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Prophecies and Seers

The Prognostications of Paracelsus

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Paracelsus

J. K. (1915)

Credits

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About:

The Prognostications (Prognosticatio) were published in 1536 by the Swiss physician, alchemist and philosopher Paracelsus (Theophrastus von Hohenheim, 1493–1541).

The book brings together 32 woodcut figures, each with a short, enigmatic text addressed to someone the reader must guess: a serpent overturning a millstone, fleurs-de-lys on a dead tree, a crown crushed by a stone, St.

Peter's chair upside down, a bear sucking its paws, a drowning Turk, children dancing, an old man asleep. In the preface Paracelsus calls the figures "32 Symbols of that which is to be", given by the Kabbala, "a mother and beginner of Astronomy", and insists on unity: the world will have peace only when "the One shall be the Shepherd".

In the age of the Reformation the figures were read as warnings to the papacy, the princes and the Empire, and later each generation tied them to the events of its own time; in the nineteenth century Éliphas Lévi called them proof of "the gift of natural prophecy".

The English version is by a translator who signed only "J. K.", published in London in 1915, at the start of the First World War; the figures are the sixteenth-century woodcuts reproduced in that edition.

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PREFACE

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1 It may be questioned whether we can at all describe the effects of the stars, since we do not see that which passes even upon earth and what lies at our feet, and often stumble and strike against it; far less can we know of the Heavens. But the reply thereto is, that for this purpose we do not use our eyes nor our feet.

2 Further can this instruction be given: It is God's will that we should have our experience in all his works, and that we should have knowledge in Nature's secrets, that nothing may be wanting, but that we should know it. In this wise were discovered many great arts such as would be tedious to relate.

3 As it is God's will that we should know these things, He only can teach them to us, for such knowledge is not of man. Who can tell how letters were invented? Only by divine inspiration, for it pleased God that we should have such knowledge, therefore has man learned it.

4 Even as God created his miraculous works, that man should know them, he also created a school wherein we learn this knowledge, but this school is not visible or known to everyone.

5 The fisherman draws fish that he never saw from many fathoms beneath the water, the miner brings gold from the depths out of the earth, through which his sight cannot pierce. In this wise has God taught it.

6 As there is nothing so occult that it shall not become manifest, so the same must be made known. Be it in the celestial firmament, in the sea, in the earth, all things must become manifest; but through man who discovers all things.

7 Who will now show the first teacher and point with the finger at him? For he is not of Adam; but in him acts, and through him becomes manifested in his creatures all that is within him. He teaches it.

8 To describe the courses this world will pass through in 24 years is lamentable enough. That man should have made himself so greedy and should have so wholly deluded himself and have failed to realise that his days must needs thereby be shortened; and that man should so wholly have forgot God, his master, and should live not in accordance with His Law.

8.2 To understand this requires the consideration of the mysteries shown by the signs of the Sun, the Moon and the Stars. It is also a subject for contemplation in what manner the people on earth inflict misery on each other, whereby no one will grant his fellow that the Sun shall shine upon him.

9 There is but one number alone wherein we should walk upon earth, that is the One, and we should not count more. In God there are three, but the three are one. Thus we men, as God transmutes himself into one, we likewise on earth should resign ourselves and become one. In that number and in no other is there rest and peace (Unity). That which is more than this is full of unrest and contention, one against the other.

10 For if a reckoner puts a number and counts more than one, how many are the errors in root and result? Hence comes the dire distress and the worm gnawing us. How pleasant and good it is when we walk in the One! Heaven has also its physical course in that number; the earth and all are therein contained. But when that is not, then the Sun, Moon and Stars appear as signs that have to be considered.

11 The end however is not yet, although there are signs thereof, but the calamity is only beginning. Blessed is he that sitteth not in the chair of pestilence, and who doth not dwell with sinners, for they shall be visited.

12 Every man that is against God may know in his own conscience that he shall not prevail against nor overcome Him. It is hard to oppose Him, and no one is able to overcome Him. Therefore it is a great folly that man should strive against what is impossible to overcome.

