

Additional remarks on a portrait medal of Paracelsus dated 1541 / by F.P. Weber.

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ADDITIONAL REMARKS

ON A

PORTRAIT MEDAL OF

PARACELSUS

DATED 1541.

BY

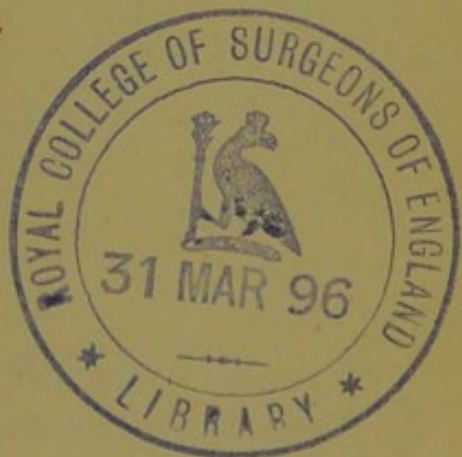
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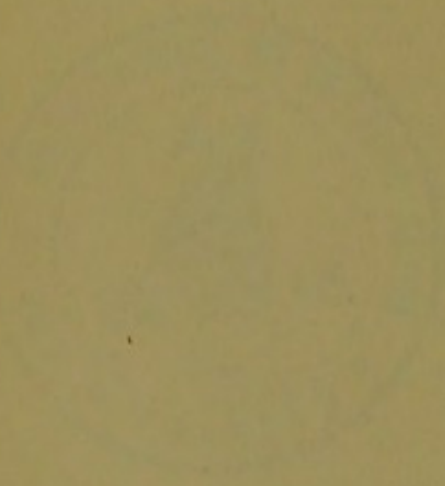
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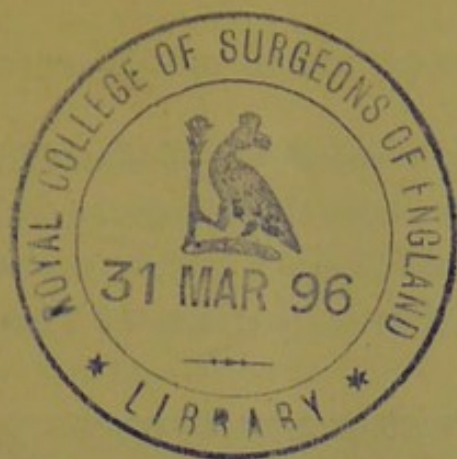
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ADDITIONAL REMARKS ON A PORTRAIT MEDAL
OF PARACELSUS DATED 1541.



Fig. 1.

IN the *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1893 (3rd Series, vol. xiii., pp. 60—71) I gave an account of a portrait-medal of Paracelsus in my possession, dated 1541 (see Fig. 1). At that time I had not seen the two copperplate engravings

of Paracelsus dated respectively 1540 and 1538 (see Figs. 2 & 3). These two engravings, together with the medal, and perhaps some of the other medals, probably furnish us with the most authentic portraits of Paracelsus extant.



Fig. 2.

The portrait on the medal, dated 1541, whether made before or after the death of Paracelsus in that year, does not appear to be a mere copy of the portrait on the engraving dated 1540, for in the medal the lines on the forehead of Paracelsus are more sharply marked than in

the engraving, and there is some slight difference in his dress. Altogether, the two engravings and the medal give us a series of portraits of Paracelsus during the last years of his life. It would indeed be interesting to know who the artists of these likenesses were.

The two engravings, an original of the latter of which is in the Print Room of the British Museum, are both apparently from the same hand, and are both signed with the monogram A. It has been maintained by Joseph Heller (*Praktisches Handbuch für Kupferstichsammler*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1850, p. 311) that the monogram stands for Augustin Hirschvogel of Nürnberg. If this were so the medal might actually be by the same hand, for Augustin Hirschvogel, as well as being an engraver, was a good draughtsman, and probably also was familiar with modelling. The following is a short account of his life.

