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Steiner, Lewis H. 1827-1892.
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Publication/Creation

Chambersburg, Pa. : Printed by M. Kieffer and Co., 1853.

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PARACELSUS

AND

HIS INFLUENCE

ON

Chemistry and Medicine,

BY

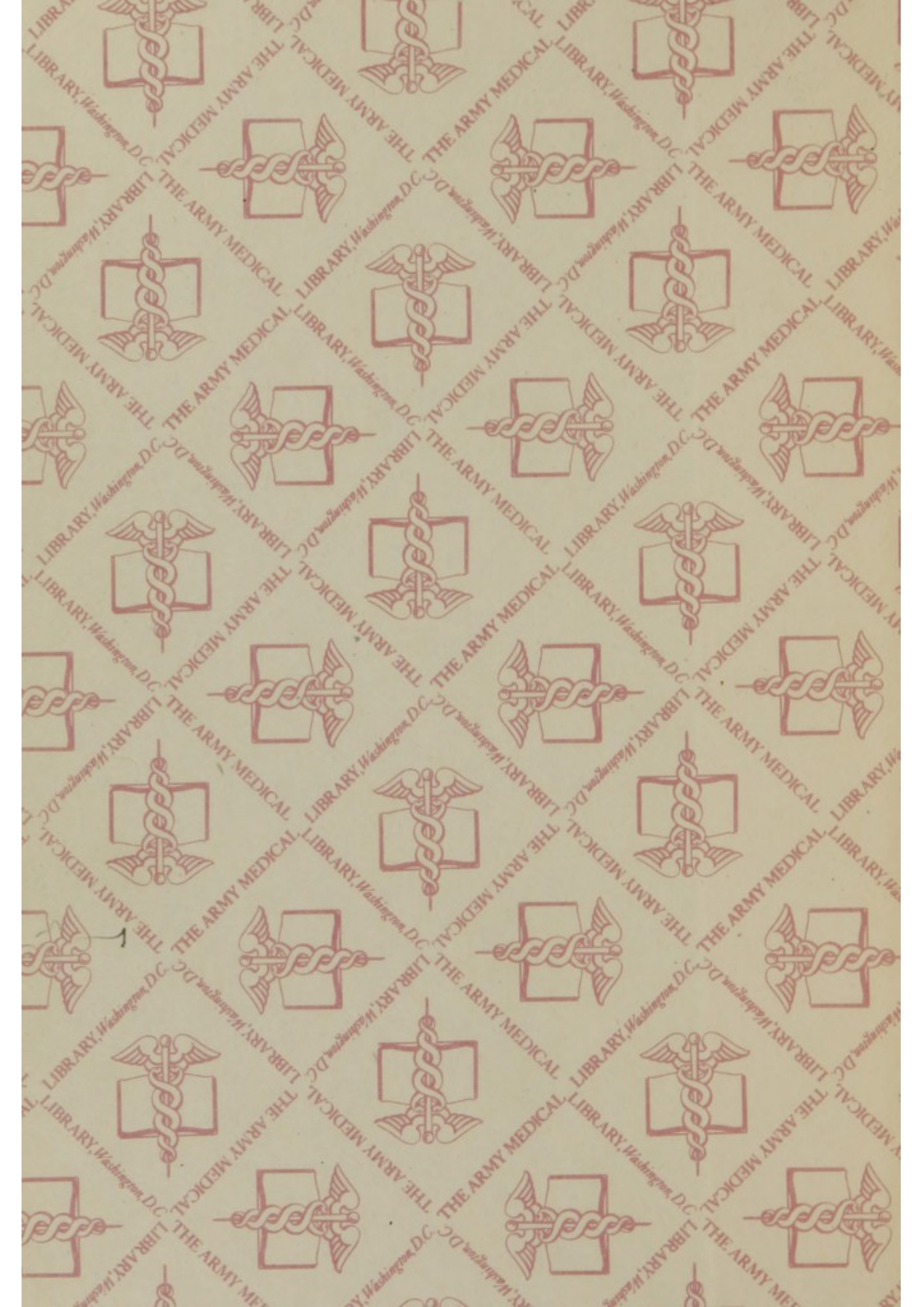
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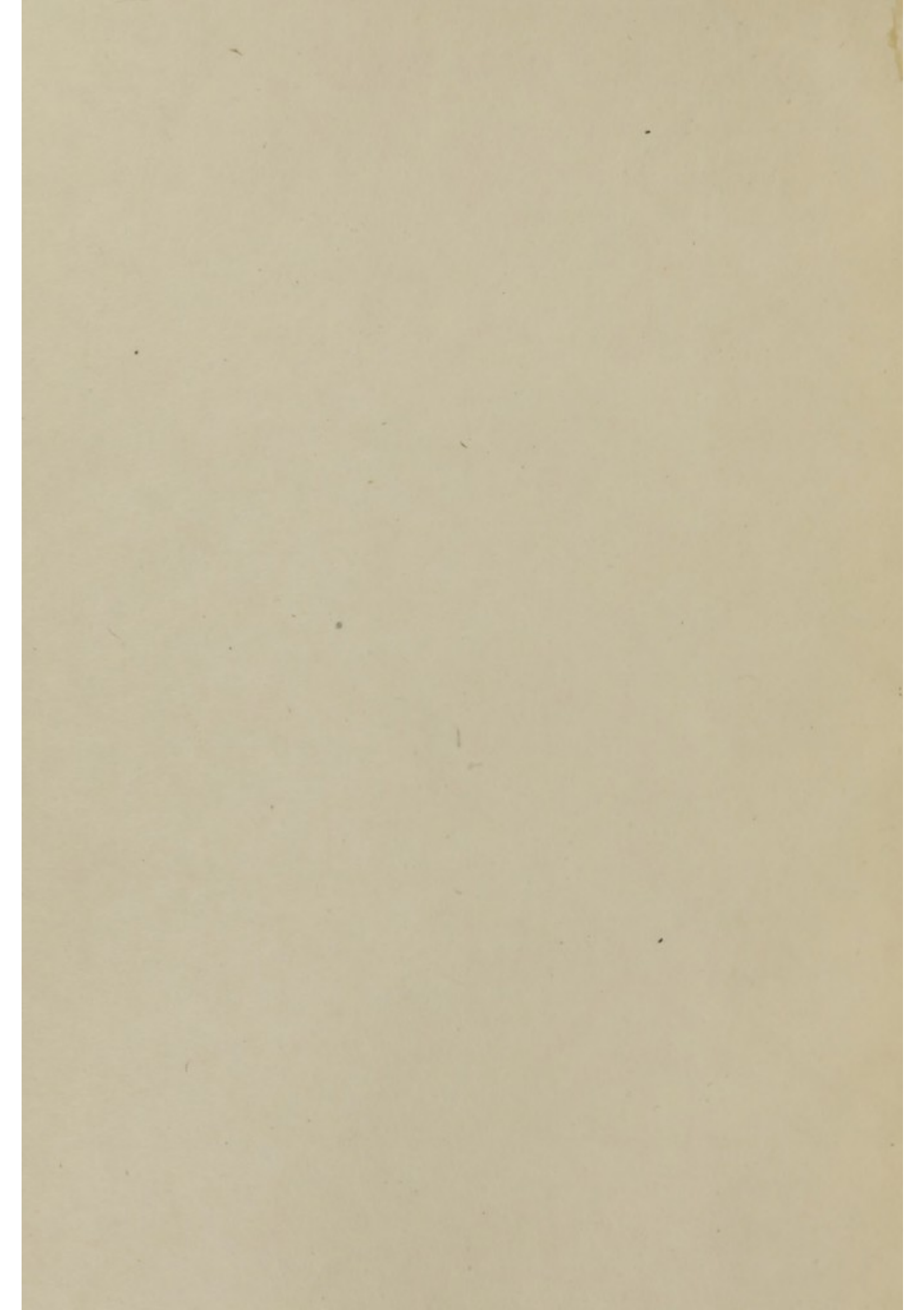
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The substance of this article was delivered before the class of the Baltimore Medical Institute, at the commencement of the Spring and Summer Session, April 5, 1853.

