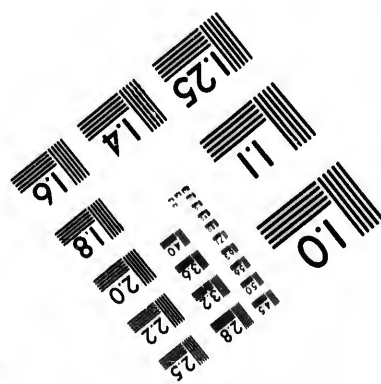
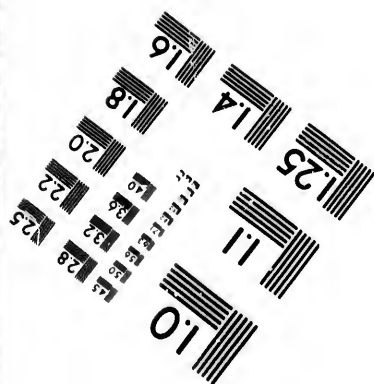
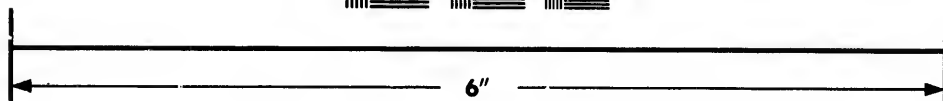
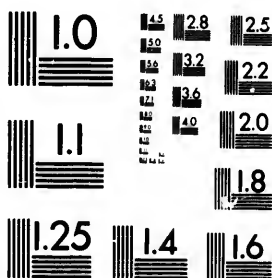


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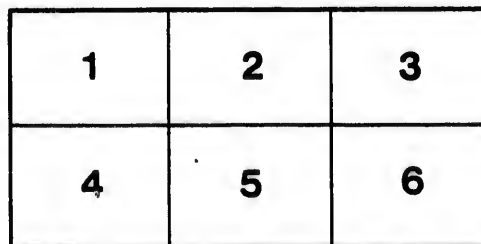
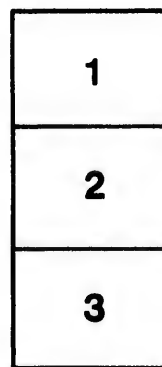
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• A Night with the Philosophers •

—•••••—
A DRAMA IN 3 ACTS

BY

Rev. G. F. Gahiet, O.M.I., D.D., Ph.D.



TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

For presentation by St. Thomas Academy of Ottawa University, March 9th. '96.

BY

Messrs. Paoul & Aurelian Belanger.





DRAMATIS PERSONAE

[STUDENTS]

Faustinus Mr. M. McKenna
Positivus " W. Walsh

[PHILOSOPHERS]

Pythagoras " J. Foley
Socrates " G. Fitzgerald
Plato " E. Fleming
Aristotle " W. Lee
Cicero " D'Arcy McGee
St. Augustine " J. Ryan
St. Thomas " T. Holland
Descartes " J. Garland
Leibnitz " J. Quilty



Act 1.

A student's room very simple, a few materials for writing, a table, a few chairs, two side-doors.

SCENE 1

FAUSTINUS.

Alone, occupied in study and reading.

Reads. "God is the source not only of existences but also of essences, inasmuch as they are real or, which comes to the same, the source of whatever reality there is in possibility without Him there would be no reality in possibilities, and nothing not only would not exist but would not ever be possible."

Oh! Leibnitz what a great thought you have written here in your "PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES." Ah! but it is very profound and my limited mind cannot penetrate it. Philosophy is indeed beautiful and noble, but yet, how arduous! Why do philosophers say these things in such dry and unfamiliar languages? But nevertheless, thou, Oh, philosophy, I love thee still, thou art my only passion.



SCENE 2

Positivus [enters in an excited manner]

Says Faustinus, throw that book aside, I am going to the Opera to see Trilby: won't you come?

FAUSTINUS.

Trilby! Trilby! what is that?

POSITIVUS.

Trilby, old boy, why, Trilby is everything nowadays, there is but one Trilby in the world, Trilby is all the rage, everyone reads Trilby, everyone goes to see Trilby, everyone is in ecstasies over Her; and then besides Trilby, there is Trilby's foot which is a marvel! They say there is but one other foot like it.