Augustin Hirschvogel, or Hirsvogel¹ (? 1503—? 1560), came of a family long settled at Nürnberg, and formerly wealthy. His father (died 1525) was the glass painter, Veit Hirschvogel, but he is said to have excelled his father in glass painting, and became the most famous of his brothers. He was a good draughtsman, an engraver, an enameller in colours, a glass painter, and a potter. He travelled much, and in Venice studied antique art, and is said to have made copies of antique vases. His designs for goldsmith's work exist, and he is said also to have trained himself in gem engraving. He studied

¹ See J. G. Doppelmayr, *Historische Nachricht von den Nürnberghischen Mathematicis und Künstlern*, Nürnberg, 1730, fol. p. 199; Joseph Bergmann, *Medaillen auf berühmte und ausgezeichnete Männer des Oesterreichischen Kaiserstaates*, Vienna, 1884, vol. i., pp. 280—295; Friedrich Jaennicke, *Grundriss der Keramik*, Stuttgart, 1879, p. 446; G. K. Nagler's *Künstler-Lexicon*, vol. vi., p. 194.

mathematics, and wrote a book on Perspective, &c. A medal with his portrait is figured by Doppelmayr (Pl. XIV.) and by Joseph Bergmann. The old German glazed pottery known as "Hirschvogel ware" derives its name from this family of Nürnberg.

Unfortunately, great doubt remains as to the real

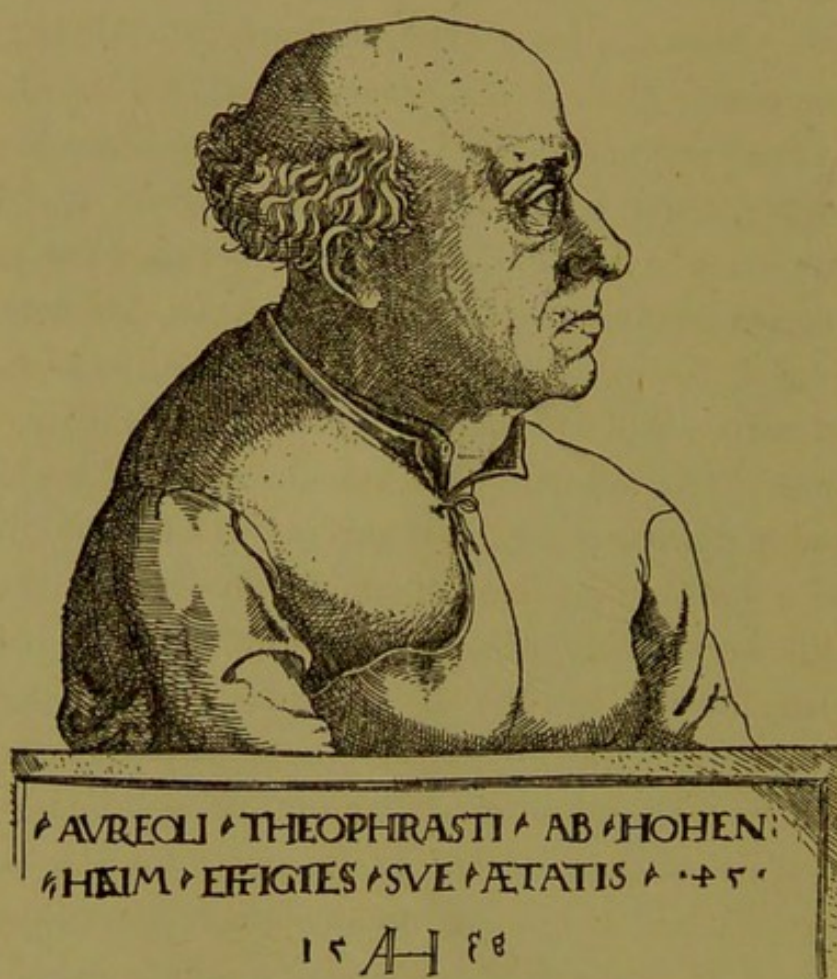


Fig. 3.

authorship of the two engravings attributed to Augustin Hirschvogel. The monogram *AH* is certainly not Hirschvogel's usual signature, and even if the monogram were his, it appears that he did not engrave the copperplates himself (see G. K. Nagler, *Die Monogrammisten*, vol. i., p. 322). One fact, however, appears certain, namely, that the author of these two engravings of Paracelsus was

likewise the author of an engraving of Dr. Johannes Fabricius, of Salzburg, in 1540 (Nagler, *op. cit.*, p. 323). This makes it probable that, whoever he was, the artist was either living at Salzburg or was temporarily at Salzburg in 1540 and saw Paracelsus himself. The likeness on the two engravings may then be accepted as authentic, and one must therefore admit also the similar likenesses on the oil painting of the town library at Nürnberg (Prof. Carl Aberle, *Grabdenkmal, Schädel und Abbildungen des Theophrastus Paracelsus*, Salzburg, 1891, p. 382, No. 45), on the oil painting in the Museum at Salzburg (Aberle, *op. cit.*, p. 388, No. 50), on the medal in my possession, and on other medals with a similar portrait of Paracelsus.