13 Thus there are 32 Symbols of that which is to be. May they not fly higher, so they but fall into the time for which they are intended. They are brought forth in all humility, but their course is through much misery. For as a serpent will they wind and turn until the end comes.

14 But who would therefore grieve as the salvation from all arrogance and pride draweth nigh? Who would not rejoice that again the One shall be the Shepherd, and in the One shall be set the habitation? How peaceful will it be when there shall be no need for counting and numbers. Then will the precious ointment be poured upon the beard of Aaron, giving blessing from above. Then will the blessing issue from God.

15 Even as there was no weeping in Heaven at the casting out of Lucifer into the abyss of Hell, why should it trouble us if in like manner Pride fall, so that One only and not more be in the Government? For many years past changes in the world have been foretold, but the signs indicated only the beginning. The end is not yet in operation, only the beginning.

16 But the time of the nations is now at hand that they shall come to an end. And also that the just may not be seduced must the breaking-up take place. To me it is not known whom God will accept, but without regard to them all is the Prognostication set forth. Others may better discern this than I and understand whom it concerns. Thus hath the Kabbala given it, as a mother and beginner of Astronomy.

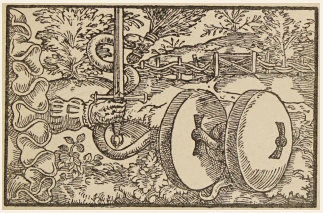
17 The course of things is however so secret that they are right before us and yet we know of them only when they are already past. For everyone should know that it is not the Will of God they should not be converted and that they should not be saved from their doom. Therefore are the things seen with seeing eyes, and yet they are not seen.

18 Let no one cast suspicion on anyone but let the End generate all things. Many speak and write, each one according to his ability. What others have also in this wise made, I will not reject, for the forerunners are many when such Monarchy is to be dissolved.

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I — THE SERPENT AND MILLSTONES

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[1] "What a thing is internally is shown by its outward sign. As Nature signs her own so doth Magic. Thou hast been signed as a devourer of all who have to do with thee. Blessed is he that is unsoiled of thee for thou leavest none in peace. Magic hath considered thee well and given thee thy due, but as thy beauty is only beheld and not the signs, therefore thou devourest all that touch thee. For beauty and not goodness is sought of thee."

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2 — THE FLEUR-DE-LYS

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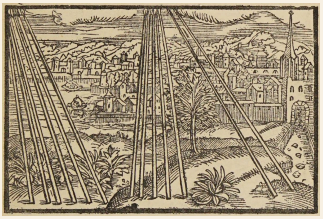


[1] "A flower groweth to the destined height. He that causeth her to grow also causeth her to fade. This happens to thee, for Magic hath therewith adorned thee, that thy coming up should be known, and also how thou hast come to nought. For before thou wast, Magic hath known thee and therefore compared thee to a flower, that to-day is in bloom and to-morrow is withered. Wisdom and Fear of God would have preserved thee, but thou hast overlooked it, thine own wisdom hath seduced thee."

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3 — THE TWELVE SPEARS

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1 “In good peace hast thou been sitting, but thou hast not known it, and hast allowed thyself to be moved. Thy wilfulness hath overturned and divided thee and no more shalt thou have thy former glory. Therefore art thou humbled and hast again become what thou wast formerly. Thou shouldst have been of aid and use to the whole world, and shouldst have set at rest others as well as thyself, but thou hast been seduced by what was rejected by thy forefathers. Although thou wilt repent, yet no one will rejoice through thee.”

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4 — THE DIVIDED CROSS

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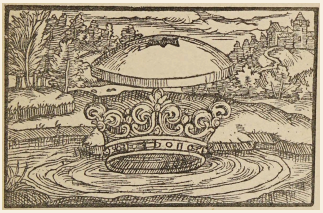


1 “Thou hast divided duty into left and right, as if it were oppressing thee. Both sides will cause thee anxiety, and hatred shall altogether overcome thee. For a harlot divideth her wantonness and for a while she hath her way, but woe to her when her deceit is discovered. Then cometh true the saying, ‘no love without pain.’ Although thou didst mightily rejoice that thou art without a head, a head shall be placed upon thee and thou shall become a limb, though thou art not accustomed to it. But against thy will shalt thou swallow and eat what is not thy natural food.”

