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# THE ZODIACUS VITAE

FOSTER WATSON

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18. 11. '08.



# THE ZODIACUS VITAE

*Inscribed to my loyal friend, in school and ever since—*

ARTHUR CROOKES NEWSUM, B.A.,

CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNORS OF THE LINCOLN GRAMMAR  
SCHOOL,

*heartily congratulating him, and rejoicing with him, on the opening of such New Buildings as would astound the pious Benefactors of our Old School—buildings which will be another glory to the glorious City of Lincoln, and hold forth the blessed hope of added intellectual possibilities to future generations, whose children will ever feel it their noble privilege to set forth in life, and, for the good of their country, to endeavour to walk worthily of the traditions of the Old School, and of that beautiful and ancient "City set on a Hill."*

*University College of Wales,  
Aberystwyth.*

*November, 1907.*

# THE ZODIACUS VITAE

OF

MARCELLUS PALINGENIUS STELLATUS :  
AN OLD SCHOOL-BOOK

Described By

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## Introduction

THE *Zodiacus Vitae* of Marcellus Palingenius is an old school-book used in English as well as foreign schools in the time of Shakespeare. At page 67, the Statutes of St. Bee's Grammar School (1583), in Cumberland, are cited as including Palingenius' *Zodiacus Vitae*. Other instances are the Orders made for St. Saviour's Grammar School, Southwark (1562), where Palingenius is prescribed amongst such "Christian poets" as Juvenecus and Prudentius. The Durham School Statutes (1593) prescribe Palingenius together with Baptista Mantuan and others. The Statutes of Camberwell Grammar School (1615) include Palingenius, along with Juvenecus, Prudentius, Erasmus and Sebastian Castalio, the author of the *Sacred Dialogues*. Further investigation would probably bring to light other grammar schools in which the *Zodiacus Vitae* was prescribed by statute or introduced in the orders, and no doubt it was read in other schools in which it was not actually prescribed by statute or orders.

Amongst the editions of the text of Palingenius, there were evidently a considerable number printed in England. For instance, the British Museum Library contains the following: in 1574, published

by T. Marsh ; in 1575 and 1592 by R. Robinson, and in 1579 and 1602 by R. Dexter. It is worth noting, too, that the book was issued by the Stationers' Company in 1616, and that on March 5, 1620, the *Zodiacus Vitae* of Palingenius had become part of the English stock of the Company. The British Museum Library has a copy of an edition published by the Stationers' Company in 1639, but it is not improbable that there were other editions issued, not now easily to be traced.

It will thus be seen that Palingenius, with his astrological, alchemistic and occult attitude, was *required* to be read in certain schools. It is well to bear in mind that while all the schools of the sixteenth century were classical in aim, the range of reading was wider than in classical schools of the present time. Thus not infrequently the *Astronomicon* of Manilius and the astrological parts of Ptolemy found their way into the studies of the scholar and even of the schools. In the private school of Milton, Manilius' book, the chief of the detailed treatises on astrology, in ancient Rome, was one of the authors read. J. A. Comenius, the great educational reformer, in his *Janua Linguarum* and his *Orbis pictus* belongs to the old school in his astrological implications. For him, astronomy "considereth the motion of the stars : astrology the effect of them." He then deals with the "aspects of the planets."

Advocates of the thesis that the aim of the school is the adaptation of the curriculum to the current culture of the age will be interested to see that in

the sixteenth century our ancestors were thus quite logical in bringing occult suggestions into the school.

Palingenius, however, was no vulgar alchemist or astrologer. He is characterized by a keen desire to arrive at a right spiritual application of all physical theories. He occupies a position which bears some analogy to that occupied, in our generation, by the late Professor Henry Drummond in connecting physical with spiritual thought in his *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. In other words, he emphasizes the unity of all knowledge, physical and spiritual.

It is easy to underrate the formative value, educationally, of the studies of past ages. The late Professor de Morgan, no mean judge, was of opinion that the system of celestial spheres, elaborated under the name of Ptolemy, could still be used by the student as a valuable mental discipline, though they cannot stand as a statement of the facts of the case. The reader can see for himself, by reference to the famous school-book, the *Janua Linguarum* of J. A. Comenius, even a century later than Palingenius, that there was a considerable degree of exercise of the imagination and reason required from the school-boy to follow the sixteenth and seventeenth century astronomy. The same remark would apply to teachings of other subjects implicitly suggested by Palingenius' book. To the subjects in physical science, Palingenius insisted, as already said, on the spiritual interpretations. His book, further, found acceptance, at any rate, in the schools, for its com-

paratively easy latinity and its effective style. At times diffuse, he offered alternative expressions, yet he rarely dismisses any topic under discussion without a concise epigrammatic line, dear to an age which delighted in adages and proverbs. These he collected, in the manner of his age, from many sources. I have pointed out a few similarities of expression between Palingenius and Shakespeare, but a closer study of the indebtedness to Palingenius in the expressions of English writers might profitably be made. But even if this question were investigated it would leave a still more difficult problem, viz.: How far are Palingenius' quotable lines original or directly derived from earlier or contemporaneous sources?

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## PALINGENIUS AND HIS BOOK

BAPTISTA MANTUAN received great glory from his attack on the abuses of the Church, and his educational reputation amongst Protestants was considerably enhanced by his denunciations of his Church. So, too, with the writer known as Marcellus Palingenius. If not a protagonist of the Reformation, he was at least candid enough to see the evil in the Old Church and to attack it remorselessly. Like Baptista Mantuan and like Erasmus, most severe of the satirists of the Catholic Church, Palingenius never left the Roman Church. In his Epistle Dedicatory to the *Zodiacus Vitae* he says: "If anything be found in so large a work, that may seem in the least to differ from our religion, I think it is not to be imputed to me. For when I speak sometimes of philosophical matters I relate the opinions of divers philosophers, especially the Platonists; for which, if they be false, not I but they are to be blamed: since my intention is never to depart from the Catholic faith."

The *Zodiacus Vitae* is in Latin hexameters. It is divided into twelve books, each of which bears the name of one of the signs of the zodiac. It was objected by Julius Caesar Scaliger that there

is no connexion between the subjects of the books and the virtues or qualities of the signs of the zodiac which supply the titles.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, a recent anonymous English translator of the book suggests that there may be a concealed sense beneath the letter of these twelve books, and that Palingenius may have been an adept in the art of alchemy. It has been suggested<sup>2</sup> that the title *Zodiacus Vitae* is due to the name of the birthplace of Palingenius, viz. Stellata, in Ferrara. At any rate, the full description of the author is given as Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus. These explanations are all interesting, but I venture to think there is another ground for the suggestion of the title—without prejudicing any of the other explanations. Every visitor to Ferrara must have been impressed and fascinated by the wonderful emblematic frescoes on the walls of the great hall of the Palazzo Schifanoia. This palace was the most beautiful of Ferrarese palaces. The Duke Bosso spared no pains to make it worthy of the

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Scaurinus, who prefixed an ode to the Reader, says the book is entitled the *Zodiac of Life*, because a life led in accordance with its teachings is glorious as the sun travelling through the signs of the zodiac. The sun illuminates, stimulates, adorns and nourishes the macrocosm. This book treats of man, but Scaurinus suggests that the microcosm of man has to travel through its zodiac also. For an account of Palingenius' *Zodiac of Life* in its relation to Astrological conceptions, see Appendix C. pp. 86-92, by Mr. Gorn Old.

<sup>2</sup> By a writer in *Notes and Queries*, 1863, p. 142. "Probably a far-fetched pedantic conceit from the author being a native of Stellata in Ferrara."



golden days of Ferrara. The walls of the great hall record the life and actions of Bosso. They thus give a vivid illustration of the life of the court, occupations, costume, of both the chiefs and the subordinates. Now, the emblematic portraiture consists in each of the twelve compartments of the frescoes having one of the signs of the zodiac. In the lowest part of each compartment are scenes from the daily life of Bosso and his court in the middle part the sign of the zodiac for the month, and in the upper the deity and votaries appropriate to the month. Each of the four walls, it is supposed, had some of the months, and the completed walls contained the yearly course of the duke's life, everywhere pursued under the emblemature of the signs of the zodiac. It has been said<sup>1</sup>: "The emblematic representations were probably suggested to the artists by one of the humanists of the Court, imbued with the curious half mystic, half pagan learning of the day, perhaps by the famous scholar and astrologer, Pietro Bono Avogario, whom both Bosso and the later Duke Ercole greatly favoured, and who was more learned than any other in the lore of the heavens." It is not easy to make out the significance of these zodiacal illustrations in their bearing on the contemporary delineations of life and action. This is precisely parallel, it will be observed, to Palingenius' *Zodiacus Vitae*. It is supposed there was once an explanation forth-

<sup>1</sup> *Story of Ferrara* (p. 331), by Ella Noyes. Mediaeval Town-Series.

coming, but the clue seems to be lost. In spite of Scaliger's criticism, there may also have been a relation discerned by the initiated in the zodiacal bearing of Palingenius' book, but the idea of the naming of the separate books of his treatise might clearly have been obtained from the Schifanoian frescoes, which were painted in the latter half of the fifteenth century, whilst Palingenius' book was first published about 1531.<sup>1</sup> The zodiacal frescoes in the Schifanoia Palace are still one of the sights of Ferrara. They must have been part of the heritage into which a Ferrarese boy grew, and the zodiacal illustration in life and thought part of the intellectual atmosphere of the time.

The relation of Palingenius to the Church is another difficult question. He has been claimed as a Lutheran <sup>2</sup> gathered to the Court of the renowned Ercole II, Duke of Ferrara, to whom Palingenius dedicated his *Zodiacus Vitae*, and of the no less renowned Renée de France,<sup>3</sup> who received the distinguished Protestant John Calvin. The ground of such claims apparently is that Palingenius directed invectives against the monks, the clergy and the Roman pontiffs. He paid the penalty for

<sup>1</sup> The first edition is undated, but 1531 (?) is given in *Brit. Mus. Catalogue*, which gives first place of publication, Venice.

<sup>2</sup> *Seckend. Hist. Lutheran*, bk. ii. p. 122. Cited by Bayle.

<sup>3</sup> For accounts of the Court of this remarkable lady, see E. Rodocanachi: *Renée de France: une protectrice de la réforme en Italie et en France*, 1896, and the *Life of Aonio Paleario*, by M. Young (1860).

his book, for he was placed on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* amongst heretics of the first class.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, he can hardly be called a Lutheran on that account, for he himself says in the Dedication of the *Zodiacus Vitae*: "I humbly submit myself to the orthodox Church in all that I have writ, and willingly receive its censure, as becomes a Christian."

Still, there is no doubt that the adverse attitude taken up by Palingenius to the evils within the Roman Church gave him a favourable hearing amongst Protestants. Like Baptista Mantuan, whilst not losing credit altogether in some quarters of the Old Church, he found a considerable clientèle amongst the Reformers. It is his reforming attitude that especially struck Barnabe Googe in the first instance. It is on this aspect that he dwells in the Dedication of the translation of the *Zodiacus Vitae* to the right Hon. Sir. Wm. Cecil,<sup>2</sup> Knight, principal secretary to the Queen's Highness and Master of Her Majesty's Court of Wards and Liveries:

"I could not (when I had long debated the matter with myself) find out a poet more meet for the teaching of a Christian life (an estate in these our days most miserably decayed) than this no less learned than famous Italian, Marcellus Pallingenius, a man of such excellent learning and godly life, that neither the unquietness of his time

<sup>1</sup> Bayle gives reference p. 765, ed. 1667, fol.

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards Lord Burleigh.