How much less claim to authenticity most of the other types of portraits of Paracelsus possess, may be gathered by an examination of the work of Prof. C. Aberle (*op. cit.*), who has most carefully collected together descriptions of the extant portraits, and classified them into types. For the correctness of the likeness (Aberle, *op. cit.*, Pl. II., fig. 3) on the engravings by Wentzel Hollar (1607—1677) little can be said, even supposing that the engraving was made after some now unknown oil painting by Rembrandt. Rubens's painting and the engravings by Sompel, Gaywood, &c., after Rubens, give an equally untrustworthy likeness of Paracelsus (Aberle, *op. cit.*, Pl. II., fig. 4), although a painting of the sixteenth century with a similar portrait is said to exist (in whose possession is at present unknown). The supposed portrait of Paracelsus by Tintoret (Aberle, *op. cit.*, Pl. III.) is also open to doubt; it was engraved by F. Chauveau as the frontispiece to the Latin edition of the collective works of Paracelsus, published at Geneva, in 1658. The original painting is not now known to exist. If this portrait

really represents Paracelsus, it must have been at a considerably earlier period of his life than that at which the portrait dated 1538 represents him. Jacopo Robusti, called Tintoretto, was born at Venice, in 1512, and Prof. Aberle suggests that, as a boy he may have made a sketch of Paracelsus, when the latter was surgeon in the Venetian army, and that in later years, when Paracelsus became a more famous man, he may have painted a portrait from the sketch. Chauveau's plate is signed, "F. Chauveau, Sculpsit, I. Tintoret ad vivum pinxit." It is possible that Chauveau copied his likeness from some portrait now lost sight of, really made "*ad vivum*" by Tintoret, though the identification in Chauveau's time of the portrait as one of Paracelsus may have been a mistake.

There exists a portrait of Paracelsus representing him as a middle-aged man, namely the oil painting belonging to the Historical Society of St. Gallen, which is said to be authentic, and bears the date 1529 (Aberle, *op. cit.*, Pl. IV., fig. 11). With this doubtful exception, the only authentic likenesses of Paracelsus are the above-mentioned engravings, oil paintings, and medals representing him in the years 1538, 1540, and 1541, and later copies of these portraits.

In conclusion I may mention that I have not yet heard of the existence of another medal exactly like the one in my possession. This is not very surprising. In the sixteenth century, in Germany, probably many of the goldsmiths and engravers occasionally modelled medals, when this was not their usual employment. I feel inclined to consider the medal in question as a trial-piece by an artist not usually employed in making medals, and this would account for only one example, and that in lead, being at present known. From Prof. C. Aberle's book

(*op. cit.*) I have derived great assistance, and have to thank Mr. Lionel Cust, formerly of the British Museum Print Room, but now Director of the National Portrait Gallery, for information concerning the engravings of Paracelsus.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Figure 1, reprinted from the *Num. Chron.*, 1893, p. 60, is the medal of Paracelsus in my possession.

Obv.—THEOPHRASTVS · PARACELSVS · A° · 1541 ·

Half-length figure, facing, of Paracelsus, with his head slightly inclined to the spectator's right hand. The face is without hair and the lines are very harshly expressed; the top of the head is bald. He is dressed in a loose gown fastened by a girdle around the waist. From his neck an amulet(?) is suspended by a thin cord, and with his hands he grasps the handle of a large two-handed sword.

No reverse. Diameter, 3·1 inches; cast; lead.

Figure 2 is a reduced copy of the engraving of 1540, taken with permission from the example in the British Museum. The portrait of Paracelsus is similar to that on the medal, but his head is inclined in the contrary direction, and the lines on the face are less harshly expressed.

Figure 3 is a reduced copy of the engraving of 1538. The portrait of Paracelsus is similar to that on the later print of 1540, but the bust only is represented, and his head is in profile to right. No amulet is suspended from the neck. Figure 3 is taken from Pl. Va in Prof. C. Aberle's book (*op. cit.*), since the British Museum only possesses a woodcut, somewhat varied from the original engraving.