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5 — MILLSTONE FALLING ON A CROWN

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1 “Thou hast not had the wisdom of thy crown, but hast turned against the way of the crown, and hast done much evil. A stone shall fall upon thee that will press thee hard against thy will. For thou hast shed innocent blood and wast unwilling to know that which thou shouldst have known and what belongeth to a crown. He whom thou hast despised shall visit thee from the South and from the East, ere thou canst count two or three, and having recourse to thy allies will not avail thee for they themselves will fall.”

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6 — LAUREL BRANCH ON A ROCK

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[1] “Thy flavour is strong, not wholesome and pleasant to everyone. Therefore, will thine enemies, to whom thou art not wholesome, cast a shadow and dry thee up, that thou mayest become temperate, and that thy fruit may not grow from thee as thou now vainly imaginest. For thou wilt have to give way to one whom thou knowest not. At the beginning thou wast very bold, and as a hero hast thou uplifted thyself. But thy undertaking hath divided thy comrades and what is divided hath no permanence. Still thou shalt retain a praise and a victory, for thou hast known thyself.”

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7 — BISHOP SURROUNDED BY SPEARS

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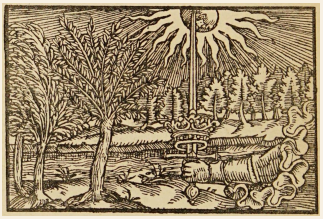


[1] “Because from time to time thou hast been self-willed thou art predestined to be surrounded by much adversity. For thou hast not considered of thyself how thou art prefigured magically under the symbol of a stone, as both fat and lean. Thou dost not know it, therefore thou fallest beneath the punishment that hath broken up all empires. Had thy pretended wisdom and understanding been thine own thou wouldst have been beyond disaster, and moreover other empires would have taken thee as a mirror. But it is not so, therefore thy wisdom proveth to be a folly at this time.”

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8 — SWORD AND CROWN (THE MAILED FIST)

✦



[1] “Who is he that knoweth on whom the Sun shines, or to whom it shall give, what man by himself can in no wise take? Therefore because it is in the hand of God and He giveth it to whom He wills, thence follows it that man’s resistance is in vain. For the hour hath come that thou shalt cease to be, notwithstanding thy strength, thy allies, thy power. For all thou hast established shall fall with thee, thou shalt delude thyself and others to thy own pity.”

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9 — A BOUND LION



[1] "Although God hath ordained that people should fear and be in terror of thee, yet there is a rod awaiting thee, that at the time shall smite thy back in such a wise as thou wilt not be able to endure, and they will say with amazement: Who would have thought that he would thus be brought to silence? It would have well become thee to observe moderation, and not as is now made manifest, to appear to be what thou art not, but to consider the end. This will make thee lame and crooked, that thou and thy followers shall with pain lament to each other."

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10 — MONK IN STREAM

✦



[1] “Thine is not a wedding garment, Magic has opened thy heart, and has made thee known. Therefore even as gold and silver must be refined from blemish, and tested, even seven times more severely than gold and silver is cleansed of its dross by fire, must thou be tried. It were well for thee to consider in thyself what was thy beginning, when thy neighbours brought thee up, and showed more kindness unto thee than was thy due, whereon thou hast presumed. This is demanded of thee. Thy transient wealth belongeth to another.”

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11 — BEAR SUCKING HIS PAWS

✦



1 “Although the sun did once shine upon thee, and thou hast glutted thyself with food and plunder, and wast sitting among the honeycombs, yet thou hast not wisely considered the end, and hast forgotten the winter; therefore he taketh away thy pleasure, and will compel thee to suck thine own paws. For as thou art bear-like, and hast no further reason, Magic hath driven thee into the toils that thou shouldst be known. But if the wit of man had been thine, the winter would not have overtaken thee.”