(Italy in those days raging with most cruel and bloody wars) nor yet the furious tyranny of the Antichristian Prelate (under whose ambitious and tyrannical governance he continually lived) could once amaze the Muse, or hinder the zealous and virtuous spirit of so Christian a soldier. I have many times much mused with myself, how (living in so dangerous a place) he durst take upon him so boldly to control the corrupt and unchristian lives of the whole college of contemptuous cardinals, the ungracious overseings of bloodthirsty bishops; the pauchplying practises of pelting priors, the manifold madness of mischievous monks, with the filthy fraternity of flattering friars. Which surely he durst never have done, but only he was heartened with a happy and heavenly spirit. . . . Besides the reprovng of the lewd lives of the clergy he boldly inveighed against the graceless governance of proud pompous princes, the licentious living of the riotous nobility, the covetous catchings of greedy lawyers, the ungodly gains of foolish physicians, and the corrupted consciences of deceitful artificers; affirming plainly that if they did not better beautify their Christian names with a more Christian life, of so many thousands as have in vain received that most holy sacrament of sacred Baptism, there should scarcely three aspire unto the inheritance of heavenly joys."

Barnabe Googe translated "the first three Books of the most Christian poet Marcellus Palingenius," in 1560; <sup>1</sup> in 1561 he published a translation of the

<sup>1</sup> As he says, *aetatis nostrae* XX.

first six books. In 1565, he published the translation of the whole of the *Zodiac of Life*. There are commendatory Latin poems prefixed written by Gilbert Duke, of the University of Cambridge, Jacob Itzuert, G. Chatterton (who also contributes a Greek poem). The last-named describes Googe's writings as equal to old Chaucer's. A distinguishing feature of Googe's translation is the marginal comment. The later Latin texts of Palingenius usually contain the "argument" in Latin prose at the head of each book. Googe keeps the reader in touch with the subject matter by supplying a series of running interesting marginal comments which arrest the reader of the translation of Palingenius' very desultory and miscellaneous text. There is also a "large table alphabeticall, containing such words and matters as be necessary and principal in this book."

The title-page of the 1565 edition is :

*The Zodiake of life written by the Godly and zelous poet Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, wherein are conteyned twelve bookes disclosing the heynous crymes and wicked vices of our corrupt nature : and plainly declaring the pleasunt and perfit pathway unto eternal life, besides a number of digressions both pleasaunt and profitable, newly translated into Englis verse by Barnabee Googe. London, by Henry Denham, for Rafe Newberge. 1565.*

I add the title-page as it appears in 1588 :

*The Zodiake of life, written by the excellent and Christian Poet Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus. Wherein are contained twelue seuerall labours, painting out most liuely, the whole compasse of the world, the reformation of manners, the miseries of mankinde, the pathway to vertue and vice, the externity (? eternitie) of the Soule, the course of the Heavens, the miseries of nature, and diuers other circumstances of great learning and no lesse judgement. Translated out of Latine into English by Barnabie Googe and by him newly republished, Probitas laudatur et alget. Hereunto is annexed (for the Reader's advantage) a large Table, as well of woords as of matters mentioned in this whole worke. Imprinted at London by Robert Robinson dwelling in Feter Lane neere Holborne, 1588.*

The title-page of the Rotterdam 1722 edition of the text of the *Zodiacus Vitae* is :

*Marcelli Palingenii Stellati Poetae Zodiacus Vitae, id est, De Hominis Vita, Studio, ac Moribus optime Instituendis Libri XII. Nunc demum ad exemplaria primaria sedulo castigati, centenis aliquot mendis expurgati, aliisque accessionibus ornati. Roterodami, apud Joannem Hofhout, Anno. 1722.*

(For accounts of Barnabe Googe, see Arber's reprint of Googe's *Eglogs, Epitaphs and Sonnetts*,

1871 ; and *Notes and Queries*, 1863, p. 141 ; Warton's *History of English Poetry*, ed. Hazlitt, iv. 323-31 ; *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xxii. p. 151.)

Of Palingenius, the best account is in Bayle : *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, pp. 464-466, ed. 1667. The uncertainty as to the name follows him naturally enough with regard to the other particulars of his life. Neither the date of birth or death is forthcoming. Ste Marthe states that Palingenius was physician to Hercules (Ercole) II, Duke of Ferrara. But this is by no means certain. Apparently Palingenius did not know Hercules personally when he wrote his dedication. De la Monnerie points out that Palingenius' name does not occur in Bartholinus' *Catalogue of Doctor-Poets*. The authors of the *Journal des Savans* (1703) say that Palingenius was a priest. In the Preface to the Reader, Googe says :—

“ Seeing that with the ancient Fathers and holy Prophets this kind of writing in verse was so highly esteemed that the godly instructions of the scripture and the comfortable prophecies of our merciful redeemer were in this sort of writing uttered.<sup>1</sup> . . . Since this (I say) appeareth, be not so straight of judgment as I know a number to be, that cannot abide to read anything written in English verse, which now is so plenteously enriched with a number of eloquent writers, that in my fancy it is little inferior to the pleasant verses of the ancient Romans.

<sup>1</sup> Googe here proceeds to refer to Vergil's imputed prophecy of Christ in Eclog. 4.



For since the time of our excellent countryman, Sir Geoffrey Chaucer, who liveth in like estimation with us as did old Ennius with the Latins, there hath flourished in England so fine and filed phrases, and so good and pleasant poets as may countervail the doings of Vergil, Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, Martial, Lucan, Persius, Tibullus, Catullus, Seneca and Propertius. Amongst whom (as most inferior to them all) I have for thy commodity brought into English verse this virtuous poet, Palingenius. And though I have not so eloquently Englished it as the worthiness of the author seems to require, yet have I faithfully and truly translated it."

The *Zodiacus Vitae* itself, as already mentioned, is dedicated by Palingenius to Hercules II, Duke of Ferrara.

Copies of the *Zodiacus Vitae* are not now so common as might be expected.<sup>1</sup> But scarcer still are copies of Barnabe Googe's translation, either in the earlier or later editions.

I propose now to give a somewhat full account of the contents of the *Zodiacus Vitae*, especially describing such matters as have an educational bearing. For the most part I shall give the renderings of Barnabe Googe's translation. The initial letter of the first twenty-nine lines of the first book compose the name of the author, Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus. This is supposed by some writers to be an

<sup>1</sup> My own copy I purchased from a barrow of neglected penny books, but this is no indication of the plentifulness of copies. It is dated Rotterdam, 1722, and this edition is described by M. de la Monnerie as "la plus belle et la plus correcte."



anagram for Pier Angelo Manzoli. Since as little is known of Manzoli as of Palingenius, there seems no reason to insist upon, or to combat the suggestion.

## BOOK I

### *ARIES, OR THE RAM*

THIS book is a prelude to the poem. It is the threshold of the poet's discourse as Aries is the beginning of the zodiac. In it, Palingenius declares his desire to visit "Parnassus Hill, adorned with laurel bough," and the "camps so clear of Castaly, where Muses sweet do sing." He seeks the light of Apollo whereby he may ascend the skies, approach the stars, and seclude himself from the common throng. He longs for fame, lest he should have seemed to live a useless life on earth, and lest nothing should survive his ashes. The hope of fame is wont to draw many unto virtue.<sup>1</sup> So, too, the poet begs that Hercules II, Duke of Ferrara, may stand by him :

"Draw near, and with a joyful face the poet look upon  
Willing to tread unproved paths that have not yet been  
gone."

The poet will then celebrate his prince's skill and virtue, so that "the world shall be amazed at them."

<sup>1</sup> Spes famae solet ad virtutem impellere multos.

Many and various are the themes the poet has in mind :

“ Sometime I toss the boisterous waves, sometime to shore I creep.” Sometimes he will deal with questions for which reason is adequate ; sometimes he will attempt to tread the “ secret ways by nature hid.” But especially he will deal with the things which lead to a sound and holy life :

“ A life, alas ! now banished clean (if I the truth may say)  
In this our age than which a worse was never seen the day.”

Then follows the praise of the moral life. It makes men illustrious, useful to themselves and the state, and “ serviceable ” everywhere. It is better than a fine complexion, than beautiful eyes or hair or limbs :

“ Doth not the righteous man, or he that virtue much doth  
love  
Live all in mirth and hopes for help of onely God above.”

*Nec curat, si quis secreta in aure loquatur :  
Nec trepidat Regis, vel Judicis ora, vocatus.*

How different the wicked man !

“ And when the lightnings’ thunder roars, then guilty  
trembleth he  
If men do chance in ears to sound, or whisper when they  
walk,  
Alas ! then cries he to himself, of me these men do talk !  
What shall I do ? The Judge or King doth call and  
shall I go ?

Or rather fly the perils great of wretched life ? now lo !  
By fixed law of God, doth fear the wicked man torment ! ”<sup>1</sup>

One of the characteristics of Palingenius is his skill in winding up his point in a line which sticks in the memory. So we have the line which disposes of the wicked man :

“ *Lege deum stabili semper metus angit iniquos.* ”

Palingenius boils with indignation over the writers on what is wicked and vicious. What wonder is it if the same thunderbolt shakes you too ! Why do you spend such labour by day and by night in writing wanton and lewd discourse ? What will such writers do ? For :

“ From ears a wanton wicked voice dare pierce the secret  
thought  
And unto mischief move thereby the members bent to  
nought.”<sup>2</sup>

It is no answer to say these things please the rich :

“ The rich man follows joyful things and liveth void of  
pains,

<sup>1</sup> *Contra, qui malus est, formidat semper apertum  
Ne fiat facinus, quod clam commisit : et ictus  
Fulmineos, tonitru audito, sibi conscius horret.  
Si quid secum homines mussant, nunc dicitur eheu  
De me, nunc recitant nostrae praeconia culpae.  
Quid faciam ? Judex, vel Rex me accersit. Adibon’ ?  
An potius fugiam miserae discrimina vitae ?  
Lege deum stabili semper metus angit iniquos.*

<sup>2</sup> Google’s translation is much fuller than the original :

“ *Improba vox imas cordis penetrare latebras :  
Ad scelus inde solet torpentia membra movere.* ”

He hates the pricking thorny ways, the cliffs both sharp  
and sour,  
By which we do assay to climb to Lady Learning's tower."

(Gaudia sectatur dives, dulcemque quietem :  
Dumosus odit calles, clivosque viarum  
Difficiles, per quas doctrinae scandimus arcem).

This opens up the way to the protest against the use of unsuitable authors for the instruction of children. For the phrases of the authors however distinguished by style are corrupted by the nature of the matter they impart :

"The talk itself doth well declare the nature of the mind,  
And every man doth most frequent things proper to his  
kind.  
Of oxen, rake and culter sharp, the ploughman's tongue  
doth walk,  
Of sail and cable, mast and ox, is all the seaman's talk ;  
Of horses, harness, spear and shield, the captain still will  
boast,  
So bawdy mates of bawdy things their tongues do clatter  
most."

All which Barnabe Googe epitomizes in his marginal comment : "The tongue bewrays the heart." It would appear that Palingenius' *verba ipsissima* found a lodgment in the memories of readers, by reference to a passage in a book by John Stockwood, *A plaine and easie laying open of the Meaning and Understanding of the Rules of Construction in the English Accidence*, published 1590 :

"I know not how it cometh to pass that as *Navita de stellis, de bobus narrat arator*, and as every one as he hath been brought up delighteth to be

talking of those things for the most part wherein he hath been most exercises : so I having spent many years about the instructing of youth in the principles and rudiments of the Latin tongue, cannot choose but even now and then be harping on those matters, with the which in former times I have been so long and well acquainted."

So Palingenius makes his appeal to schoolmasters :

" I warn you, sirs, above the rest, of youth that takes the cure,

Whose part it is the tender minds of boys for to allure,  
To virtue and to godliness, like wax do them prepare,  
Hate you the wicked works of those, for greater matters  
care !

Read not such things as are but vain, unworthy to be told."

Googe describes the above lines as " a good rule for schoolmasters." In place of vain, unworthy matter, Palingenius pleads for the worthy histories of " ancient fathers old."

" Herein let children noursled be." For they render material succulence, and believe me they build up life. Fables are not to be despised. A comedy of pure diction may teach much :

" There be, I grant, some poets' works, not altogether vain,  
Which with a pleasant sugared style proceed from sober  
brain.

These things do help, and, void of vice, these works do  
profit much,

In youth, bring up your scholars with none other food but  
such."