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## A D D R E S S.

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6e To PARACELSUS,—a native of Switzerland—Chemistry is more indebted for a proper attention to its nature and design, by way of directing the public mind to its importance, than probably any one of those mighty minds that have travelled the path he pointed out and honestly grappled with such difficulties as might ~~be~~ found obstructing their progress. A course of investigation commenced with him, which had for its object, the application of chemical remedies to the removal of disease, and tended, in a great measure, to dispel the miserable chimeras that were conjured up by the men of his time, as the close guardians of all knowledge. For *this* alone, though no actual contributions had been made by him to the stock of human knowledge, it would be right that his exertions should be properly understood at the present day; and a *proper* understanding of this, will induce us to overlook that otherwise intolerable presumption and egotism which seem to have pervaded his whole life.

Prior to his time, the profession of Medicine was mostly prosecuted as a mysterious art and surrounded with all the paraphernalia of empirical pretension, while Chemistry, at best, was only a search for the supposed method of transmuting baser metals into those of more value to mankind on account of their rarity and comparative indestructibility when exposed to the action of fire or the atmosphere. Its devotees enshrouded themselves and it, with all the mystery they could command through the wonderful effects of their re-agents, and the credulity of mankind. This last they lost, since long before Chemistry was freed from the trammels of mystery, mankind had forgotten how to be credulous. Credulity was completely driven away by the scorn and ridicule the arrogant students of Alchemy excited on all sides. Indeed Alchemy was based originally on mystery,—its very name (*al* the, *komia* mysterious) indicating the view its own followers took of its end and design. Its origin likewise, probably in Egypt—the land of



mystery,—associates it at once with the dark and the hidden. Its objects were neither to benefit man by teaching him those actions which take place in the vital laboratory, nor to afford him means of meeting an impaired organism, but only to procure those substances which minister ~~alone~~ to the baser passions of our nature.

Alchemy has generally been considered the invention of Hermes Trismegistus,—an Egyptian,—who is said by legendary history to have been the son of Ham. Of the personal history of this Hermes, nothing is now known save some contradictory statements, bearing on their face, evidence of modern origin; but a table, which is alleged to have been removed from his place of interment, with the inscription *Verba Secretorum Hermetis Trismegisti*, clearly shows that quite as much account was made of mystery by the father of this art as by his followers in after ages. He had an indistinct notion that all nature was resolvable into one element and, in accordance with this idea, he says in the table;—*Sicut omnes res fuerant ab uno meditatione unius; sic omnes res natæ fuerunt ab hac una re adaptatione. Causa omnis perfectionis rerum ea est per universum hoc.* Hence he labored to procure the noble from the baser metals, considering it only necessary to cause a change of state in this *one* element to produce gold or silver at the will of the experimenter.

