

THE CÆLUM PHILOSOPHORUM,

OR BOOK OF VEXATIONS ;

By PHILIPPUS THEOPHRASTUS PARACELSUS.

THE SCIENCE AND NATURE OF ALCHEMY, AND WHAT OPINION SHOULD BE
FORMED THEREOF.

*Regulated by the Seven Rules or Fundamental Canons according
to the seven commonly known Metals; and containing a
Preface with certain Treatises and Appendices.*

THE PREFACE

OF THEOPHRASTUS PARACELSUS TO ALL ALCHEMISTS AND READERS
OF THIS BOOK.

YOU who are skilled in Alchemy, and as many others as promise yourselves great riches or chiefly desire to make gold and silver, which Alchemy in different ways promises and teaches; equally, too, you who willingly undergo toil and vexations, and wish not to be freed from them, until you have attained your rewards, and the fulfilment of the promises made to you; experience teaches this every day, that out of thousands of you not even one accomplishes his desire. Is this a failure of Nature or of Art? I say, no; but it is rather the fault of fate, or of the unskillfulness of the operator.

Since, therefore, the characters of the signs, of the stars and planets of heaven, together with the other names, inverted words, receipts, materials, and instruments are thoroughly well known to such as are acquainted with this art, it would be altogether superfluous to recur to these same subjects in the present book, although the use of such signs, names, and characters at the proper time is by no means without advantage.

But herein will be noticed another way of treating Alchemy different from the previous method, and deduced by Seven Canons from the sevenfold series of the metals. This, indeed, will not give scope for a pompous parade of words, but, nevertheless, in the consideration of those Canons everything which should be separated from Alchemy will be treated at sufficient length, and, moreover, many secrets of other things are herein contained. Hence, too, result certain marvellous speculations and new operations which frequently

4 *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus.*

differ from the writings and opinions of ancient operators and natural philosophers, but have been discovered and confirmed by full proof and experimentation.

Moreover, in this Art nothing is more true than this, though it be little known and gains small confidence. All the fault and cause of difficulty in Alchemy, whereby very many persons are reduced to poverty, and others labour in vain, is wholly and solely lack of skill in the operator, and the defect or excess of materials, whether in quantity or quality, whence it ensues that, in the course of operation, things are wasted or reduced to nothing. If the true process shall have been found, the substance itself while transmuting approaches daily more and more towards perfection. The straight road is easy, but it is found by very few.

Sometimes it may happen that a speculative artist may, by his own eccentricity, think out for himself some new method in Alchemy, be the consequence anything or nothing. He need do nought in order to reduce something into nothing, and again bring back something out of nothing. Yet this proverb of the incredulous is not wholly false. Destruction perfects that which is good ; for the good cannot appear on account of that which conceals it. The good is least good whilst it is thus concealed. The concealment must be removed that so the good may be able freely to appear in its own brightness. For example, the mountain, the sand, the earth, or the stone in which a metal has grown is such a concealment. Each one of the visible metals is a concealment of the other six metals.

By the element of fire all that is imperfect is destroyed and taken away, as, for instance, the five metals, Mercury, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Saturn.* On the other hand, the perfect metals, Sol and Luna, are not consumed in that same fire. They remain in the fire : and at the same time, out of the other imperfect ones which are destroyed, they assume their own body and become visible to the eyes. How, and by what method, this comes about can be gathered from the Seven Canons. Hence it may be learnt what are the nature and property of each metal, what it effects with the other metals, and what are its powers in commixture with them.

But this should be noted in the very first place : that these Seven Canons cannot be perfectly understood by every cursory reader at a first glance or a single reading. An inferior intelligence does not easily perceive occult and abstruse subjects. Each one of these Canons demands no slight discussion. Many persons, puffed up with pride, fancy they can easily comprehend all which this book comprises. Thus they set down its contents as useless and futile, thinking they have something far better of their own, and that therefore they can afford to despise what is here contained.

* The three prime substances are proved only by fire, which manifests them pure, naked, clean, and simple. In the absence of all ordeal by fire, there is no proving of a substance possible. For fire tests everything, and when the impure matter is separated the three pure substances are displayed.—*De Origine Morborum ex Tribus Primis Substantiis Paramirum*, Lib. I., c. 1. Fire separates that which is constant or fixed from that which is fugitive or volatile.—*De Morbis Metallicis*, Lib. II., Tract I. Fire is the father or active principle of separation.—“Third Fragment on Tartar,” from the *Fragmenta Medica*.