But when the youth is grown up, it is a different matter :

“ And when their young and tender age they once have  
 passed out :  
 Then may they safely void of harm, go range the fields  
 about,  
 And gather flowers where they lust, for danger is away.” <sup>1</sup>

The last question started in the first book of the *Zodiacus Vitae* is : Which is more important, goodness (probitas) or learning (scientia) ? This gives an opportunity for the praise of learning.

“ This cities rules, and moveth Mars, and this can wars  
 refell,  
 It shows the earth and goodly stars, and sickness doth  
 expel.  
 This teaches figures fair to frame, of sundry sort and kind ;  
 This teacheth us to number well, and music calls to mind.  
 This doth ascend the heavens, and bring hidden things  
 to light,  
 No perfect man without this same may called be of  
 right.”

If a wicked man be learned, it is as if a maniac had weapons put in his hands, so that he may rage furiously and slay more victims by their strength. The honest good man, though a shepherd, a groom, or a mule-driver, ought to be held precious, even if he has no book-learning. Such a man is happy and ought to be deemed such, but still there is a happier, viz. the man who has both goodness and

<sup>1</sup> *Liberius poterunt lato discurrere campo,  
 Et quascunque volent decerpere tutius herbas.*

Cf. Charles Lamb : “ She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and *broused at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage*. —*Essays of Elia* : Mackery End in Herts.

learning. The ignorant man can so easily fall into evil. Great is the joy and good of both in integrity of life and wisdom to direct it aright.

Finally, in the first book, Palingenius implores the divinities of the two-peaked mountain, for their aid to fulfil all that he has in project in the poem.

“Nor let ‘limping Vulcan’ destroy him, at any time or age.”

By this term “Vulcan,” says Googe naïvely, he means to denote fire.

So he passes from Aries to swift-approaching Taurus.



## BOOK II

### *TAURUS, OR THE BULL*

THIS book opens with a description of spring. The favourable Zephyr returns from the Western world, and all is ripe for enterprise and learning. There is no laurel to the idle. Fortune favours the brave. Let us then climb the heights, and enter into the prerogatives of man. Palingenius then explains the force of human reason :

“ With reason man hath under brought the strongest beasts  
of night,  
The lion fierce, the tiger swift, alone hath put to flight.  
The serpents though their bodies foul with poison do  
abound,  
Do stand in awe, and fear him, too, when that they hear  
him sound.  
The monstrous fish, the thurlpole great, of mighty form  
and strength :  
In ocean sea doth give him place, when he doth walk at  
length.”

Without man, the earth would be a place overgrown with briars. Consider what man has done. He has built cities, ordained laws, erected temples to the gods. He has searched out many arts and invented instruments,

“ Which like the lightning flash and flame and like the thunders sound.

Wherein the fire fast enclosed, enforceth all he may :  
Out of his mouth to rumble out the pellet far away,  
Whereby the towers high be bet, and walls of every town,  
His strength not able to abide, come topsy-turvy down.”

This is a description, as Googe gravely informs us, of the cannon. Palingenius next describes the ingenuity of man, in his ships. And man, ingenious thus on land and sea :

“ Yet knows he not, nor seeks to know (a thing too bad to tell)

How for to live, what ways to fly, or what to follow well.”

Neither the crabbed knowledge of the laws, nor medicine, nor the rhetorician, nor the grammarian reveal the highest virtues. Wisdom alone can open the way of life.

Most people think riches will show the way, if one only had as much gold as the Lydian stream, or the Tagus bears down to the ocean ; as many acres of good ground as one has hairs on one's head ; a long array of slaves, with orchards fair as those of Alcinoüs, high marble houses, and more flocks of beasts than Polyphemus fed in Trinacrian fields, or than Aristaeus possessed, or than Heros snatched from Erythraean sheepfolds. The crowd think the man who possesses these is in perfect blessedness.

“ What serpents foul in flowers lurk, these blockheads do not know,

Ne yet how many pricking thorns among the roses grow.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sed nescit quanti lateant sub floribus hydri,  
Quotque rosas inter spinæ nascantur acutæ,

The rich man's miseries are by day and by night<sup>1</sup>:

"And little rest the wretched soul, doth take at any night,  
Sometimes on side, sometimes on face, sometimes he turns  
upright.

He tosseth round about the bed, like as the mighty stone  
Of Sisyphus continually doth toss and turn alone."

The description of the misery of the rich man is full and graphic. Palingenius uses many classical allusions to illustrate his topics, and the boys who read their Palingenius as a school text book could not but learn much of classical mythology.

Much of the second book is taken up with the description of the miseries of rich men. The rich man is compared unfavourably with the poor man, in respect of happiness. The peasant and sailor have more enjoyment from leeks and eggs, than kings and queens from the choicest productions of land and sea. It is best to curb one's desires and guide oneself by wisdom. Seek only what is possible of attainment.

Palingenius breaks forth into praise of poverty. He gives once more classical illustrations, e.g. Anaxagoras, Democritus, etc. The great Romans lived in small houses and on frugal fare. Googe's headings of Palingenius' themes are "The hunts of earthly pleasure," and "Carpet knights bred in peace."

The moral is: so learn to be satisfied with that which is just enough. Palingenius writes paragraph after paragraph on this attractive ethical theme, but

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Juvenal: Sat. III.

as usual he can sum up his position in a line ready for the memory :

“ Cum tibi sufficient cyathi, cur dolia quaeris ? ”

Or as Googe renders it : “ When little cups shall thee suffice, dost thou tuns desire ? ”

And whilst you avoid avarice and living at too great an expense, do not forget that Dame Nature created us to have regard to others as well as ourselves. We must help the poor and afflicted from our stores—great or small. Palingenius laments that in his days the wealthy man has no pity to the poor. He does not give to beggars. He does not give to support the learned. He despises the Muses. He cares most for his dice-tables and cards. Let us for our part rather use things aright—for ourselves—and for the rest, assist others.

Now Palingenius thinks it time to return from his poetic flight, for his vessel may have to face Orion's treachery towards ships. When the clouds have gone, Triton will call us from the shelter of the rocks, and then we will again to the deep !

### BOOK III

#### *GEMINI, OR THE TWINS*

As the highest good cannot be found in riches neither can it be found in pleasure. The writer meets an ancient man by the seashore, who takes him to the shadow of an oak, and agrees to instruct him in words of wisdom in the guidance of life. This man is none other than Epicurus. He claims undivided attention—for to distinguish the good and true is difficult and uncommon. It is rare to find anywhere a real man. It might be said, without misnaming it, that the world is a cave of fools and a tavern of errors.<sup>1</sup> The end of life is assuredly pleasure. Palingenius particularly delights in rolling out his instances and illustrations. So he makes Epicurus proceed: "Why does the ploughman's clubbish hand delve and tear the earth in share? He stops not in the heat of the Dog-star, nor in the frosts of winter? Why fears not the sailor the roaring rage of surging seas, the sand-banks and threatening rocks, despising the death that is so closely escaped,

<sup>1</sup> Sed rarus ubique  
Verus homo : ut possit non falso nomine dici  
Mundus stultorum cavea, errorumque taberna.

trusting in a pine vessel driven before the wind? Why is the soldier's noble delight in the blow of trumpets, the neighing of foaming horses, and the slaughter of men? Why does it delight others to grow pale with poring over manuscripts? All things are pursued for the sake of pleasure. It is so even with the gods themselves. We even believe the things which give us pleasure to think." Epicurus gives a sly hit at priests :

" Who credits most, is most himself deceived  
These are, I say, deceitful things, whereby be priests  
relieved." <sup>1</sup>

It satisfies our vanity to believe in immortality. " But when once our life has faded into thin air, we are nothing, as if we had not been born . . . whatsoever things have arisen fall : what things have begun will see an end. Mighty cities and peoples, powerful realms, the highest mountains and the greatest rivers, time bears away, and shalt thou, vilest of dust, exist for ever? So great is the confidence of an ill-equipped mind. Forsooth, we labour in vain in the love of virtue, by hoping dreams and by inventing vain chimaeras." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Qui facilis credit, facilis quoque fallitur idem ;  
Lucra sacerdotum sunt haec, artesque dolosae.

<sup>2</sup> I give here Palingenius' text :

" Ast ubi vita semel tenues defecit in auras,  
Nil sumus, ut nondum geniti nil prorsus eramus. . . .  
Quaelibet orta cadunt, et finem coepta videbunt.  
Ingentes urbes populosque, ingentia regna,  
Supremos montes, et maxima flumina tandem

This passage calls to mind Shakespeare's *Tempest* :

“ The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve.  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.”

Palingenius then asks Epicurus to show him the method of acquiring pleasure, if that is the highest end. The ancient man agrees, and rises. He conducts him along winding paths, till they see a splendid palace—the palace of Pluto. His three daughters busy themselves there : Ignoble Luxury, Swollen Pride and Stupid Ignorance. Who will lead us to the owner of the palace ? The maids, Hazard, Fraud and Usury. Epicurus offers to take the poet in another direction. He leads him over a stony pathway almost impassable for the wild shrubs. They pass by the humble dwelling of Poverty. In one wood behind dwells a royal lady, who can make men really happy. But she must be approached with clean hands and face. Then follows a truly fine description of the attractiveness of the dwelling of the Goddess of Pleasure. There it is always spring and there always are to be found the sweetest fruits. But the cry of her votaries, as they gather by the pilgrims, gives the experience of the dead,

*Aufert longa dies ; at tu vilissima pulvis,  
Semper eris ? tanta est modicae fiducia mentis ?  
Nempe laboramus frustra, virtutis amore,  
Somnia sperando, et vanas fingendo Chimeras.”*

recalling the manner of the *Divine Comedy*.<sup>1</sup> These are the experiences of those who have tasted pleasure only too well. Then came to the view of the poet a comely matron, Arete, who explained the horrors of ill-regulated pleasure. "Not the sands of Lybia, the houses of the cursed Antiphates, devouring Scylla, or cruel Charybdis, nor anything that could be named, are so much to be avoided as pleasure. . . . Man becomes mad when, with the possibility of equalling the gods, he becomes a beast, and yields to the evil of gluttony and pleasure." Epicurus departs groaning, and Arete explains to the poet the reason for the struggle between reason and the emotions. The poet addresses her: "O goddess for certainly—goddess and no matron thou."<sup>2</sup> She then enters into a description of the horrors of drunkenness, the hurtfulness of too much sleep. Arete is called away from earth (where virtue languisheth and which is no safe place for the good) to the stars, but promises to send to the bewildered poet one who will instruct him further.

<sup>1</sup> Epicurus is guide to the poet Palingenius, as Vergil was to Dante.

<sup>2</sup> This recalls Ferdinand, "Most sure the goddess," and Miranda's, "No wonder, sir, but certainly a maid."



## BOOK IV

### CANCER, OR THE CRAB

THIS book opens with a canticle to the sun—"the eye of the world, who passes through the *duodena animantium idola*, and divides the year into seasons. Phoebus, from the summit of Delphi, answers all the poet's misgivings, in words such as the writer of epics loved to write: "Be of a brave heart and endure, patience conquers all and virtue when depressed rises afterwards but the higher. Don't you see how fortune often alternates? Nothing lasts for ever under heaven. The pleasant sun returns after the saddening clouds. After the deep seas have been tossed by the winds for a long season, at length they settle to peace. The flowery spring succeeds the winter's cold. Therefore take courage. A time will come when the stars will vary their course, unless, indeed, before that day, the Fates shall first cut thy threads, and when thy name which now lies sunk and buried will become memorable in a thousand mouths of men. I myself will draw near, and, with the hand of my nine sisters, will stand beside thee, to befriend thee wheresoever thou goest.