Aristotle, after Hermes, advanced the doctrine, that instead of one, there were four elements, from which all material substances were formed, and that these elements were earth, air, fire and water. Modern science has long since satisfied us, that three of these are compound bodies, and the fourth—fire, is the result of “intense attraction between two or more substances.” The doctrine of Aristotle, however, was held for centuries, until exploded by the Arabian Alchemists, under their great chief—Geber. The latter taught that all metals were composed of but two substances—mercury and sulphur, which, with salt, constituted the elements of all matter. The doctrine of the four elements had been forced to give way to another doctrine, equally as erroneous, but still worthy of note, as an indication of the progressive tendency of human investigation.

The Arabian division soon gave way before the discoveries that were almost daily stumbled on by the disciples of Geber, in Arabia, and others on the continent of Europe. The state of Alchemy at this time exhibited ever and anon a glimmer of



that true light, which should afterwards contribute so much to man's wants, comforts, and luxuries. It was not the dawn of day, but the gradual disappearance of the thick darkness of midnight, which this period in the history of science truly displays. Phenomena were accumulating on the hands of its devotees, it is true, little understood and accounted for by occult causes, yet, it was necessary for such an accumulation, before truth could be deduced for the benefit of the race. Geber produced the first book ever written on this subject, and we learn, notwithstanding the mystic nature of his experiments,\* "in general, it is written with so much plainness, that we can understand the nature of the substances which he employed, the processes he followed, and the greater number of the products which he obtained." It would be a matter of much interest to examine the accumulated results of his observations, but it would lead us too far away from our subject. We are only able to glance at this veteran Alchemist of Arabia, who, in despite of that indisposition to severe mental labor or diligent investigation of any subject, which marked his nature, evoked some little order out of the chaos which surrounded his favorite pursuit, and cleared the way for other and surer guides in the department of science.

Paracelsus was born in the year 1493, at Einsiedeln, in Switzerland, and probably had his attention turned to the profession of medicine quite early in life, as his father was a physician, and practised his profession in the place of his son's nativity. An education of a limited character at home, with a natural bent for experimenting on the nature and constitution of things around him, served to direct his attention in after years, when he roamed through different lands, picking up fragments of knowledge from all sides, to those chemical investigations which were to be of so much importance to the world. He visited France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, and seems to have paid some attention to Chemistry, and kindred branches, as taught at the most distinguished Universities of those countries. With a looseness and lack of dignity, unknown to his profession at that time, he communicated freely, with all classes of people, on the subjects of disease and its remedies,—was boon-companion of all classes, whether professional or unprofessional, learned or unlearned, from men of the position of Erasmus and Oecolampadius, down to any garrulous old crone who would talk with eagerness on domestic

\* Thomson's History of Chemistry, vol. 1, page 117.



remedies. By this mingling with all classes in society, and being looked up to with respect by most of them, he acquired a collected series of facts, which availed him much in his treatment of disease, and, at the same time, so inflated his vanity that he publicly consigned to the flames, in the presence of a large assembly, the works of Galen and Avicenna, declaring his shoe-strings were wiser than these two eminent writers. His family name, Bombast de Hohenheim, with the prefix, Paracelsus, was not sufficiently high sounding, and he called himself Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Paracelsus Bombastus de Hohenheim.

In 1527, he entered upon the duties of Professor of Medicine, at the University of Basle, being elected to that position by the magistrates of the town, at the instance of Oecolampadius. Here, in his vernacular, and occasionally in barbarous Latin, he lectured to large and enthusiastic audiences for some time—attracting some really anxious to know those remedies he was introducing, so effectually, into medical practice, and others actuated by a desire to hear those denunciations he poured out *pleno rivo* on the heads of his rivals. His vanity and inflated style of speaking, largely increased by such flattering audiences, at last excited disgust and contempt with his class, and it dwindled down to a very meagre number.

But his faults were not confined to those of egotism and vanity,—they included drunkenness and licentiousness. In a state of intoxication, he generally entered his class-room;—visited his patients, and dictated his lectures, in a like condition. Doubtless, to this pernicious habit, must be attributed much of that pompous egotism, which proclaims so authoritatively: “\* Me you shall follow, you Galen, you Rhazes, you Montagnana, you Mesue. I shall not follow you, but you shall follow me. I shall be monarch, the monarchy shall be mine.

\* \* What will you think when you see the sect of Theophrastus leading on a solemn triumph, if I make you pass under the yoke of my philosophy? Your Pliny will you call Caco Pliny, and your Aristotle, Caco Aristotle?”

He only retained his position, as Professor, for one year, having given up his chair in consequence of a quarrel with the magistrates of the town, with reference to a suit brought by him, against a rich ecclesiastic, which suit was decided against him. After this termination of his professional duties, he led a life of irregularity and drunkenness, roaming from place to

\* Thomson's History of Chemistry, vol. 1, page 146.



place, accompanied by a number of followers, who adhered to him through good and evil fortune. His occasional cures of diseases, given up by the rest of the profession, served to retain for him a large share of his former reputation.