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12 — ST. PETER'S CHAIR UPSIDE DOWN

✦



[1] "Although one may seat himself securely, yet there is no chair that may not fall, and also he that sitteth thereon. And thou seatest thyself upon this chair but thou shouldst not be thereon. Thou shouldst be below and not above. For thou art a burthen and an unbearable yoke, therefore falls S. P. Thou hast seated thyself thereon and he hath paid thee and given thee the reward thou wast seeking: Temporal honour and praise: and these thou hast gathered all together in thyself and swallowed them up. Therefore as a temporal thing thou must also pass away."

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13 — SWORDSMAN STRIKING THE LAND

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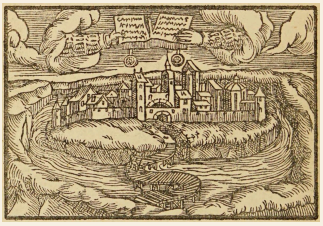


[1] “Too much kindness giveth too much evil, when the evil despiseth the kindness and the folly thereof allows it to advance in its undertaking. But it advanceth the wrong way, and it shall happen as to grass that is fully grown, it is mowed off and taken to where it should be. But if thou hadst been provident, and considered the end, thou wouldst see thy misery and know thyself. Nay, then, as thou willest it, shall it take its reward and its end, as thou hast been seeking it, and thy wisdom shall come to thee as a mockery.”

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14 — CHARTER TORN OVER CITY

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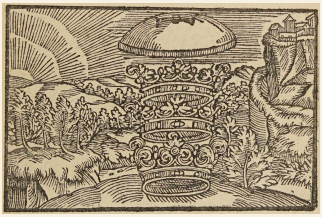


1 “Giving too much out of hand bringeth sorrow and want to the giver; for if it fail he shall be beaten with his own weapons. Therefore as such overmuch giving away hath made thee proud, thy pride shall have a time and term where it goeth thus far and no farther; then shall all be torn up, and thou must have nothing more. But if thou hadst considered that no one should set himself against the poor, and hadst also recognised thy liberty to be against thy neighbour, thou wouldst have abstained therefrom. But thy own heart hath seduced thee and thy wisdom hath been reckoned openly as a folly.”

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15 — MILLSTONE FALLING ON TRIPLE CROWN

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[1] "Nothing is so good that it may not also become evil if it ever is without a head. To be without a head giveth pride and that bringeth forth no good. Therefore shall a head be placed upon thee that thou shalt become a limb, and it will press heavy upon thee, that thou shalt have to carry the head with the other limbs. It is high enough but it would be higher, didst thou but understand it. Thou shalt encounter those whom thou hast not expected, and thy great Council will cause confusion. But when thou sleepest will union take place."

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16 — TORN PAPERS

✦



[1] “A child that goes to school and learns, when it arrives at years of discretion is ashamed of its childish work and destroys it. Thus shall it also happen to thee. As thou writest in such a manner thine own work shall be nought. For which reason there will be much labour for nought and in vain. For the time teacheth and giveth knowledge that not every pearl is a true pearl that is alleged so to be. Therefore a hand shall fall upon thee that will tear thee to shreds.”

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17 — STONE-MASON



[1] "He who buildeth a house should guard it, that when the enemy cometh it may not be destroyed. Its destruction should also be guarded that it may not be rebuilt, and that the folly of both may not be laughed at. Thus what hath been broken up is again rebuilt. Such things are done by children of men who do not consider the end. They erect, ornament and decorate, forgetting that their work is subject to destruction and again to restoration. At present all is still fragile, moreover they do not build on a rock but upon the sand."

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18 — STORM BLAST. THREE SACKS EMPTYING HAILSTONES, PODS AND LOCUSTS

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[1] "The eagle doth not grow out of thee, therefore shall He send a wind unto thee that will repress thee and thy young. Although it may go well with thee and thou sayest to thyself: My soul, thou hast all thou desirest and wishest for, what is there that may not be thine? Thou art sitting in Paradise. While thou art thinking it is thus with thee, and there is nothing contrary, in thy greatest councils and rejoicings, the Deluge shall burst in upon thee, and the rough South Wind shall blow thee away as dust off the earth. For not in pleasure and wealth are we created but in the vale of tears. This thou hast forgotten."

