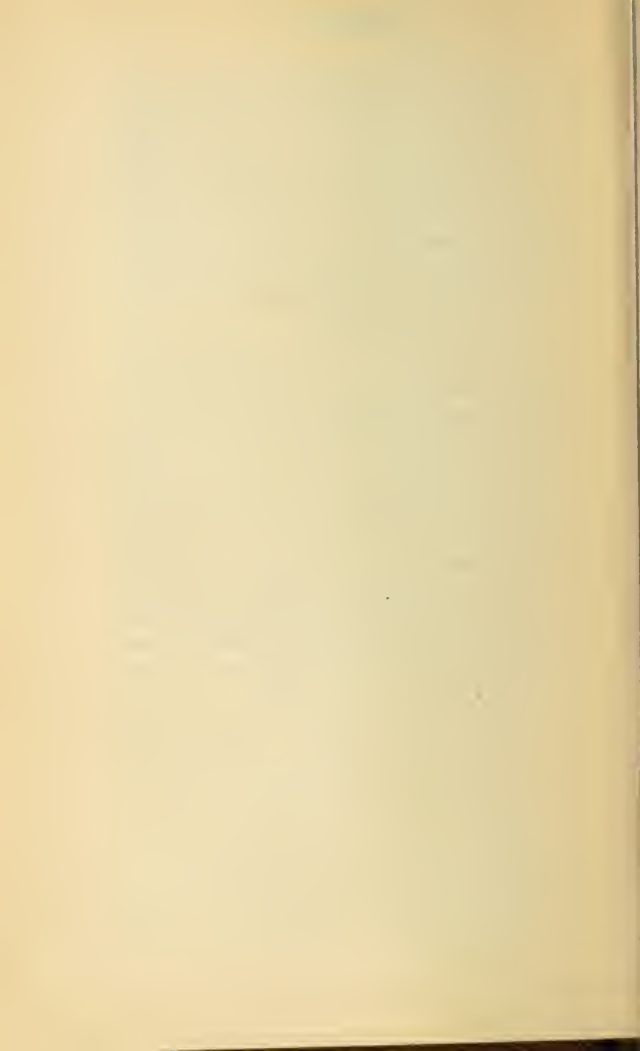
of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegerus.¹

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius, *De Philos^a et Philos^{um} sectis*, thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, 'De Chymia'—'Nobilem hanc medicinæ partem, diu sepultam avorum ætate, quasi ab orco revocavit Th. Paracelsus.' I suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise *De Phlebotomia*, and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart; as did after him Realdo Colombo, and still more perfectly Andrea Cesalpino of Arezzo, as Bayle and Bartoli observe. Even Lavater quotes a passage from his work *De Natura Rerum*, on practical Physiognomy, in which the definitions and axioms are precise enough: he adds, 'though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius.' See Holcroft's translation, vol. iii. p. 179—'The Eyes.' While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentinus (in *Præfat. in Paramyr.*) declares 'quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio, a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri.' 'O fœcunditas ingenii!' adds he, appositely. Many of these, were, however, spurious; and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen. 1658) 'rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus.' The rest were 'charissimum et

¹ For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius' treatise—*Hermetis, etc. sapientia vindicata*, 1674. Or, if he is no more learned than myself in such matters, I mention simply that Paracelsus introduced the use of Mercury and Laudanum.

pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab illo quam obtentum.' 'Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodisse videntur; quippe quæ muro inclusa ipso absente, servi cujusdam indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt,' says Valentinus. These have been the study of a host of commentators, amongst whose labours are most notable, *Petri Severini 'Idea Medicinæ Philosophiæ*, Bas. 1571; *Mic. Toxetis Onomastica*, Arg. 1574; *Dornei Dict. Parac.*, Franc. 1584; and *Pⁱ Philos^æ Compendium cum scholiis auctore Leone Suavio*, Paris. (This last, a good book.)

(6) A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued *in extremis* by the 'laudanum' of Paracelsus, refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit in the aforesaid sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred—(as he curiously says somewhere, 'Quis quæso deinceps honorem deferat professioni tali, quæ a tam facinorosis nebulonibus obitur et administratur?')—is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms—'Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit,' *honoravit* or *ordinavit*—for accounts differ.

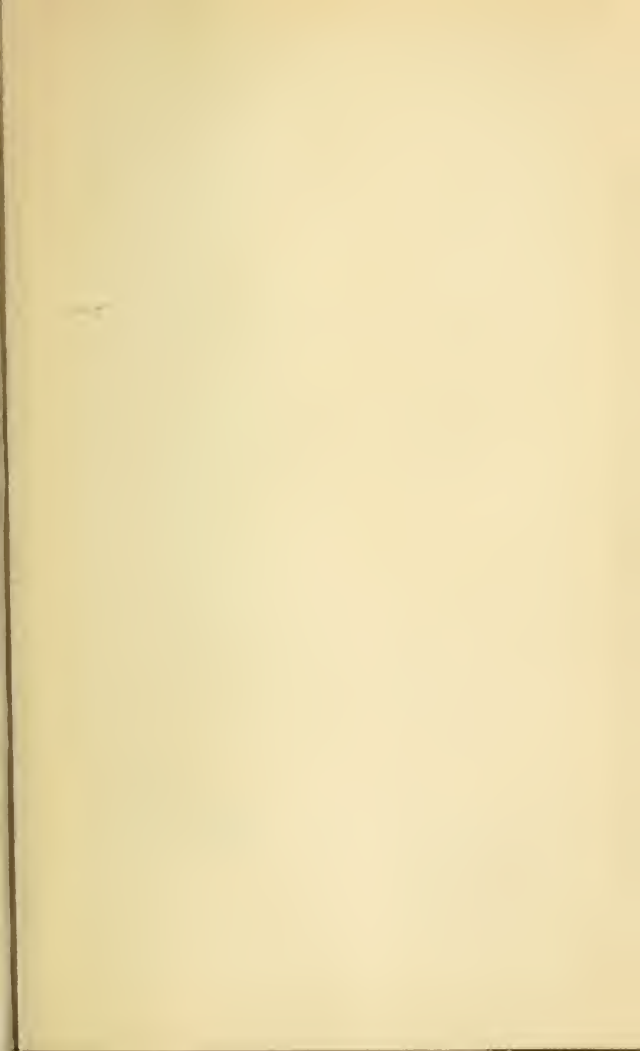


This issue of Browning's 'Paracelsus,' based on the last revised edition, has been edited by Mr. G. LOWES DICKINSON, M.A., who has read the text and added the marginalia.

I. G.

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