Ungoverned by religion, he denied the authority of the Pope, and denounced Luther,—the one for asserting that which Paracelsus did not believe, and the other for not condemning the Pope as heartily as he did. He looked upon the Scriptures as containing the sum of all knowledge, and also, as actually treating of all things. Medicine, he insisted upon it, must be given by a Theosophist; for such an one could see, by faith, more clearly into the hidden causes of disease, than any other man, on account of his inner illumination.

He boasted the possession of the philosopher's stone, and the Elixir Longæ Vitæ, and notwithstanding such a powerful adjuvant to life, as the last should have been, he died in the Hospital of St. Sebastian, at Salzburg, 1541, in the 48th year of his age.

From this short sketch of his life and character, it is an easy matter to conclude that he was virtually an impostor,—without moral character, without any religious creed,—whose endurance, by the world, is only attributable to the startling and extraordinary success, which at times, attended his practice. We look at him with no desire to extenuate, or cover over, one of those stains which stand out so boldly in his character;—yet, with all their hideousness, we say the man did more for the cause of Chemistry, than any man of his day.

The world, prior to his time, recognized very little use in the study of Alchemy, or its child, *then* in swaddling clothes—Chemistry. He insisted upon its being absolutely indispensable to the physician, in the treatment of disease, and showed that many substances could be so altered by fire and Chemistry, that their properties might be changed from those of an injurious tendency, to such as would be advantageous to the living economy.

From this fact alone, which was setting old notions and modes of practice adrift down the stream of oblivion, an impetus was given to medicine, now telling with force, throughout the whole civilized world. Man was never created to follow any routine blindly; and though for centuries he may be induced to do so from habit, a deliverer will come who will teach him to throw off the galling yoke, and with the quizzing *cui bono*, induce him to investigate the reasons that forced him



ever to bear it. Though such an one fall a victim to his own evil passions, and thus come short of the brilliant position he might have otherwise occupied, his body will serve as a bridge from dull, hide-bound servility to antiquated notions over to full, free, investigation into the nature of things. It is but fair to see what has been attained in this age, by those who have passed from the position of slavish obedience to the dicta of a master, to that *status* of science where they proudly boast themselves *nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri*; and though their passage over may have been by a bridge, with no attractive exterior,—nothing to please the eye or gratify the taste,—still it demands all the credit for the facilities it has afforded.

From the time of Paracelsus and his disciples, down to the present day, medicine has yearly drawn heavy draughts on Chemistry, to elucidate the mysterious operations of the human system. The operations of digestion,—consisting in the conversion of heterogeneous articles of food into a homogeneous mass,—has been explained by the action of chemical re-agents. Respiration merely performs for the blood the part of separating one gas and substituting another. Secretion is also based upon chemical laws. Thus many of the complex series of phenomena, which united are considered as life, are purely chemical in their character, and though they *cannot* be imitated out of the body without the presence of living, organized matter, yet, their character is thereby not affected in the least. It is true, the operations of the vital laboratory cannot be considered synonymous with those carried on in our laboratories with lifeless material, yet the former may be explained by the latter, both directly and by analogy.

The operations of a laboratory will go on, so long as the requisite materials are present in proper quantities, due regard being had to the necessary presence of heat, light, electricity and moisture. Affinity will show her mysterious changes, colors will lose their brilliancy, and the form of substances be changed from solid to liquid,—from liquid to gas,—or the opposite, as the abstraction or absorption of heat may take place. Now these effects will be produced, without being held in abeyance by any power, save those just mentioned—heat, light, electricity and moisture. With the operations of the living laboratory it is quite different. They are kept within certain bounds so long as life, or even health lasts, and only act in strict accordance with their legitimate chemical properties,



when the vital spark has been extinguished. The changes after death, thus produced by the action of decomposition, in accordance with chemical principles, is noticed by Baron Cuvier, as follows: “\* This separation of the elemental constituents of the body is the natural effect of the action of the air, humidity and heat; in a word, of external matter upon the dead body; and it has its cause in the elective attraction of those different agents for the elements of which the body is composed. That body, however, was equally surrounded by those agents while living, their affinities with its molecules were the same, and the latter would have yielded in the same manner during life, had not their cohesion been preserved by a power superior to that of those affinities, and which never ceased to act till the moment of death.”

Now Paracelsus first directed attention to this chemical explanation of many functions of the human system, and very rightly endeavored to govern them, when acting abnormally, by means of chemical agents. The actual importance of the vital principle in restraining these chemical operations within proper bounds was not *fully* understood by him, but the necessity of having some principle of this kind was perceived, and accordingly he attempted to meet this want by the supposition that there existed a demon in the stomach, who presided over all its chemical operations.