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19 — DEAD STAG



1 “Thou art leaping about in thy garden and art well pleased with thyself; but giving up thy wisdom and following thy pleasure thou makest bad use of thy leapings. Therefore shall it happen to thee even as thou art lying there, and those that should be thy peace will hunt thee and force thee to leap high. But take thought with thyself and consider that human things are vain. Then wouldst thou become altogether changed and wouldest be safe from the misfortune into which thou doest daily walk. Bethink thyself that pride and ill-manners never ended well.”

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20 — THE CROSS INVERTED

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1 "A thing standeth upright as long as it can be upheld; but when man alone uplifteth, then in its time, the highest will become lowest. In this wise shall man set his wisdom against the earth and bury it therein, from whence it hath come, and it shall give way to another. For human wisdom may last for a time. She is compared to a flower in the field, that is lovely and pleasing in herself. But the flower doth not remain, much less human wisdom. It is said 'Time bringeth roses,' but these also fade. Thus shall it happen to thee, because thou art of thyself."

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21 — DROWNING TURK

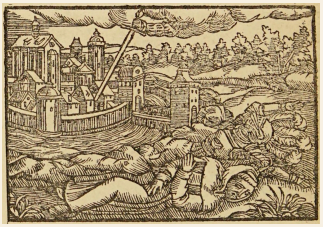


1 “When rest shall come to him, and thy watchers shall be dispersed, and thy limehound shall be wearied and succumb, then shalt thou be afflicted in thine own nest, with thy young, and shalt be forced to give way to him of whom thou hadst supposed that he would give way to thee, and thou shalt have to leave thy eggs and nest. Thus shall happen to thee, that thou and thine shall be ensnared together in the meshes thou hast laid for others, and never again shalt thou be what thou wast formerly. And the children that were thine shall no more be thine. Thy robe shall clothe thine enemy, who will despise thee.”

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22 — MONK AND KNIGHT STRUCK DOWN

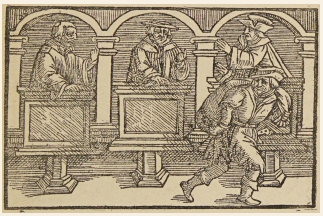
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[1] “Although thou hast not wholly revealed thy heart, yet there is nothing that in its time will remain secret and not be revealed. Then shalt thou become known to him that should know thee. For thou didst and wouldst presume to subjugate the soft in silken and the hard in iron clothing, and wast thinking in thy councils: Now may we not what we would, who are they that shall prevent us? Nay, truly, it will be the soft at first, the iron afterward, but it will cost thine own blood. Didst thou but think of humility, not of the kingdom of this world, how well would it be with thee.”

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23 — THREE PREACHERS AND A THIEF



[1] "As there are three persons in the Godhead, comprising but one number, thus should also men become united only in one number. But where this does not come to pass then is fulfilled the saying: every empire that is divided in itself must pass away. Thus no empire passeth away unless it be divided against itself. The wisest construction of a house and confederation of an empire is, when they conduct themselves as one and act accordingly, so that the number may never be divided. For what can be divided is unstable and vain, and one disputes with another. But rejoice, for thou shalt become one."

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24 — A STRANGE PREDICTION

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1 “What is it, or what does it help you that ye combine together and do not consider that ye are contrary in soul and heart? Behold only how ye are externally marked by your garments, even so are ye also internally. Ye should not be as beasts but as men, but as ye are not so, he will rule you that is above you, of whom stands written: give unto him what to him belongs. For no bestial reason is permanent, only that reason remaineth which is destined and ordained by God. This falleth in due time, thus is your council destroyed.”

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25 — A PREACHER IN A COIL

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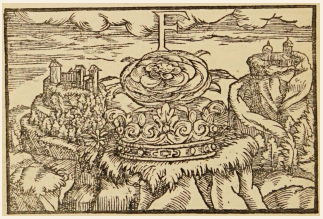


1 “A thing must be understood as certain and true in order to be known without any doubt. But for this reason, that finite knowledge had faults and defects in thy design, therefore hast thou been strangled in thine own doubts. Thou hast supposed that there is no need for closing with the true seal, and hast thought to be a seal thyself; but therein thou wast in error and art not what thou hast supposed thyself to be. This will give thee a miserable death. For thou hast lived on and on in doubt, and others with thee have built upon sand. They have wept, and thou shalt weep yet more.”