They will snatch thee from the crowd, and render thee famous into the ages.”<sup>1</sup>

The poet next meets two shepherds who are contending in song. He is made umpire, but whilst the contest proceeds, seven wolves fall upon the competitors and destroy them. And then the promised son of Arete, Timalphes, appears. He praises sacred love, condemns mere passion, and attacks the luxury of monks. Love is supreme. Love it is which tends to peace, and Palingenius describes the joys of peace. Peace is hated only by fools and only fools desire to stir up strife. The poet then describes the golden age. The goodwill of friendship is one of the greatest goods of life. Nothing is better, nothing sweeter. Palingenius expands the Ciceronian topic and revels in it. Ways of gaining friends and preserving friendship are discussed. To praise your friend discreetly requires tact. Palingenius offers many suggestions as to rightful conduct and manners in dealing with both friends and strangers. He is more prolix than Polonius and with not a little of the same shrewd worldly wisdom. After a further discourse on the smallness of the earth, and withal its variety, as seen from the upper regions, Timalphes then outran the wind, and sought again the heavenly temples.

<sup>1</sup> Esto animo forti, et dura : patientia vincit  
Omnia . . . tunc celsior exit  
Quum premittitur virtus. . . . Nihil est durable semper  
Sub coelo : redeunt post tristia nubila soles  
Jocundi : postquam ventis maria alta fuerunt  
Exagitata diu, tandem pacata residunt :  
Et remeat brumae post frigora floriferum ver.

Only citizens of heaven, those who are constituted of pure ether, can so ascend, not mortals borne down with the weight of the prime elements, nor any one indeed until the spirit has been loosed by death.<sup>1</sup>

Palingenius abounds in maxims in Book IV. For example :

“Ingenio studeas magis quam superare furorc.  
Infirmi et timidi est nimirum, multa minari.  
Non volo te scurram : sed, si potes, esto facetus.”

And one cited by Mr. V. Rendall : <sup>2</sup>

“Verbaque foemineae vires sunt, facta virorum.”

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, Act V. Sc. 1.

“Such harmony is in immortal souls ;  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.”

<sup>2</sup> A Note on Latin Quotations. *Notes and Queries* 9th series, vol. iv, p. 327.

## BOOK V

### *LEO, OR THE LION*

THE poet now desires wisdom only, for he has seen the undesirability of riches and pleasure as ends. He finds much that is miserable in the life of man, so much that he is tempted to ask, wherein is man's life preferable to that of animals? He finds that it is in the possession of speech, and in the use of our hands. But true as this is, man is only his highest self when he rises to his oneness with divinity and immortality. Palingenius believes that it is an error to suppose that high pontiffs and those who hold the government of peoples lead a pleasanter life than the rest of men. For theirs is an apprehension and terror of losing their place; theirs is a dreadful suspicion of the envy of others. They imagine snakes in this place; poison in that. They dare not eat without a cup-taster. A crown does not bring happiness.<sup>1</sup> Wherein then is the king the loser over the ordinary man, his subject? It is in the priceless possession of liberty, which even the poor man has.

<sup>1</sup> "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

“ O bona libertas, pretio pretiosior omni ! ”

He continues : “ O highest glory, first of all, without which nothing is pleasing, nothing sweet, and in a word, without which, life is death. The poor man can walk by day and by night, secure on every side. Where he has the mind to go, he goes ; whether it is to walk through the city, and to look at the various places of interest and to watch the games, or to see the monuments, or whether he prefers to wander outside the walls, through the cultivated gardens or flowery meadows, or should he desire to turn aside to the pleasant country, nothing hinders him. Alone he goes. He needs no noise of slaves, no crowd of attendants. As often as he is driven on by the goad of hunger and thirst he takes his food and drink without a fear. Better have the freedom of the birds and live on coarse, scanty foods in the heights, and eat the sweet food foraged from the plains for themselves with much labour, than be imprisoned in a cage of ebony or be shut up in a cell, adorned with gilded gems, and grow fat there on royal and overflowing dishes.

“ Saepe igitur miser atque infelix est etiam Rex.”

Palingenius applauds the man of competence, gained by no exercise of meanness ; the man whose desires are kept within easy curb. That gives the true liberty as against others as well as against oneself. The misery of those who serve another's will is usually self-inflicted and certainly should be shunned.

“ For nothing more an honest man becomes than liberty,  
 But he of nature is a slave and of no dignity,  
 Unhappy rather, and a wretch, who can the yoke sustain  
 Of master's hests, and them obey for hope of foolish  
 gain.

The meadows fat, nor all the gold nor price of Indian sands  
 Is so much worth that thou should'st have thy meat in  
 other's hands

And rest at other's will, and when thy master bids thee go,  
 Then like a ball from him thou must be tossed to and fro.”

He holds whoever is in anywise a slave cannot be happy. And, as usual, he puts the whole matter into a maxim-form :

“ Asini est, clitellam ferre libenter.”

Is marriage or celibacy preferable ? A wife may make a man's life miserable, and his children may give him bitter trouble. A man gives up his liberty if he marries. But this largely depends upon his choice, and a man should take great care to find out about the woman he marries what the morals of her parents are like. Moreover, he should get a woman friend to find if she be lazy and unable to knit and weave. Palingenius is of opinion that a man should choose his own wife. In this opinion he is in advance of English Elizabethan thought. For instance, John Stockwood, in 1589, wrote his *Bartholomew Fairing* to show that it is for parents to choose and provide wives and husbands for their sons and daughters, and that children should be strictly obedient to their parents' choice. Palingenius then refers to the trouble which children give. If sons are a discredit, it is the parents who are to blame. The young and tender twig can be

bent at will. It must be dealt with rightly before it becomes a vigorous tree. He who is born wicked will rarely become just and good, though an academy may teach him pious morals and a thousand teachers should have him in training on this side and that. Googe's comment here is: "That which is bred in the bone will never out of the flesh."

Palingenius believes in the great possibilities of education. He sees that the struggle between Nature and Nurture is keen, though he is of opinion that Nature is really supreme:

"Cultura est etenim natura potentior omni."

"Yet something will she altered be with use and daily toil,  
So with continual husbanding doth bear the barren soil.  
So lions, fierce of mighty force, obey to man as King,  
So by continual exercise each Art in time doth spring.  
Wherefore instruct thy children well while tender years  
do grow,  
And teach them honest ways to walk, and virtuous life  
to know."

Then follows a section marginally named by Googe *Give not children too much liberty*:

"Permit them not to ramp abroad according to their will,  
Than liberty no kind of thing for children is more ill.  
If thou be wise, hold fast thy reins and warily well them  
guide,  
For mortal things by nature's force are moude (moulded) in  
vice to slide  
And willingly thereto they run, if help no labour bring,  
For without art is nature wont to give no perfect thing.  
For God himself will not permit that we with slothfulness  
Should heavy wax, but stirs us up with cares and  
business."

Palingenius then fancifully sketches the weary way to the habitation and dwelling-place of Lady Virtue. Virtue has difficult approaches. But the way to the vices is an easy slant, and we pass down, all of us easily of our own free-will, in their direction. Children, therefore, should be trained especially to avoid all evil, and should be kept away from it. Correct them with harsh words. Use the rod, if need be. Point out the way they should go. Hide your love from them. Palingenius has little confidence in boys :

*“ Damnosus favor est pueris ; soloque timore,  
Non ratione scelus fugiunt ; peccantque libenter  
Ac prompte, si non duris cohibentur habenis.”*

Yet the very doubtfulness of the original nature of the child is some measure of the possibilities of the educational process. On the whole, Palingenius is clear in this matter. In spite of his belief in Nature, he rather belongs to the school of educational thinkers who are of opinion that education can do everything for the child. Every father will have his children just such as he has brought them up. We must strive that the child has a healthy body, since health is worth more than all gold, or as he epigrammatically puts it :

*“ Robustus fossor rege est felicior aegro.”*

Hence parents should trace and know the causes of the whole troop of diseases which afflict the human body, so that the causes being removed, the diseases may be avoided in their children and themselves.



Prevent if you can the sources and foundations of physical ill. Do not delay remedies at the beginning.

A little water suffices to quench the kindling fire. But when that is fully grown, "and flames begin to spire with vaunting course against the stars : scarce river, spring or lake will then suffice to quench it out."

If need be, seek a physician's aid. Remember, however, that surgery is more certain than physic. The physician *fallitur et fallit*, whereas the surgeon's art *aperta luce videtur*. The physician merely dabbles in his technical terms and his syllogisms. Physicians demand public rewards and think it sufficient (nor are they mistaken) for the gaining of honoured name.<sup>1</sup> Palingenius considers kings blameworthy for permitting such a state of things, and prescribes the remedy :

"Let them be skilled perfectly in their Art, or let them not profess."<sup>2</sup>

Palingenius gives simple rules for health. Don't eat too much, and don't have unwholesome food. Digest the food already eaten before having more. Take daily exercise, for movement is the cause of heat. Sleep well. Preserve a joyful heart. Seek

<sup>1</sup> Publica praemia poscunt :

Id satis esse putant (nec decipiuntur) ad hoc, ut  
Carnifices hominum sub honesto nomine fiant.

<sup>2</sup> This is an implicit demand and almost an explicit statement of what we call registration of doctors. His words are :

"Vel perfecte artem discant, vel non medeantur."

wisdom, than which the gods themselves can grant no greater favour. Wisdom consists in four things : (1.) Good counsel ; (2.) Sound judgment ; (3.) Right government ; (4.) Greatest of all, the contemplation of heavenly and earthly things.

Humorously, Palingenius observes that the lion's tail is long enough, and bids his Muse hold her peace and rest.

## BOOK VI

### *VIRGO, OR THE VIRGIN*

THE poet has dealt with pleasure, riches, marriage, health as factors of the highest life. He now proceeds to consider high birth. Palingenius again emphasizes the fact that wisdom is a rare possession. Eloquence has been vouchsafed to many, wisdom to few :

“tradita est multis facundia ; paucis consilium.”

Many writers compose sublime poems and are skilful in Latin and Greek discourse, but still are not wise. Brilliancy of words, without vitality, are an outside image (*externus imago*). They bring no fruit to the mind. They are only dreams and fantasies, and such writings have no reference to real life (*quae nihil ad vitam faciunt*). It is truth the poet ought to seek.

The poet then meets Calliope, who points out a procession of people clad in black garments and the gloomy syrma, making terrible lamentation. Death himself is seen advancing with furious scythe and cruel countenance. Death speaks, and pro-

claims his woful irresistible triumphs and fates, reminding one of the apostrophe which Sir Walter Raleigh addresses to him in the well-known eloquent passage at the end of the *History of the World*.

Whilst the poet is paralysed with fear, the mother of Orpheus sees him and takes pity upon him, and offers to impart the truth to him. Man, she tells him, acts rashly when he thinks by the intellect to explore the secrets of nature and divine things, whilst his mind is gross and feeble. He is incapable of grasping absolute knowledge in this state—he is “garrulus, infelix, caecus, temerarius, amens.” In a word, he is self-centred :

“Stultitiae fons est et origo philautia vestrae.”

If this thick mist of self-love were removed, it would alter the whole perspective of things. What we call blessings would be seen to be rather evils. The goddess is proceeding to illustrate in the case of riches, but the poet interrupts, saying that he knows about that matter from Minerva. “Don’t tell me what I know.” Moreover, Arete has stated comprehensively the truth regarding pleasure. The goddess then agrees to deal with nobility itself. This in the opinion of the multitude is constituted by either a full supply of money or noble birth. Nobility cannot be derived from riches. The goddess throws the argument into logical form : If nobility be derived from gold, then it must be pointed out gold comes from the earth, or from deception, or theft or usury, and therefore nobility is derived from deceit, theft, usury. Oh senseless

judgment of the multitude ! Money has no common measure with nobility. “ Pretio nam dignior omni est Nobilitas : haec non emitur, nec venditur auro.” Worth is individual. If a man boasts of his ancestors, the deeds of his father, his grandfather’s monuments, his relatives’ great deeds, whilst he himself is sluggish, senseless, abounding in crimes, devoid of virtue, how can blood make him noble ? He is taking to himself that which belongs to others. He is a jackdaw assuming the name of a swan, or a crow stealing the plumes of a peacock and arraying himself in them.