The archæus, who is allowed almost the same attributes we give to the vital force, was supposed to exercise the power of abstracting such substances from the ingesta as might contribute to the nutrition of the body, and to reject such as would be detrimental. The whole process of converting the food into healthy, nutritious chyle, was superintended by him, as well as the subsequent conversion of this chyle into blood. Hence, Paracelsus taught, that when the body was diseased, this archæus must be conciliated, and his power over the chemical operations of the stomach, brought into full action. Here we see foreshadowed the necessity of giving tonicity to the system, by attending to the functions of digestion. He attributed also the curing of all diseases to this archæus—the *vis medicatrix naturæ*. Prior to his time, remedies were brought to bear upon disease through some supposed mysterious power they *inherently* possessed, which caused the disease to flee, as a weaker party would before a stronger on the battle field. Medicines were understood to *cure disease*, and they were ad-

\* Lectures on Comparative Anatomy.



ministered with reference to this effect alone. The fact that nature supplies each living being with a power of recuperation, which sometimes needs assistance to *enable it* to throw off morbid matter, was not at all understood. Indeed not only does nature possess such recuperative power, but most often what we consider disease, is merely an indication of nature's activity in removing morbid matter from the system. Medicine is, therefore, given with reference to assisting nature in this operation,—the ejection of intruding enemies from her walls;—it is an auxiliary to the vital force, and not the force itself, by which the disease is removed. This is most fitly shown in inflammation and fever, now considered as curative processes of nature,—and not its deadly enemies;—they are the means adopted by the system to remove poison from its inmost recesses. Often the invalid is not able to withstand the violence of this curative process,—the vital powers succumb and death follows. The administration of medicines, with the view of suppressing these processes of nature, would be death itself; consequently medicines are given sometimes intelligently, and sometimes ignorantly, which act by *moderating* the violence of this conflict,—fitting the system to sustain the shock and thus to attain its original vigor and health. The power of medicines is not to eradicate disease, but to enable nature to drive it forth from its hiding-places,—or to strengthen the foundations of life which disease is endeavoring to undermine and overthrow. This idea certainly was present to Paracelsus' mind, and he repeatedly declares that medicines do not cure the disease, but the archæus who presides over the vital functions,—“that he has a head and hands, and is nothing else than the *spirit of life*, the sideric body of man, and that no other spirit besides, exists in the body.

Another subject, with reference to which, we owe much to the views of Paracelsus, is that of the proper preparation of medicines. Prior to his time, they were concocted of incongruous materials,—some opposing diametrically the action of others,—some completely inert, and many of a disgusting character. The famed Mithridate, composed of drastics, astringents, terebinthinates, expectorants, antispasmodics, stimulants, carminatives, aromatics and tonics, along with dried vipers, constituted a compound, which had been considered specific for many diseases. This was, however, simple and unobjectionable, compared with many others in which mummies, and various other disgusting substances were exposed to



decoction, and the resulting draught—little inferior in character, to the compound of the witches' cauldron in Macbeth,—was crammed down the throats of invalids. Paracelsus endeavored to obtain the active principles of medicinal agents, by means of extracts and tinctures. The quintessence of a thing, he insists upon it, should always be given to the sick, so that by its most powerful form it may induce the archæus to correct the diseased system.

The limited knowledge of the real properties of medicines, peculiar to the age, caused the propagator of this idea to fall short of carrying it out, or even of understanding it, in its full force. Extracts and essences as proposed by him, were, in many instances, mere figments of his brain. The liquor of the *moon* was supposed to have a particular tendency to the brain; and various solutions of gold and silver, were proposed for different diseases, which, considering the nature of the substances employed, must have possessed not an infinitesimal quantity of active material. The announcement of an idea, novel and revolutionary in its character, is not always accompanied by its most successful adaptation to practical purposes. The lengthy and contradictory prescriptions of the days of Paracelsus were continued down to a comparatively recent period, and were only completely removed from the practice of physicians, when fuller and more just understanding of the views advanced by him were attained and the chemical properties of medicines with their incompatibles were better understood. Indeed in the time of Van Helmont, physicians had become so reckless in their combinations that recovery was considered as “not the consequence of their prescriptions but in spite of them.”

The love of Astrology and Alchemy—both implanted early in the mind of Paracelsus by his father,—was not easily removed, and hence we find that with all the justness of his views, as to the use of Chemistry in the art of Pharmacy,—he neglected its assistance in procuring remedial agents from the *vegetable* kingdom, and relied here on the doctrine of *Signatures*. From some peculiar form or color, vegetables were considered as adapted to the disease under consideration and were applied with confidence as to success. Signatures were considered by Paracelsus as of immense importance, and hence he calls for a study of the *chiromancy* of a plant, denominating the leaves its *hands*, in order to ascertain correctly its medicinal properties. A similar idea, in the following century, may have existed in



Sir Thomas Browne's mind, when he states in his *Religio Medici*; “\* I hold, moreover, that there is a phytognomy or Physiognomy, not only of man, but of plants and vegetables; and in every one of them some outward figures which hang as signs or bushes of their inward forms.” The believers in this doctrine endeavored to enforce its truth by the argument that these forms and peculiarities were given to plants by the Deity, who enforced upon them such mystic, external signs in order to exhibit their internal qualities and relations to disease. With this kind of sophistry, they shut up all inquiry into the reason of the doctrine of signatures, and the minds of men, on account of reverence, feared to doubt what came from such high authority.