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26 — "F" ON A ROSE IN A CROWN

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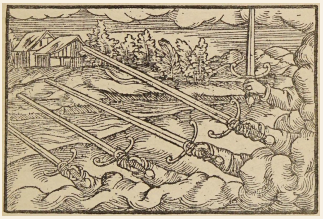


[1] "The Sybil hath been mindful of thee when she placed the 'F,' and right well art thou now standing in the rose; for thou art ripe and time hath brought thee. What the Sybil saith of thee shall be accomplished and even more shall be said of thee. The summer that bringeth roses is that contrary time wherein all things are divided; which is an indication that man was building on sand. This must pass away, and thou shalt set it upon the rock that many will be astounded. For when the time cometh, also therewith cometh that wherefore the time hath come."

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27 — FIVE SWORDS

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[1] “It hath been forgotten that many heads rule badly, and that also only one should rule and not more. This is the cause that they have split up and parted, each one seeking his own opportunity. But as it is not right to seek one’s own opportunity, but that each should serve the other, and seek to be useful to the other, and leave his own, as doth indeed but seldom happen, for this reason they will be put down; and to whom it is destined to be united, he shall be foremost, and under him shall rejoice those who have been long afflicted and distressed.”

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28 — FIVE MEN IN CONSULTATION

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1 "There will be no common voice, therefore it will be in vain that the five consult together. Have care of the future—forty-two and a little before and after will he come and do as he pleaseth, and bend you like a branch, and gird you in a wise such as will not please you. For thy council is not of him who is sought nor of whom thou deemest it to be. If ye would consider that there is no wisdom at all in man when he throweth off the yoke, he would himself be opposed to it and would not throw off the yoke, but would think of the heavy reckoning in the day of wrath."

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29 — A MITRED LAMB



[1] “Thus shall it come to pass that each one will be led into its own pasture. For feeding in strange pasture causeth distress, contention, and misery in this world: As soon as each one cometh into its own stall there shall be unity. For the mouth becometh depraved, feeding according to its lust as it pleaseth the jaws; all that cometh of going into strange pastures. How blessed shall be the hour, and the poverty, that will come and shall ordain each one to its meadow, not far from the year XXXXIII.”

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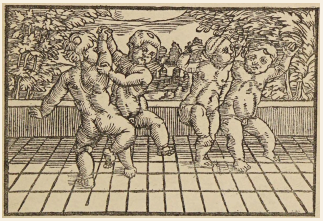
30 — MONK, PREACHER AND MYSTIC



1 “Thou hast often assembled, and much congregated, but the enemy was not with thee, therefore all things thou hast resolved were to no purpose and in vain. It must be alone that thou wilt forego thy claims, and reflect of whom thou art, of whom thou hast learnt, and what thou wouldst do if thou wert to turn aside, and wouldst acknowledge thyself and others; then wouldst thou cease. But as thou desirest to be what thou shouldst not be, and wilt sit upon the chair of Saint Peter, and whereas the same must fall; therefore thou mayest not continue in thy plots, for he shall turn aside thy design who is thy master.”

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31 — FOUR DANCING CHILDREN



1 "There shall be such a total renewal and change that they will be as children that know nothing of the cunning and intrigues of the old. This shall be when they count LX, a little less, but not more. Therefore it is well that we should remember that the time appeareth to be a long time according to a man's lifetime, but as a short time should we observe and consider it.

1.2 For to cause so much to fall and to be overthrown, with such a raging and roaring lion that has so long grown, this cannot be done in a moment. But how well shall it be with him that shall be as a little child, for human knowledge causeth but unrest and grief."

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32 — OLD MAN ASLEEP

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1 “Thou hast taken great trouble, therefore it is but just that after thy day’s work thou shouldst have rest and repose. Blessed is he that is born during sleep; he shall know no evil. For thou hast purified with great care, and hast endured much in thy days. Thee no one hath overcome, and no one shall there be that will again awaken thee, even as long as there is counted as much as thine enemies have counted from their eyrie.”

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