FAUSTIGUS.

[re-enters.] And whose is that?

POSITIVUS.

Why it's her other foot of course, I know! Then there is Sve ngali, that devil of an hypnotist. Say, old boy, you shouldn't miss that. Come along, we will have a jolly good time.

FAUSTINUS.

Many thanks, but I cannot accept your invitation.

POSITIVUS.

And why not ?

FAUSTINUS.

You know that I have no love for theatres, and that I derive much more pleasure from my philosophical studies. I have just been reading an admirable passage from Leibnitz.

POSITIVUS.

Oh ! Pshaw to the mischief with philosophy. But now seriously, do you really believe in it ? And it is for such reveries and empty dreams, that you deprive yourself of the real enjoyments of life ?

FAUSTINUS.

Yes friend, for me there is nothing so sweet in life as philosophy

POSITIVUS. (aside)

Really he is out.

(aloud) Why Faustinus, you shock me. I can understand the sense of studying philosophy to kill time or to win a B.A. : and looking at it in that light I can resign myself to it, but to study it seriously, or to become passionately attached to it, that's really beyond my comprehension and one must have lost his mental equilibrium to do it. But for goodness sake tell me what is philosophy, what does it amount to ?

FAUSTINUS

You wish to tease me — you know very well it is a science

POSITIVUS.

That is sufficient. You will tell me that it is the queen of sciences a queen ! but one of whom the sciences are little proud. What ! are you still tied to her apron strings ? Philosophy a science ! Well that's a good one, and what does a philosopher know ? Why one of your most celebrated, Socrates, I believe, said that he knew but one thing, and that was that he knew nothing at all, an astounding revelation indeed, after he had been philosophizing for fifty years : and they gave that sport, Socrates, a dose of hemlock, but I would have recommended three grains of Hellebore or a cold water bath to cool his brain.

FAUSTINUS.

The profound words of Socrates are beyond your limited comprehension, in any case, philosophy would teach you at least to respect great men.

POSITIVUS.

Pardon me if I hurt your feelings, but philosophers, great men! Why Cicero who ought to know them since he was one of them said:— "There is no opinion too absurd for a philosopher to defend." And again he exclaimed:— "O, credulous race of Philosophers!"

FAUSTINUS.

My dear Positivus, to every thing that you may say, here is my answer:— philosophy may be compared to rare wines, which are so precious that they are everywhere counterfeited. Like-wise there are good philosophers as well as poor ones.

POSITIVUS.

Is that so? Well I would like to imitate some of this good philosophic wine. But I warn you ... no sophistry with me. By what label am I to distinguish these bottles of good wine?

FAUSTINUS

Oh! you materialistic joker! the one sign that is necessary is sound reason armed with the torch of evidence.

POSITIVUS.

A wonderful revelation! They all proclaim evidence as their criterion upon which they build system after system; and hurling anathemas at one another, they were unable to agree even among themselves. It was said of one that he was a deist rising, a sceptic at breakfast, an atheist at dinner, a pantheist at supper, and a polytheist at bed-time. And even more I would not dare to say that philosophers are mountebanks, if one of them had not already said, :- To hear philosophers theorize, one would take them for a troop of fakirs, each yelling from his stand; "Come on good people: Right this way; Mine is the only genuine article on the market."

FAUSTINUS.

Then according to you there is no good in philosophy ?

POSITIVUS.

Oh ! yes it teaches some good antiquated maxims . But these were known before philosophy was dreamed of. Tell me , is there any need of philosophers to know that there is a soul , a God , a future life , good and evil ? My goodness ! the red-skins of Canada know that , without bothering themselves about Aristotle and Co .

FAUSTINUS.

Philosophy fathoms these great truths .

POSITIVUS.

Say rather that philosophy gropes in the dark and breathes doubt , and your philosophers have the happy faculty of expressing the simplest truths in sesquipedalian circumlocutions , in such a manner that if I say a thing I understand , and that you do understand likewise , that is not philosophy , and if I say a thing I understand and that you do not understand , that is not philosophy either , but if I say a thing that I do not understand any more than you do , ah ! then that is philosophy !

FAUSTINUS.

All your joking can never alter my taste .

POSITIVUS.