Nobility is the peculiar honour of the mind, a certain inborn force, by which it always desires great things and despises the vile, by which like fire it strives to rise upward, and like the heron penetrates the highest clouds, despising what is low. He who by the gift of heaven has this nobility will become good, patient in labour, powerful in wisdom, vigilant in his business, so that he may do the deeds which are deserving of praise and that he himself may thus be praiseworthy.

But men are content with bare imitations of worth in all directions, false coins, false bread and other falsities. Man is an ape :

“ An ape, quoth she, and jesting stock is man to God in sky  
As oft as he doth trust his wit too much, presuming high,  
Dare search the things of nature hid, his secrets for to  
speak.

Whereas in very deed his mind is dull and all too weak.”

Warton in describing the *Zodiac of Life*, gives a parallel passage from the poet Pope, and considers

that this was taken from Googe, or from the text of Palingenius :

“Superior beings, when of late they saw  
A mortal man unfold all nature’s law,  
Admired such wisdom in an earthly shape,  
And show’d a Newton as we show an ape.”

The goddess suggests that man’s first lesson is to control his temper, restrain his passions, use his reason, avoid wrong-doing, pursue justice. Know thyself, practise hard work, flee sloth, to reach to the heights of virtue. Then thou shalt become worthy and noble.

Nobility is a possession which cannot be bequeathed by will :

“Non sic nobilitas per testamenta relinqui,  
Aut virtus potis est, velut aedes, rura, supellex.”

Even if you boast an aristocratic ancestry you may discover the beginning of the “nobility” in cobblers or farmers. Then comes another line, for the reader’s memory :

“Omnia fert tempus ; pariter rapit omnia tempus.”

Palingenius truly is a sixteenth century democrat, who knows how to put his case. He asks : Who were Vergil, Tully, Cato, Horatius ? All were plebeian born ; all. Whatever his ancestry, it must have been the same with Homer. He claims no nobility from birth. Who was the father of Demosthenes, Socrates, or who was the mother of Euripides ? Plebeians. Let us not, then, seek honours from the names of others, but let us first have regards for the moral

life in all. Palingenius then eloquently describes the perils, labours, and even apparent "foolishness" of the moral life, which so often has the effect, as it were, to make a man gentle, so as to become the prey of greedy wolves.

This, he tells us, is the way of nature. A most powerful description is given of the struggle for existence and war in nature. The virtuous man must inquire into natural causes, as he was encouraged to do, in connexion with physical health. Study is a long, tiring labour. Many in pursuing it are tortured with indigestion, diseases, or afflictions of the eyes, paleness, thinness, old age. Let the wise man take his own measure, and not go beyond his depth. The intellect is stirred by hope of fame or glory. Ambition is the cause of vain glory. It is a spur and brings by its pricks many to virtue, yet in itself it is a vice.<sup>1</sup> Virtue should be sought for herself alone, not for glory through her. But ordinarily he who is not what he would like to be, wealthy or handsome, assumes a mask like an actor. Each man is an actor. This life is a play and this world is a changeable stage.<sup>2</sup> Each man is a player or actor. Almost all mortals wear a mask and under a false appearance blind the eyes of the multitude.

<sup>1</sup> The idea is similar to that of Milton (in the *Lycidas*): "Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise."

So also, in Book IX. of the *Zodiacus Vitae*, Palingenius says:

"Spes famae solet ad virtutem impellere multos."

This recalls "All the World's a stage."

“ So move they gods above to laugh with toys and trifles  
vain,  
Which here in pageants fond they have, while they do  
life retain.”

Honours suffice for the man who deserves honour. He who does not deserve it is shamed by the mockery of its possession. It is a stage-scene in which the act or takes the part of a king. The goddess then enumerates the evils man endures. In the course of the account, it is noted that every animal can walk almost as soon as it is born, whereas it is not so with man.<sup>1</sup> For a long time he has no strength in feet, tongue or mind. He howls day and night as he slowly learns his way in the world. The miseries of man's life are fully detailed. The picture is vivid and black and the question is raised: Why should death, then, be feared? Life in itself is neither to be loved nor avoided. It is possessed by the worm and the fly. If life is devoid of goodness, then let it be despised, and death be feared. But if the life led has been really good, death is a refuge from the innumerable ills.

Then Arete, putting the laurel on the poet's brow, departing through the *inane amplum*, becomes hidden amongst the shining stars.

<sup>1</sup> For the full significance of this difference between man and animals in the relative length of infancy thus pointed out by Palingenius, see the modern educational interpretation, Nicholas Murray Butler in *Essay on the Meaning of Education*.



## BOOK VII

### *LIBRA, OR THE SCALES*

THIS book takes up more abstruse questions. The first principle of all things is God, He is one simple and pure good. God has no body, not as some would suppose, an infinite body. For, then, there would be no room left for other bodies. Life is a substance, not an accident. Probably many beings are in existence, better and nobler than man, less corporeal or perhaps incorporeal. The wretched earth contains so many animals; probably, the heavens contain inhabitants who are less gross and material than those of earth. The poet gives full rein to his imagination, and rejoices in a larger, higher, better world than that of man. The rest of the book is a treatise on the essential and accidental parts of the soul. It is the soul that sees and hears. The soul is active, and possessed of almost innumerable powers. It is one, and so exceedingly small that it is in nowise visible. The soul is like the divine nature, free from all matter, independent of the body, immortal.

## BOOK VIII

### *SCORPIUS, OR THE SCORPION*

THIS book, like Milton's *Paradise Lost*, has for theme the vindication of God's ways to man.<sup>1</sup> In it, Palingenius deals with fate, the reconciliation of the foreknowledge of God with free will. He defines free will as obedience to right reason, and thus the doctrine is not opposed to divine foreknowledge. The human mind becomes free when the right reason of the intellect has vanquished the rule of the passions. The poet answers the argument as to the mixing of good and evil in his life, and maintains that whatever physical evil befalls, the good man is spiritually blessed.

<sup>1</sup> From the synopsis: "Per totum librum Dei Providentiam a pravis consequentiis pro virili vindicat."

## BOOK IX

### *SAGITTARIUS, OR THE ARCHER*

THE poet pauses as his bark has half crossed the ocean, when he perceives a crag with a top higher than the clouds. There his Genius guides him and from thence they behold everything full of wonderful delights. A voice comes forth : “ Bend thy knee, O Stellatus.” Then he prays ending :

“ Grant, therefore, O most mighty King, to me thy creature  
low,  
Thy will to learn and thee to please, and then that I may  
know  
Mine own estate, from whence I came and whereto I was  
made  
And whither I at length shall pass when that from hence  
I fade ;  
What here in life I should perform, and what I should not  
do :  
That when dame Lachesis my thread of life hath snapt in  
two,  
And that the farthest day is come, that long with privy  
stealth  
Procured my grave, death bring my rest, and port of  
saving health.”

Palingenius was allowed by the Deity to stay on the mount and pluck the celestial fruits. His

vision began to enlarge, and he was lifted up gently by the wind and carried to the moon. Timalphes meets him to give information, and he is led over the wonders of the moon, which he describes. Timalphes then expounds the doctrine of metempsychosis—so as by it to explain the lapse of the human soul towards vice and its dilatory struggle towards virtue. With the son of Arete as guide, the poet is led to regions where he surveys the machinery of evil demons and their punishment, after the manner of the *Inferno*.

There are four bands of demons in the air, and these urge human beings to dissipation, avarice, pride and envy. Lucifer, once the bearer of light, is now a lover of darkness. He emerges by stealth, sends forth his servants secretly to stir up the hearts of men to evil, inspire them with mad fury, instilling thoughts silently into their minds, without using mouth and voice.

Turning to the spectacle of human affairs, the poet is asked to picture to himself a hand having the thumb raised towards heaven and fingers extended. The thumb stands for those who have wisdom next the heart, who rejoice in nature, are innocent, merciful, just and pious—celestial men, gods in human form. The first finger stands for the prudent men, good, but tending towards earth, men to rule cities and do business. They are just and of pure morals, but with a love of the material. These men make the golden ages of the world. The middle finger denotes the shameful, shrewd and vigorous in mind, of great eloquence, but bad,

vicious, earthy, foxlike in their deception of the people, calling white black, and black white, fearless except about the present life. They are violent both secretly and openly. The evil demon himself makes great use of these, for the astute are more numerous and fiercer than the prudent. When they rule, Mars is predominant. Fury conquers law and justice ; vices are triumphant ; and virtue overwhelmed. The fourth finger points to fools ; their number is great. Nature seems to rejoice in them as she does in thistles and weeds. They are blunt-witted, crass-brained. They seek the pleasures of the belly. The astute bid for them to get them to do their false and wicked deeds. The astute make asses of these people in many ways but in one—chief of all—by dedicating themselves to the temples of the gods, urging and terrifying the foolish by threats as to what may occur if they be not propitiated by money offerings. The drastic treatment of the fools recalls the *Moriae Encomium* of Erasmus, which Palingenius clearly had read. The fifth finger stands for maniacs. If incurable, it were better they died. There are thus two kinds of good men and two only. The rest are evil. These should be avoided. If that is impossible, they must not be irritated.

Cannot the astute and the foolish be turned to virtue by wisdom ? Yes, but not by that wisdom which physicians and monks show in devoting themselves day and night to disclose the hidden causes of things, to open up the secrets of Nature, prattling of *Prima Materiaa*, *vacuum*, and a thousand *Chimacras*

with swollen cheeks, displaying their learning and refilling their purses. We must distinguish between knowledge and wisdom. *Wisdom produces the fruit of life, knowledge the flower.*

Palingenius attacks the schools of his time—Googe naming the section :

*Evil Education the Cause of Corrupt Behaviour.*

“ What learns the scholar now in schools, what knowledge doth he gain ?

But fancies vain and bawdy tales : behold in seat full high  
The Master sits with book before, that open wide doth lie,  
And spitting oft he well doth view his great assembled  
crowd,

And when he sees them bent to hear, with lofty voice and  
loud,

He then expounds some dreadful ghost of doleful tragedy ;  
Or else some harlot's tricks declares in wanton comedy,  
Or doting loves of ancient time, or else to light doth bring  
Some monstrous or some cruel fact, or lamentable thing.  
O brain deserving to be purged, dost thou these ways  
instruct

The tender minds, and ignorant bring up with such a  
fruit ?

Is this the salt whereof the age so young is made to say ?  
Is't not a shame with trifles such, to pass the time alway ?  
By this so many naughty knaves and villains do appear ;  
By this the grove of vices thick, upspringing everywhere.  
Whereas no virtuous bringing up of children can be found.  
O you that youth do not correct, but rather them con-  
found

Learn first yourselves to live upright, and then to others  
show

A virtuous trade, lest like to beasts you live, and nothing  
know.”

The poet again discourses on the right method of training virtue in the soul. First have God

frequently in your mind and heart. Pray to Him and the holy servants who perform his behests and stand by Him. The angelic minds can benefit the man who prays. Be not of those who think there are no superior beings to men. Be just; injure no one. Help especially the good. Keep free from the Circes and Sirens of the mind. Shun all effeminate luxury. Be wise betimes. Pity the poor, and bear poverty with equanimity. Poverty may relieve you from burdens and lighten your wings to fly to the stars. Avoid pride. Control anger. Study the books of the wise. Inquire into the causes of things.

By such methods may the foolish and the astute develop virtue and worth.

Just at the end of the book he finds room for a sharp rebuking of proud monks and the Church. He reaches, under the conduct of the son of Atlas, the jagged rocks of San Marino,<sup>1</sup> which reach up into the starry ether. Then he is set down in the fields of *Verruculum*, and his Guide leaves him.

Mr. V. Rendall, in *Notes and Queries*, 9th series, vol. iv. p. 327, in drawing attention to the number of quotable lines to be found in the *Zodiacus Vitae*, cites l. 827 from Book IX:

“Maxima pars pecore amisso praesepia claudit.”

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<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the wonderful little Republic placed on a high rock, above the plains that stretch to Rimini.