Chemistry entered its highest sphere of duty, when it was openly declared by Paracelsus that “its use was to prepare medicines and not to make Gold.” It had just begun to free itself from the dross and impurities of Magic and Alchemy, when attention was directed to it by him as a science of much importance, both for the proper preparation of such remedies as were already known and for the investigation of such new agents as might be presented to it for an examination of their qualities. In this way, Chemistry showed its good services to man, which have since been recognized by the civilized world. The medical profession universally acknowledge the utility of its study as an important subject in a medical education. It forms one of the branches taught in all their schools, whether regular or irregular, Allopathic, Homeopathic, Hydropathic or Eclectic. *Tantus enim ille non est physicus, qui Chemicus non est,*” was said by *Ten Rhyne* in the seventeenth century,—writing somewhat more moderately on the subject than *Libavius*—one of Paracelsus' own students,—who says “*Medicus ille nequit esse magnus, cui Chymia non est magna.*” It is now fully understood that no man can practice the profession of Medicine with that intelligent satisfaction, one should always possess, unless a certain amount of knowledge of Chemistry be included among his mental qualifications.

By the aid of Chemistry we have driven out of use the unseemly preparations, which years ago constituted the only mode of treating disease, and have substituted those composed of a few articles selected for their peculiar adaptation to the case under consideration, and so prepared that the component parts are compatible with each other and suited to the wants

\* *Religio Medici*, 114.



of the system. This was a mighty revolution in the treatment of disease and does great honor to his name, to whom we are indebted for the suggestion. The complicated prescriptions of olden times resulted from a desire to modify or mitigate the action of some of their ingredients by adding others in themselves harmless and unsuited to the wants of the patient. As the imagination had forsooth to be worked upon, substances were added which should exercise some effect on it. The number of articles, which were then subjected to protracted decoction had their activity either entirely destroyed by combination with some chemical incompatible or volatilized by the continued heat. The decoction was then filtered from this rudis indigestaque moles and forced upon the patient who recoiled from the nauseous compound. The best diagnosis under such treatment could be of no avail. And every attempt to cure this state of things seemed to make it worse, as the inefficiency or positively injurious character of such compounds did not induce them to throw them away, but only suggested to their minds one mode of cure, and that was by still adding additional articles to make them more suited to the case.

The reform introduced by Paracelsus, has progressed slowly down to the present time, when the principle, that the simpler the compound, the more useful in disease, appears to be universally acknowledged. The way has been more thoroughly opened for the employment of the essential qualities of medicines by the discovery of the alkaloids which constitute the essence of their activity, and hence there is little or no reason at present for the administration of copious draughts of any decoction, when the efficiency of these draughts may be found in a portion of a grain of the substance itself. The discoveries of Cav<sup>u</sup>antow, Set<sup>u</sup>ürner and Pelletier only cleared the way for the attainment of Paracelsus' idea, that all medicines should be given in "their quintessences."

The substances which were introduced to the world by Paracelsus, as possessed of medicinal properties, are neither few nor unimportant in their character. Prominent among them, were the different preparations of Mercury, called at that time *argentum vivum* or quicksilver. Certain diseases, which were beyond the control of any other agent, yielded directly to the application of these mercurials. But the herculean doses, in which they were occasionally exhibited, proved too powerful for the system and many cases of death are recorded as succeeding this treatment. These were necessarily overshadowed



by the few extraordinary cures occasionally effected, and which prevented the new treatment of Paracelsus from becoming odious to the people. Dr. Paris states that Paracelsus was undoubtedly the first man who dared to use mercury internally as a *medicinal* agent, "and that though Avicenna had asserted it was not so injurious as the ancients had imagined, yet he did not attribute to it many virtues; he merely says, *Argentum quidem vivum, plurimi qui bibunt, non laeduntur eo.*" To Paracelsus must therefore be attributed the first use of the preparations of this important agent medicinally. For centuries misunderstood,—blindly given at one period for all diseases coming under the eye of the practitioner, and as blindly rejected at another, as unsuited to any form of disease,—the action of Mercury, has become more and more thoroughly understood by the profession, and in consequence *properly* appreciated. It required the lapse of years, after its introduction, before sufficient evidence could be collected for the formation of correct opinions, as to its proper therapeutical qualities. These were eventually attained, and the value of this agent, in *certain* forms of disease, is now recognized by the members of the medical profession all over the world.

*Antimony*, which had been largely used in his practical, and occasionally fatal experiments, on his monastic brethren by Basil Valentine, was first properly introduced to the world by Paracelsus, who was an ardent admirer of the old Benedictine monk. We are also indebted to him for the introduction of Opium.

These three important agents in the *Materia Medica*,—Mercury, Antimony and Opium,—were thus first introduced to professional notice by Paracelsus. There is no room for astonishment at the success of the man, though surrounded with those repelling qualities which spring from vaulting ambition, accompanied by egotism of the boldest kind, and the vilest species of immorality. The treatment of the reigning Galenical school, composed of incongruous articles, jumbled together in complicated prescriptions, and administered with all the solemnity that empirical pretension exhibits in contact with ignorant credulity, fell short of the effect it was designed to accomplish. Not even the magical incantations, which accompanied the preparation of some of their remedies, seemed to be of avail, when acute disease racked the emaciated frame, nor did the sideric influences compel the surrender of the offending cause. Hence, cases of this character, and those where



chronic disease had slowly and insidiously attacked the inmost vitality of man, and by gradual approach, was reducing it to a lower and still lower *status*, were unsuccessfully treated by the Galenists. The boldness of Paracelsus induced him to exhibit the powerful remedies, which had come into his possession, and occasional cures of men, given up by other modes of treatment, sent his name far and wide over the country, and really constituted the reason for his being tolerated, when he exclaimed, that "the very down of his bald pate had more knowledge than all other writers, the buckles of his shoes more learning than Galen or Avicenna, and his beard more experience than all their Universities."

His success at this time, and under such circumstances, necessarily made him many enemies, whose rage died not as long as he lived. His boast, that he had cured eighteen princes, after the disciples of the Galenical school had utterly failed to produce any impression on their diseases, only fanned the fires of opposition, so that his conduct was closely watched by those who wished to destroy an opponent,—now doubly formidable to them, on account of his occasional wonderful success, and the crowds of partizan-admirers who continually surrounded him. Such a system of espionage might have destroyed a much better man than Paracelsus, whose drunkenness and licentiousness had almost become a proverb. His vanity had led him also to proclaim, boastingly, that he could cure *all* diseases, and could prolong human life, indefinitely. The means of effecting the latter, consisted in an Elixir, of his invention, the absolute futility of which, was very satisfactorily proved, in accordance with the account of his biographer, by its being along side of him, or in his pocket, when he died at Salzburg.

The system of dispensary practice,—or medical attendance to that class in society, which is unable to afford pecuniary compensation, is said to have originated with Paracelsus. This is a bright redeeming trait in his character. To afford relief to suffering humanity, whether able to compensate, for services rendered, in gold or not, is certainly sufficient to entitle one to the thanks of his race,—to justify his claims to be called a benefactor of mankind,—in the highest degree, a philanthropist. There are, however, two motives which prompt men to such deeds,—one entitling them to the respect and esteem of their fellow men,—the other merely exhibiting the livery of heaven to worship mammon in,—being kind and attentive to the poor, because it is felt that all this must reflect credit on



them among the rich,—that it is an expenditure of labor which must eventually bring in a handsome per centage. The first motive, renders the possessor, worthy of that title by which Luke is called, in the New Testament, “the beloved physician ;” the second, entitles the practitioner to the name of a mere tactician—a man of policy.

Now it is doubtful, whether such a man as Paracelsus, was ever actuated by disinterested motives, in establishing a custom, that has done so much good for suffering humanity. It is more probable, that, perceiving his abuse of the profession would prevent him from receiving that encouragement from the wealthier classes that he expected, he was induced to offer his services, gratuitously, to the poor. In this way, he would not only have an opportunity of exhibiting such professional skill as he possessed, but would, at the same time, gather around him a crowd of warm partizans, whose support would give countenance to his conduct. The exhibition of his skill would eventually attract some in the higher ranks of society, while the partizans, previously gained, would be of use in forcing the community to tolerate the invective he so lavishly poured on the heads of the physicians of his day. Such, doubtless, were the motives of Paracelsus, in establishing this species of gratuitous practice among the poor. Sown by the craft of policy, it attained for its projector, reputation and wealth,—both lost through his own unworthiness. Since that day, it has been watered by the dews of fraternal kindness, and nursed by heavenly charity, until it now stands forth one of the noblest results of man’s sympathy for his fellow-man. The philanthropic spirit, which induces such attention to the sufferings of man, without reference to subsequent recompense, is like that mercy which

“droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath ; it is twice bless’d ;  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.”

The character of Paracelsus affords a striking contrast with the benefits he has conferred on mankind,—so striking indeed, that we can hardly conceive the former to have proceeded from such a polluted source. His boasted pretensions mark him an impostor and the very archetype of quackery. But we are indebted to him for the association of Chemistry with Medicine, and for the bold announcement, that the highest use of the former was to aid and assist the latter ; for measur-



ably diverting the public mind from fruitless searches after the philosopher's stone, and directing it to more rational and useful investigation in the domain of Chemistry proper; for establishing the system of gratuitous dispensation of medicines to the poor, and thus preventing a man's misfortunes from depriving him of scientific advice and remedies suited to his disease; and lastly, for that boldness with which he cut loose the cord that had formerly bound men's opinions fast to the dogmas and dicta of Galen and Avicenna, and set his profession a proper example of thinking for themselves,—debating in their own minds the justice of their predecessor's conclusions before adopting them as their own.

The disciples of the Galenical schools used all efforts in their power, to put down this bold attack on their birth-right. Since their *practice* evidently could not justify them in the eyes of the world, they were obliged to resort to force—that certain sign of a bad cause—to arrest the progress of their opponents. This they endeavored *first* to obtain through public opinion, by boldly declaring that the powerful remedies suggested by Paracelsus, and used by him and his disciples, in their practice, were poisonous. But the astonishing cures already produced by this school with such remedies, had prejudiced the public in their favor. The Galenists *then* called on the Faculty of Paris, and these gentlemen, according to Thomson, formally “prohibited their fellows and licentiates from using any chemical medicines, whatever.” Not satisfied with such a general prohibition, by a decree, promulgated Dec. 5, 1603, they called upon all Parisian physicians to abstain from consulting with Turquet—a follower of Paracelsus,—because he had used antimonial preparations in his practice. The decree states: “*Ipsium Turquetum indignum judicat, qui usquam medicinam faciat, propter temeritatem, impudentiam et veræ medicinæ ignorantiam.*” Such was the character of one of the highest authorities, representing the followers of Galen, in the sixteenth, and at the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. To brave authority so bigoted, so opinionated as this, was no small work; to stand forth and receive a thousand lances from an opposing enemy, may be considered a rash thing, and yet such an act may so deprive them of weapons that a thousand can then rush upon the enemy and take the field. Peril of this kind, encountered with pure motives, entitles a man to the name of patriot; if with selfish views, he is less entitled to the meed of praise. In either case, the good done for humanity,