## BOOK X

### *CAPRICORNUS, OR THE GOAT*

THIS book contains the well-known reference to alchemy, which causes Palingenius to be counted amongst the esoterics of its mysteries and practices. He refers to the philosopher's stone, but as far as one can see, he preserves impartiality as to its nature, and it is difficult to gather whether he refers to it as one of the elect in its search, or as a describer of the studies typified by it. The book, for the rest, consists of a repetition of the methods of training in virtue and another attack on the Pope and his Court. There is, however, one passage on the bringing up of children which should be quoted. After referring to the great influence which the poet considers the signs and aspects of the stars have at birth, Palingenius goes on to speak of parents :

“ Besides of great effect both seem, their parents' state and  
kind,  
Of whom the infant nurséd is, and who doth guide the  
mind.  
For as the child in tender years himself at first doth train,  
Such custom shall in graver age within his heart re-  
main. . . .



Therefore the master needs must be both wise and  
 learnèd well  
 That guides the child, and also must to virtue him compell.  
 And like the horseman good, now here, now there must  
 wind and wrest  
 The untamèd head, and now with bit and now with spur  
 molest.  
 Nor onely him with words persuade, but with examples  
 teach :  
 For what if life be contrary, availeth it to preach.”

The boy must be kept away from evil companions.  
 Do you wish to know what a man is like. Mark  
 well his friends. Nature and God bring like to like.

Palingenius pleads for sanity in study. Let the  
 boy “in Greek and Latin books his daily travail  
 take,” but let him read only good authors, refusing  
 all “dishonest” books. For the man who is  
 unlearned is seldom good. But don’t let the youth  
 over-study lest he become demented or diseased.  
 He should have due recreation and play. Though  
 all studies are good and fair, yet the highest are  
 those

“ That teacheth well the stars to know, and nature’s open  
 plain ;  
 Let these our wise man well apply, with all his force and  
 might,  
 In graver age, and in these arts let him spend his delight.”

Then follow further directions to the man who  
 is to be both learned and good, especially pointing  
 out the importance of good food for forming pure  
 blood. The importance of wealth could not be  
 disguised from the ancient philosophers who devised  
 a certain stone to secure resources. The sages

can by search for this stone pass into various countries, learning from all :

“ And this whosoever doth enjoy may dwell in any land,  
Both free from fear of fortune’s wheel and force of robbers’  
hand,  
But unto few the gods vouchsafe so great a gift to give.”

The significance of the philosopher’s stone to Palingenius is apparently that wise and learned men may live in a sense of security and pursue the way of wisdom and discovery for the good of themselves and for all. It is the mediaeval and renaissance counterpart, in a way, of the modern claim for endowment of research.

The tenth book, it should be noted, contains another severe indictment of war. The wise man is all for peace unless he is forced for the sake of his country to protect himself and it.

Another question raised is : Whether the wise man should learn any art so as to support himself, if robbed of his patrimony. Yes, he may surely become a good and learned physician. The rest of the book concerns itself with a vigorous contention for the immortality of the soul and another condemnation of Rome.

## BOOK XI

### *AQUARIUS, OR THE WATER-CARRIER*

THIS book treats of astronomical matters. It enumerates all the circles, order, motion of the planets according to the system of Ptolemy. Then not only the signs and constellations of the zodiac, but all the signs and stars of heaven and their rising and setting are noted. Next come the metaphysical questions of form and matter. The highest ether is harder than adamant. Then an eclipse of the moon is explained. The heavens in rotating produce no sound. The stars change, and rule all things and are moved with the sun. Another question raised is: Why planets don't scintillate? The heavens are the *primum mobile*. Palingenius expounds the Platonic doctrine: The forms give being to things.

Perhaps one of the most interesting speculative opinions of Palingenius is his reiterated belief that the ether has its citizens, who live without material food and drink. The poet denies that matter is eternal. Finally he gives his views regarding elements and meteors.

## BOOK XII

### *PISCES, OR THE FISHES*

HERE, again, the poet takes up the story of the inhabitants of the ether. Innumerable thousands of gods inhabit the ether. Some account is given of their dignity and manner of life. It is easy for human beings to summon evil spirits; but only a few, choice, purified human beings occasionally succeed in conferring with good *daimones*.

He who wishes such intercourse should persevere in frequent prayer. Pray long and frequently. The aged oak does not fall at a stroke. A single drop of water does not hollow out the marble. Rome was not built in a day.<sup>1</sup> Life and growth are gradual, so this important task is slow and tortuous. It is not easy to approach kings. Why should it be easy, then, to bring the gods to converse? They will come to us at length if we persevere rightly and we shall be blessed in our com-

<sup>1</sup> This is another of the passages referred to by Mr. V. Rendall, *see* p. 39, who describes it as a "find." Palingenius' words are: "Non stella una cavat marmor, neque protinus uno est Condita Roma die."

It would require much research to determine the *original sources* of such proverbial utterances.

munion. People will say converse with the gods is impossible. Such people's minds are gross.

“ Believe me he that lives alone, avoiding company,  
Is either mad or more than man and talks with God on  
high :

In this sort lived the Prophets old, as it appears by fame,  
And many after Christ, whom men did holy Fathers name.  
And in this present age of ours, full many may we find  
That lead their life and spend their years, in this same  
sort and kind.

These men when they do wisely speak, and reason fair and  
well,

And wonders great do bring to pass, and things to come  
foretell,

Wilt thou esteem as mad or fond, or to be weighed light ?  
Or rather wilt thou judge they be inspired with Holy  
Spirit ?

It is this unity with God that we seek in a future  
life, why then should there not be communication  
now and here ?

## CONCLUSION

The sketch which I have made of the *Zodiacus Vitae* will give the reader a concise view of the contents of the book, particularly from the point of view of the educationist. But the subject-matter of the poet is much more varied than would appear from a summary of the general course of this long poem. In it are the appeal to the life of virtue, for its own sake, and not for reward; the recognition of wisdom as difficult, and the path to it a thorny one; the appreciation of peace as nobler than war; and the praise of friendship; its call to the bearing of poverty with equanimity, its fearlessness of death, its condemnation of avarice, and its plea for the pleasures of the mind as higher than those of the body. All these things, as M. Gustave Reynier <sup>1</sup> has pointed out, are emphasized. Incidentally, there is also a closeness of observation which shows a sympathetic intelligence in detail as well as in high speculative themes. Reynier instances the wood of pleasure, with its many trees:

<sup>1</sup> *De Marcelli Palengenii Stellati Poetae Zodiaco Vita, Parisiis. 1893.*

" There lacks no Mastes Esculus, no maple, holme nor oak,  
 Nor plaintree, cork, nor yet the nut that colour doth  
     provoke,  
 The winding and the alder tree, the chestnut and the ash,  
 The filbert, pitch-tree and the palm, the birch with  
     spriggy lash,  
 The fir-tree and the mirtle eke, and broad leafy Beech  
     wood ;  
 (When Saturn ruled the golden world) which was on  
     father's food.  
 The vine, the fig, and apple eke, and Lothos Priaps friend ;  
 The Ivy and the laurel tree that poets' heads doth shend ;  
 The mulberry and the poplar tree that Hercules esteemed ;  
 The pear tree, willow and the prune, with box that whitely  
     seemed.

. . . . .

Or other more, whose names if thou dost take in hand to  
     tell  
 Thou sooner maist in number bring th' ' Egyptians ' sand  
     as well."

So, too, when he has come forth from the wood  
 and enters the garden of pleasure :

" With purple roses red and white, and pansies painted hue ;  
 White daffodils and violets sweet, with fragrant lilies blue ;  
 Sweet amaranth that long doth live, with leaves of crimson  
     dye,

" The clove with balm and cassia, too, mint, thyme, and  
     saverie,  
 With saffron, myrrh and majorem, the garden's onely gem  
 Of savour sweet, in Idale woods enough there grows of  
     them."

As M. Reynier remarks : " One might suppose  
 that the writer was a cultivator of a garden, running  
 over the names of his fine specimens."

Warton <sup>1</sup> gives the most careful and judicial description of the *Zodiacus Vitæ* :

“ This poem is a general satire of life, yet without peevishness or malevolence, and with more of the solemnity of the censor than the petulance of the satirist. Much of the morality is couched under allegorical personages and adventures. The Latinity is tolerably pure, but there is a mediocrity in the versification. Palingenius’ transitions often discover more quickness of imagination and fertility of reflection than solidity of judgment. Having started a topic, he pursues it through all its possible affinities, and deviates into the most distant and unnecessary digressions. Yet there is a facility in his manner which is not always unpleasing ; nor is the general conduct of the work void of art and method. He moralizes with a boldness and a liberality of sentiment which were then unusual ; and his maxims and strictures are sometimes tinctured with a spirit of libertinism which, without exposing the opinions, must have offended the gravity of the more orthodox ecclesiastics. . . . Although he submits his performance to the sentence of the Church, he treats the authority of the Popes, and the voluptuous lives of the monks, with the severest acrimony. It was the last circumstances that chiefly contributed to give this poem *almost the rank of a classic in the reformed countries* and probably produced an early English translation. After his death he was pronounced a heretic ; and

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, ed. Hazlitt iv. p. 326.



his body was taken up and committed to the flames<sup>1</sup>; a measure which only contributed to spread his book, and disseminate his doctrines."

M. Reynier<sup>2</sup> has investigated the sources of the *Zodiacus Vitae*. Vergil has influenced Palingenius, and still more Lucretius. Indeed, Palingenius gives the *verba ipsissima* of Lucretius in such phrases as "novus ignotusque sacerdos," "latentes naturae tentabo vias, atque abdita pandam," "non levia hic tradenda." Passages of close parallelism can thus be quoted, and this influence is clear and important. Reynier shows the thought expressed in the allegories of the great painters, Raphael, Botticelli, Andrea Mantegna, reproduced in the *Zodiacus Vitae*, as part of the general atmosphere of the time. Examples, too, could be given of similarity in Ariosto. It is evident that Palingenius had carefully read his Dante, and he frames the passage describing the inhabitants of the infernal regions (in the Sagittarius), Book IX., in direct imitation of Dante, as Warton remarks.

M. Reynier shows, with much interesting quotation, that much of Palingenius' matter in the occult sciences is to be found in H. Cornelius Agrippa: *De Occulta Philosophia*, 1529. So, too, in the same author's satirical book, translated as *Vanitie and uncertaintie of Artes and Sciences*<sup>3</sup> (English translation, 1575,

<sup>1</sup> Bayle states that this fact is derived from Melchior Adam and confirmed by Giraldus: *de Poetis suorum temporum*.

<sup>2</sup> *Thesis de Zodiaco Vitae*, p. 14 et seqq.

<sup>3</sup> First Latin edition, 1530.

by James Sanford), there are similar views to those of Palingenius on the ignoble origin of the nobility. Physicians are attacked by both, and surgery is proclaimed by both as surer than medicine. Agrippa deals with the signs of the zodiac. He has a stellar theory of friendships and enmities, states the doctrine of like to like and the theory of the divine light that lightens the intellect. The Military Art is a vanity, the most uncertain and vain of all arts. Agrippa launches out into keen attacks on the monks. These afford points of resemblance between Agrippa and Palingenius, and many others, could be found in the *de Incertitudine et Vanitate Scientiarum et Artium*. There is more than a parallelism of topical matters between Agrippa and Palingenius. In his *Life of Agrippa*, Prof. Henry Morley bought out the attempt of this philosopher to preserve a spiritual interpretation of the older philosophies whilst denying much of their material and literal truths. It is the same with Palingenius. Hence the extreme difficulty of deciding whether Palingenius was an alchemist, a magician and so on, or not. In connexion with his educational views, it may be noted that in the training of the body in health, Gooze declares that the maxims are those of Hippocrates. M. Reynier<sup>1</sup> quotes Seneca (*Epist. ad Lucilium*, viii.). He also aptly instances the severe criticism of Savanarola towards those school authors which teach *fabellas turpes vel prorsus inanes*. Savanarola allowed the reading of Homer, Vergil, Cicero, but

<sup>1</sup> P. 40.

detested not only Catullus and Ovid, but also Tibullus and Terence. Amongst the piles of luxuries consigned to the flames by the followers of Savonarola, were such books as those of Petrarch, Boccaccio, etc.

## *THE INFLUENCE OF PALINGENIUS' ZODIAC OF LIFE*

THERE were three ways in which this book had considerable influence.

1. On account of its attack on the corruptions of the Church, for which reason alone it became almost a school classic.

2. On account of its summary of great learning, which included a comprehensive outlook on life. The names of mythology which are introduced require a very inclusive classical dictionary for elucidation. But classical knowledge is put to a purpose, a high ethical purpose, the attractive presentation of virtue. Platonism is represented, and the philosophies of science certain and uncertain. The astrological, astronomical, alchemical and magical inculcations, spiritualized so to say, involved a wide outlook on the field of knowledge, and a deep religious attitude along with the undoubted breadth of thought. Such a book directly attracted teachers. This is directly shown by the statutes of St. Bee's School<sup>1</sup> in Cumberland, drawn up in 1583. The books "only to be read in the said

<sup>1</sup> Founded by Archbishop Grindal.

school," apart from grammar and religious books, and the old Roman<sup>1</sup> classics are these :

B. Mantuan, Palingenius, Buchanan, Sedulius, Prudentius.

That Palingenius' *Zodiacus Vitae* was held to be a school textbook may be seen from the poem prefixed to the Basle edition of 1574, by H. Pantaleon, addressed to the tutors (*moderatores*) of Christian youth. The object of the book is there stated to be "that beardless boys may first learn pious teachings, and that afterwards they may further read the sweet writings of the poets" (*vatum*).

The grounds of the inclusion of Palingenius are no doubt those stated above, the general reflection of learned knowledge of the classical world, together with a sound practical judgment and insight into the perspective of the good life.

3. The early literary influence of the *Zodiacus Vitae* may be estimated by the passages quoted in the Appendices A and B.<sup>1</sup>

4. One other influence should be mentioned. The *Zodiacus Vitae* is the precursor of satirical visionary and, in a sense, of Utopian works. One book directly suggested by the title of Palingenius' book is the *Zodiacus vitae christianae, Satyricon pleraque omnia verae sapientiae mysteria singulari suavitate enarrans*, written by C. Barthius, 1623. M. Brunet mentions a French poem entitled, *Le Zodiaque poétique ou la philosophie de la vie humaine*, by M. de Rivière, in 1619, which he says was an imitation of Palingenius.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 81-85.

Nor is the *Zodiacus Vitæ* without relations to poetical romances. It is a precursor of Sidney's *Arcadia* and of Spenser's *Fæerie Queene*, though in this respect it is rather part of a general development than of direct significance. It contains glimpses which suggest parallels to More's *Utopia* and the *Nova Solyma*,<sup>1</sup> and to *Mundus Alter et Idem*. It reminds the reader in some respects of Campanella's *Civitas Solis*.

As a moral treatise it had in its day a considerable place. As late as 1731, it was translated into French by M. de la Monnerie, with the sub-title, *Preceptes pour diriger la Conduite et les Mœurs des Hommes*. This translation was fittingly dedicated to Philip Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, whose letters to his son had claimed the province of morality as peculiarly his own. He speaks of foreign authors, Bayle, Baillet, Menage, de la Monnoye, Naudé, Colletet, Borrichius, Scaliger, as being prodigal in the praise of Palingenius.<sup>2</sup>

Scaevola de Sainte Marthe in 1569 published his *Premières œuvres*, consisting of imitations and translations into French gathered from various poets. The first portion of his book contains, rendered into French verse, the argument of the first book of Palingenius' *Zodiac of Life*. Then follow from Palingenius the topics: (1.) That riches are not necessary for the acquisition of virtue, nor even desirable for it, nor

<sup>1</sup> Translated by the Rev. W. Begbie (1902), who claims that the original was written by John Milton.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B.

for living pleasantly (*délicicusement*). (2.) The enjoyment of riches. (3.) The fine description of the rising sun from Palingenius' third book. (4.) Against gluttony (from Palingenius' third book). (5.) On sleep (from same book). (6.) Palingenius' Invocation at beginning of fourth book. (7.) On love (from the fourth book). (8.) On liberty (from Palingenius' fifth book). (9.) On marriage (from the same book); on the earthquake (Palingenius' eleventh book). (10.) Palingenius' prayer to God (Book XII.). M. de Sainte Marthe says, in his epistle to the reader: "It was M. de Morel who first gave me courage to dare to write, and who induced me to undertake the translation of Marcellus Palingenius, a work certainly highly deserving of recommendation for its great and divine erudition, with which it is full, I dare say as full or more so as any poem which has been written in our time, and perhaps also in the past. But, for the rest, *de bien longue et fascheuse peine*. That is why before advancing further in my translation I was anxious to show some of my specimens, so as to make clear to myself and to discover if the work would satisfy our people." Evidently he did not receive encouragement to proceed, and the first complete French translation was given in prose by M. de Monnerie.

Melchior Adam, in his *Vitae Germanorum Philosophorum* (1615), says that Christopher Wirsungus published an edition of Palingenius *with very learned notes*. If Wirsungus wrote these notes, all trace of them seems to have been lost. There have

been several German translations of the *Zodiacus Vitae*, viz. that of M. J. Spreng, 1564 ; of Schisburg, 1785 ; of J. Pracht, 1806. The first English prose translation of Palingenius was privately published in 1896, the interest which prompted the undertaking being the relation of the *Zodiacus Vitae* to occultism.

There were many editions <sup>1</sup> of the Latin text of the *Zodiacus Vitae* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Those published in London, of which there are copies in the British Museum, are dated 1574, 1575, 1579, 1592, 1602, 1616, 1639. This statement in itself shows that the book had considerable circulation in England.

The late Prof. Henry Morley, in writing on Henry Cornelius Agrippa, said in connexion with the study of magic and occultism that " it is man's reason of yesterday which has become his superstition of to-day," and we must not forget how much wisdom went to the formation of older forms of thought and reflection. This is particularly true when we come to consider the educative process. The practical maxims on education discoursed upon by Palingenius some may think are commonplace to-day where they are right, and beneath discussion where they are wrong. But in relation to their age they were none the less formative and illuminating. To inculcate the necessity of the study of " nature and the stars " seems to the modern mind trite. We have nature study in schools. But the study of the stars by a reaction from the older studies has fallen from the

<sup>1</sup> Bayle says an infinite number.



modern curriculum almost altogether. Palingenius' eleventh book on astronomy and some of its metaphysical implications are the most obsolete, perhaps, of the contents of the *Zodiacus Vitae*. Yet they are not the least valuable. For they teach us much of the old occultism, which was at any rate brought to the attention of pupils and scholars, and the doctrine of the continuity and unity of life and mind. The earth is the "stable" of the world. It contains many animals, and you think the heavens empty of life? The ether possesses its citizens, the stars are celestial cities and the habitations of the gods. Real kings and real people are there, not as on earth, mere shadows. This advance, from the material to the spiritual, from the gross and material to the refined, from the sensuous and sensual to the intellectual, even if typified in the gradual rise in intelligence of graded orders of beings as far superior to man as the lower animals are inferior to him, is at any rate not opposed to the modern evolutionary line of thought, and must have had its educational value for those who thought in the older modes of culture. It is an appeal to the student to go through untold labours of investigation and search to find the *real*, and a belief that the real lies round about us, if we have penetration to grasp it from under the shadow of the material. The search may take us to the pursuit of the philosopher's stone. It certainly leads to questions of the transmutations and unions of fire, earth, water, air, with the compounds generated by them, stones, metals, plants and animals. In all these

material bodies there are occult virtues. Beside the four elements there must be a quintessence which is over and above them all. This is the Soul of Nature, and from this every body derives whatever efficacy it possesses. That body which has most of the virtue of the quintessence of the universe has the most power and value. The great problem is to separate the spirit from the matter in everything, e.g. in gold, or in human beings. It is because of the interchangeableness of essence and form that occultism seeks to know and use the essence. Hence the celestial bodies have influences, and the influences of intelligence as located in human and superhuman bodies are still more effective. Hence the arts of sorcery and divination were enlisted so as to control the influences. Magic therefore becomes the knowledge of the whole of natural forces. Natural magic, in this view, is the perfect setting of all philosophy. On its practical side it is the attempt to gain the power through knowledge of rising from inferior to higher grades, so to say, to know the evolution of species, and to guide directly and immediately the transformations. But to the minds of men like Cornelius Agrippa and Palingenius, it meant the evolution from the material to the spiritual, from the sensuous to the intellectual, from the human to union with the divine. In a childlike age of intellect, it led to glorying in the marvellous. It was the attempt to explain the wonders of the world. It made every object of sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, every material object, the hero of its romance.

The old myths and fables belonged to the objective observation of what animals and things did. Occultism projected the active essence, the reality, as an explanation. All life, all objects became endowed with an intelligible aspect, or at least came within the sphere of a possible intelligibility. From the educational point of view in the process of inquiry into all things, great and small, the intellective powers were developed, and the sympathetic attitude towards nature quickened. As Agrippa said when he was asked for an explanation of his occult philosophy : " The key is Intelligence, for the understanding of high things gives powers to man when he is lifted by it to nearer communion with God, and dying to the flesh has his life hidden in Christ " (H. Morley, *Life of Agrippa*, vol. ii. p. 232).

It is from considerations of this kind that Palingenius, even in his occultistic bearings, deserves to be remembered. His area of readers, we have seen, must have been large. He was read by adults, and he was read in the schools. If we are to understand the education of his age, we must remember that even representative educators were living in full recognition of occultism. Possibly the extent of this influence is not at all duly recognized by us. Nor apparently has the extinction of this element been without some loss. At any rate, it is extremely curious to note that astronomy has sunk into a most inconsiderable position in the school curriculum, since the rationalist Copernican system has displaced the Ptolemaic, and since the dis-

## 80 INFLUENCE OF THE ZODIACUS VITAE

missal of astrology has rendered the knowledge of the solar and stellar system of less direct practical importance as a subject of knowledge. It is not without suggestiveness, therefore, to draw attention to the extreme significance generally attached to astronomy in the sixteenth century, and to the fact that modern times have, in this instance, lost a very valuable educational discipline, except indeed to a comparatively few specialists, which Paligenius in the sixteenth century turned to account both on the descriptive and the intellectual side. Nor should it be overlooked that in what we are apt to look upon as the most material of studies, the wonder-working of magic, sorcery, and all their processes and methods, Paligenius and others of the better sort sought to bring these pseudo-methods of study into the service of the world of ideas, to convert the whole of the materialistic tendencies into a pure, Platonic spiritualism.

## APPENDIX A

### ENGLISH REFERENCES TO PALINGENIUS

Roger Ascham, *Scholemaster*, 1570.

“Indeede, Chaucer, Th. Norton of Bristow, my L. of Surrey, M. Wiat, Th. Phaer, and other Gentlemen, in translating Ouide, Palingenius and Seneca haue gonne as farre to their great praise as the Copie they followed could cary them; but, if soch good wittes and forward diligence had been directed to follow the best examples, and not haue bene caryed by tyme and custome to content themselues with that barbarous and rude Ryming, emonges their other worthy praises, which they haue justly deserved, this had not bene the least, to be counted emonges men of learning and skill more like unto the Grecians than unto the Gothians in handling of their verse.

William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetrie*, 1586, speaking of Latin poets, says:

“Onely I will adde two of later times, yet not farre inferiour to the most of them aforesayde, Pallingenius and Bap. Mantuanus; and for a singular gyft in a sweete Heroicall verse, match with them Chr. Oclan[d], the Author of our *Anglorum Proelia*.”

Webbe, also in speaking of translators, says: (after Golding's *Ovid's Metaph.*):

The next very well deserveth Barnabe Googe to be placed, as a painefull furtherer of learning: hys helpe to Poetry, besides hys owne devises in the translating of Pallingenius's Zodiac."

Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, 1598:

"As those Neotericks, Jovianus Pontanus, Politianus Marullus Tarchaniota, the two Strozze, the father and the son, Pallingenius, Mantuanus, Phillipus, Quintianus Stoa, and Germanus Brixius have obtained renown and good place among the ancient Latin poets; so also these Englishmen being Latine poets, Gualter Haddon, Nicholas Car, Gabriel Harvey, Christopher Ocland, Thomas Newton with his Leyland, Thomas Watson, Thomas Campion, Brunswerd, and Willey have attained good report and honourable advancement in the Latin empyre."

Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, 1598:

"So these versifiers for their learned translations are of good note among us, Phaer for Virgil's Aeneads, Golding for Ovid's Metamorphosis, Harington for his Orlando Furioso, the translators of Seneca's Tragedies, Barnabe Googe for Pallingenius, Turbervile for Ovid's Epistles, and Mantuan, and Chapman for his inchoate Homer."

Hallam, *Lit. of Europe*, vol. i. note p. 365:

The *Zodiacus Vitae* "is not very poetical, but by no means without strong passages of sense and spirit in a lax Horatian metre. The author has said more than enough to incur the suspicion of Lutheranism."

Hallam, in speaking of Sir Thomas Chaloner's *D Republica Instauranda* (1579), says:

“ It may be compared with the *Zodiacus Vitae* of Palingenius rather than any other Latin poem I recollect, to which, however, it is certainly inferior.” (*Lit. of Europe*, vol. ii. p. 148).

## APPENDIX B

### FOREIGN REFERENCES TO PALINGENIUS

The testimonies to the value of Palingenius' work quoted in the 1722 edition are :

Thomas Scauranus, who supplies a laudatory poem ; Henricus Pantaleon of Basle, who wrote a poem for the 1574 edition ; a poem quoted from the *Nugarum Lib. VIII* of Nicolaus Borbonius, and the following prose critical passages :

Scaliger, *Poet. Libr.* VI. :

" Palingenii poema totum Satyra est : sed sobria, non insana, non foeda. Ejus dictio pura, versus ac stilus in imo genere dicendi quare si noluit melius : ne a nobis quidem id tentandum est," etc.

Lil. Gregor Gyraldus, *De Poetis suorum temporum Dialog. II* :

" Legitur quoque Marc. Palingenii Zodiacus Vitae : opus varium, multisque rebus ad constituendam vitam minime idoneum : quod nisi principi nostro Herc. Estensi (si minus vobis placet Atestio) nuncupatum foret, eius minime meminissem. Nam et post eius mortem in eius cineres saevitum est, ob impietatis crimen."

Borrich, *Dissertat. de Poet.*, p. 102 :

" M. Palingenius Stellatus poeta, reliquit posteritati Zodiacum Vitae, hoc est, de hominis vita, studio, et



moribus optime instituendis libros XII epico carmine, nec eo poenitendae industriae: humiliori tamen plerumque stylo, et dictione, quam ut nostri seculi aures impleat. In cujus rei fidem ista ex lib. V. 466-474 adducuntur."

Castum poetam, mirâ facundiâ nil nisi rosas et lilia loquentem vocat Georgius Richter Orat. XXXII. p. 72, 74, 84. Vid. Valesiana, p. 32; Lotichius p. 2; *Bibl. poet*, p. 89; Baillet, *Jugemens des Savans*, tom. VII. p. 147.

Also Bayle's Dictionary, under Palingenius, et in Broukhusii not. ad Propert. p. 36, 171, 231, et Tibull. p. 264.

## APPENDIX C

### *THE ASTROLOGICAL ASPECT OF THE ZODIAC OF LIFE*

BY WALTER GORN OLD

In the following brief survey of the scheme of Palingenius I propose to show that the twelve signs of the zodiac were for him something more than mere pegs on which to hang an argument or elaborate a discourse. Palingenius understood at least as much as was current teaching among astrologers of his day in regard to the twelve divisions of the heavens and the corresponding divisions or "Houses" of the horoscope, and probably he knew something more. Indeed, I find it impossible to escape the conclusion that he framed his arguments upon astrological "dominions" and "correspondences."

If this can be shown to be the case, then it will follow that the whole of the discourses have a more concrete plan than would superficially appear. Mystically considered the purport of the twelve chapters of Palingenius will find their parallel in the twelve labours of Hercules, and thus will typify the evolution of the human soul through successive stages of mental and spiritual enlightenment. The suggestion is extremely fascinating and may prove instructive.

I. Beginning with Aries, "the threshold of our zodiac." Here the year is born anew, and equal day and night depict the state of equilibrium between spiritual light and material darkness into which the earth-born soul enters when it arrives at this first stage of existence. Aries corresponds to the First House, astrologically known as the "House of Life."

At this stage virtue is of more account than knowledge, as Palingenius observes. In this connexion the cryptic words of Solomon have peculiar significance: I am not good because that I came into an undefiled body, but being good I came into a body undefiled.

II. Taurus corresponds astrologically with the Second House, which is known as the "House of Wealth." It has an occult analogy with the Golden Wedge of Ophir, for this angle of thirty degrees comprising the second sign of the zodiac, was known to the Hebrews as Ephrah or Ophirah, the productive. It is the Heifer which symbolically stands for the "much cattle" of the wealthy nomads of the East. Palingenius aptly argues in this section of his work that "the highest good is by no means to be sought in riches," and shows that the poor man may have his peculiar treasures in a life "rendered like unto the dwellers in heaven by divine wisdom."

III. Gemini corresponds to the Third House and is governed by the planet Mercury, the messenger of the Gods. It is the House of Communications and Relationships, and, according to astrology, Mercury rules that period of life between the ages of four and fourteen, when the seeds of knowledge are implanted in the mind and the intellect begins to germinate. Consequently this division of the heavens is known as the Hall of Learning. At this stage Palingenius meets his teacher Epicurus, and from him learns that pleasure is the high-

est good, while Virtue urges discrimination and recommends the use of reason as arbitrator between the pleasures of the mind and those of the body.

IV. Cancer of the Northern Tropic corresponds to the Fourth House and is ruled by the Moon. It symbolizes the ocean, the first stage of things, original substance, and corresponds to the condition of the infant mind. It rules the human life from birth to the age of four years and may be regarded as chaotic. In this chapter Palingenius is particularly concerned with that condition of love which is associated with modesty and innocence, and has much to say regarding Cupid, the all-conquering child of Venus.

V. Leo, the fifth sign of the zodiac, is governed by the Sun and corresponds to the Fifth House, which has dominion over the fruits of love and in astrology specifically represents children. The appositeness of the fifth discourse of Palingenius appears conspicuously in his argument, which sets forth the "advantages, disadvantages, and necessity of conjugal life," gives "instruction upon the marriage state and the education of children," and contains a warning against celibacy. In Leo, the second sign of the Fiery Triplicity which begins in Aries, we find the multiplication of life by procreation and the extension of the self in familism.

VI. Virgo, which corresponds to the Sixth House, is not only Ceres, the giver of food, but also Hygieia, the goddess of health. The old astrologers say that the Sixth House governs the physician, and thus the disciples of Æsculapius are collectively represented by his daughter Hygieia. In this section of the work Palingenius argues concerning the condition of those who are in suffering, arguing that "death should not be dreaded, but rather that we should hasten to it as to a refuge." Thus health, food and clothing, the astrological appur-

tenants of this celestial sign, are well within the argument of this section. In this region of the heavens is Lupus, the Anubis of Egyptian theogony, the Aish-keleb or Man-wolf, who later passed under the name of the great healer Æsculapius.

VII. In this section Palingenius rises to a higher key, and having fully dealt with material conditions of life, he now lifts the gamut of his argument by a complete octave. Under Aries he considered the unit of human life, and now under the opposite sign he treats of Deity as the single source of all life, "the first principle of all things," the self-existent, infinite and incorporeal. Libra, the balance, shows equilibrium by the union of opposites, as God and Nature, force and matter, male and female. It is the symbol of justice, atonement, pacification and rest. In the intellectual world it represents Reason, which Palingenius here affirms to be an "infallible rule of truth." From the condition of the human body Palingenius passes to the consideration of the Soul and its welfare. It is in the union of soul and body by incarnation that man obtains the means of liberation.

VIII. Scorpio here stands for the more ancient Serpentarius, and corresponds to the Eighth House, which is the House of Death and also the Gate of Life. It symbolizes the end of all things by resolution of form, the bending back upon itself of the stream of life. It typifies the Law of Cycles, or of correlated successive-ness. In this section Palingenius fitly discourses on the modes and causes of death, and of Fate as the expression of the Divine Will, which determines the end from the beginning. "All have an appointed day to die. No account is taken of age." But Palingenius adds: "There are, however, some who can learn the powers of the stars and can attain to the secret of the great pole . . .

who see events to come and ofttimes predict the manner and day of death, because nature is as certain of the future as of the present or the past." The serpent, as the symbol of death in the physical sense, is also the index of life in the spiritual sense, and is so used in the Scriptures. *Demon est Deus inversus.*

IX. Sagittarius corresponds to the Ninth House, which is that of spiritual beginnings, of religious aspiration, and psychic experience. In this section of his work Palingenius treats of the training of the soul, its peregrinations and its relations to the denizens of the higher and lower worlds. Palingenius is taken to the sphere of the Moon, which I understand to mean the astral world, and there beholds the judgment of three orders of souls, some being allowed to pass upward, some commanded to remain, and others sent back to earth. As in Aries we symbolize the beginning of earthly life, and in Leo the extension of that life in our progeny, so here, in the third sign of the Fiery Triplicity, we have the symbol of the spiritual genesis, the human growing out of the animal, as the soul from the body of man, in the Centaur.

X. Capricornus, the Goat, corresponds to the Tenth House, which is the House of Attainment. It is the Second House from the Ninth, and represents spiritual possessions, just as the Second denotes the possessions of the person. The Goat, which symbolizes the Exile, climbing the rocky heights in search of tender herbage, stands for the aspiration of the soul. In the material world Capricornus represents the mountain; in the social world, position, honour and credit; in the intellectual world, the ambition of mastery and government; and in the spiritual world, the soul's achievement. Palingenius says that "the wise man bears about with ease the whole of his possessions" and in this section dis-

courses on the way and method of attaining to the wisdom of the spirit.

XI. Aquarius, the Water-carrier, from whose vessel is symbolically poured forth the whole vast volume of stars which enter into the composition of "the Milky Way," here suggests the theme upon which Palingenius discourses in this section. He treats of the nature and composition of the heavenly bodies, the orbits and motions of the planets, and the rising and setting of the asterisms. From these considerations he proceeds to the nature and constitution of the ether of space, the modifications of the elements, and concludes with some speculations on the supernal world and the denizens of the highest ether. The sign Aquarius is astrologically dedicated to Uranus, and Palingenius most fitly devotes this chapter to the science of the heavens.

XII. Pisces, corresponding to the Twelfth House, appertains to secret things and the revelation of the occult. With this sign the circle of the Great Year of the human pilgrimage is completed, and a new cycle is entered upon. The tethered fishes symbolize the binding back of the soul to its parent Source, and thus stand for true religion or Yoga (*yuj*, to join). In a mystical sense the sign denotes human necessity under the eternal law, and human freedom of will within limits.<sup>1</sup> In the material world Pisces and the Twelfth House denote bondage; in the intellectual world, the constraint of reason; and in the spiritual world, obedience to the Divine Will, which is the highest wisdom, implying a true knowledge of universal laws and intelligent consent thereto in both thought and action. As Laotze says: "The meshes of the celestial net are very large, yet nothing escapes it": and as regards the human soul,

<sup>1</sup> "Freewill in man is necessity in play," says Bailey, in his *Festus*.

here denoted by the fish leashed to its counterpart, it is certain that it can never escape from itself and the consequences of its own actions save by the operation of the individual will in intelligent and conscious alliance with revealed Good. Palingenius devotes this last section of his work to revelations concerning the nature of the Incorporeal Light, the super-ethereal world, the three-fold Heaven, and the possibility and desirability of open communion with the Gods. To such communion he ascribes whatever of merit there may be in his interpretation of the Zodiac of Life.





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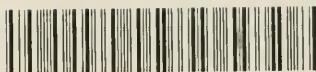
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