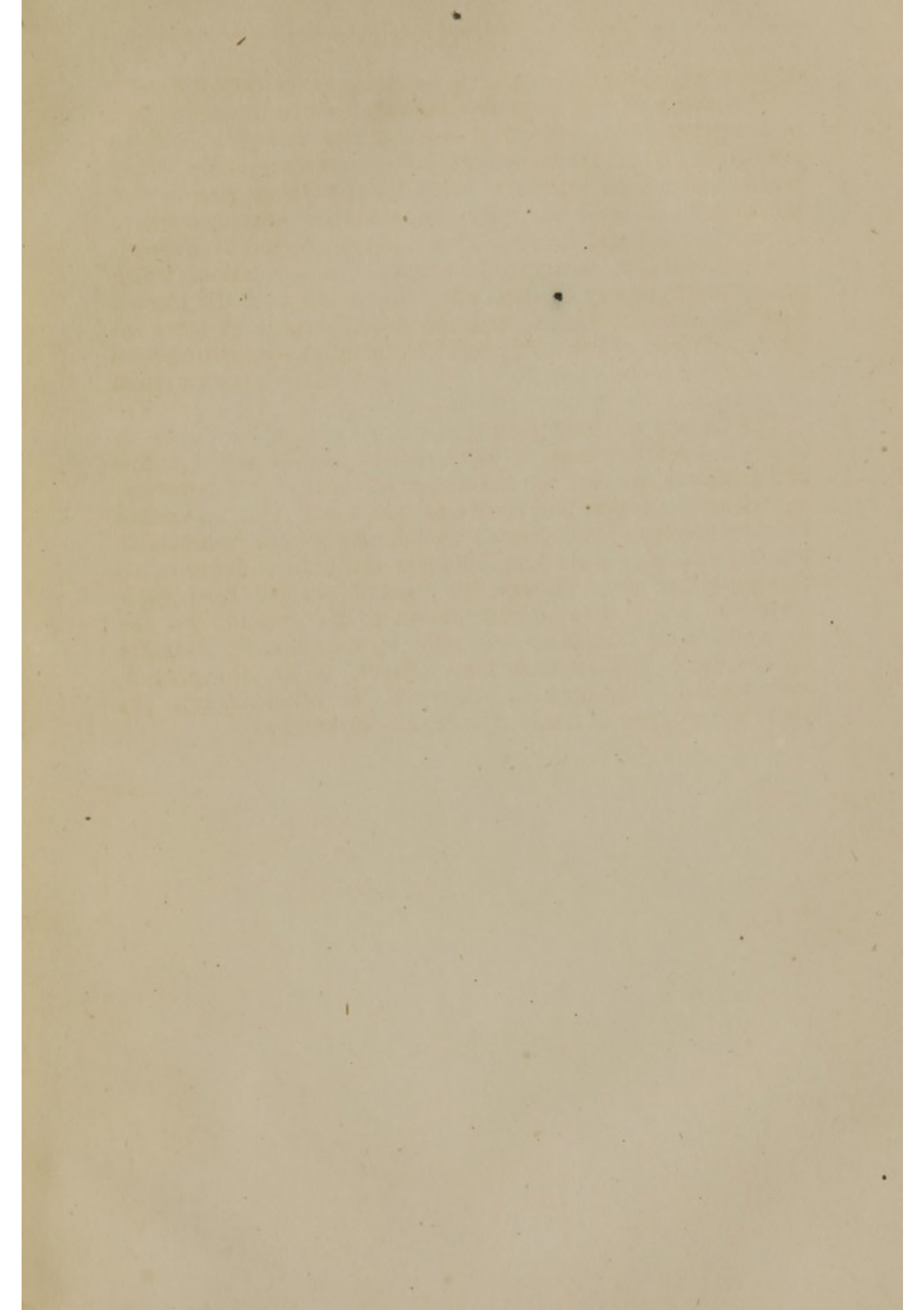


is the same, though the motives for doing it be very different.

The charm of *authority* once destroyed,—the reverence paid to hoary antiquity, merely because it *was* antiquity, without considering its *claims* to our respect or reverence, once lost,—medical men once taught to think for *themselves*, and in that thinking, to discover the race was made for advancement in knowledge, and not for stagnation; these effected by Paracelsus were the low, murmuring sounds of a revolution, which gained strength day by day, until the overturn of the threadbare doctrines of Galen, and the establishment of more enlightened views of Pathology and Therapeutics,—resulting from the application of Chemistry to the study of the human system—announced a new era in Medicine.

The history of every man contains something that may be of use to his fellow-man, if its *morale* be read aright. In this of Paracelsus, we can see the danger that attends prosperity, as well as the odium and contempt which will ever be excited by vanity and self-sufficiency; we can also see the incalculable benefits that may arise from boldness and independence in attacking old errors. Though the giant of old had fresh vigor given him every time he was thrown to the ground; yet the strength of his conqueror was able to hold him up from his mother earth and dispatch him. Error, on its own ground, may flourish,—dragged on other soil, or lifted up into the purer atmosphere of truth, it is readily dispatched.













JUL 14 '48