But my poor fellow if you wish to study , at least , study something useful . Physics for instance which teaches us to make barometers ; or Chemistry which teaches us to make soap ; or Geology which affords us coal oil ; or Mathematics which shows us the secrets of statistics . These at least are practical , but of what value is philosophy ? I think I can tell you . One day , a philosopher while crossing a river looked with disdain upon the humble boatman who accompanied him , and said :- My good fellow , do you know Logic ? — No sir , replied the riverman . Then you have lost half of your life . Do you know Ethics ? — No sir . Then you have lost the other half of your life . But suddenly a violent gust of wind upset the boat , then the boatman said to the disciple of Aristotle . Do you know how to swim ? — No , said he . Then philosopher , you have lost the whole of your life . Behold your philosophy ! Time presses : once more I ask you , will you come to the theatre ?

FAUSTINUS.

No ! I tell you , — go on , you fatigue me with your joking .

POSITIVUS.

Don't get ruffled old fellow . I hope philosophy will soothe you :
Good-bye I am going to see Trilby and will tell you all about it
when I return .

[He goes out humming.]



Act 2.



FAUSTINUS. (Alone.)

He goes away sneering . O God that one should be so blind !
How darest thou , narrow-minded youth , thus blaspheme that
which is the most beautiful emanation of superior wisdom ,
divine philosophy ! Well ! let them say what they will .
I love the noble speculations of philosophy above all , I prefer to
all things its sublime aspirations to the knowledge of an invisible
world : I delight in those bold researches after the ultimate causes
of the world , of man and of God . Yes physics , chemistry ,
mathematics are something : but above all towers philosophy .
There , my mind sees clearly , there I breathe freely .

[He goes to the window.] How silent

and peaceful is the night ! What myriads of brilliant stars are in
the heavens ! It was on one of these beautiful nights that
Pythagoras heard the harmony of the celestial spheres .
Pythagoras , and those other immortal geniuses who have appear-
ed as beacou-lights in all ages , those sages who have sung of
truth and beauty in the world . Oh ! how I would like to see them
at this hour to converse with one of them ! they would
tell me the secret of their wisdom , they would show me where
to find that plenitude of truth for which my soul thirsts . After
all , why should they not come , those lofty minds , as amiable
and good as they were enlightened ? Why should they reject the
ardent appeals of the humblest of their disciples , of him who
admires and loves them passionately .

[raising his arms.]

Oh! come, come down from those ethereal regions, ye super-human spirits, lights of humanity! Come to me! come and whisper in my ear, in the drowsy silence of the night, the word of ancient wisdom! Come, my heart is wringing with anguish! I sigh for truth and truth escapes me. Come, spirits of the great sages of old, come and enlighten my mind as the the flash of lightning illumines the dark stormy night!
What! So soon! Ah! I knew that my voice would be heard in the Elysium of true sages.

❦ ————— ❦

❦ SCENE ❦ ❦ 2 ❦

[PYTHAGORAS ENTERS.]

[Noble and majestic bearing; long white beard; white gown.]

FAUSTINUS.

Who art thou, venerable sage, whom I would take for a god descended upon earth?

PYTHAGORAS.

I am not a sage, I am only the friend of wisdom, —
O PHILOSOPHOS!

FAUSTINUS.

Well then, O philosopher, tell me, what is the world?

PYTHAGORAS.

The world is the COSMOS, because it is order.

FAUSTINUS.

Sage of Crotona during the beautiful nights of Hesperia, thou art said to have contemplated heavenly bodies and the stars in the sky.

PYTHAGORAS.

Yes, and like the ancient minds, wrapt in admiration, I listened to the great harmony of the celestial spheres, which unhappily human ears filled with other sounds, have failed to listen
Hark! young friend of wisdom, everything is silent now on this earth; hearest thou those sweet melodies from worlds that are far away?

[Behind the curtain is heard soft music.]

FAUSTINUS.

O delight ! O sweet enchantment ! O ! if men only knew and wished ! [The music stops; then after a short silence .]
And now , Pythagoras , teach me still what the human soul is ?

PYTHAGORAS.

A living and motive unity , a spark of the God Creator .

FAUSTINUS.

But why , O Pythagoras , hast thou taught Metempsychosis , those endless migrations of the soul into bodies of men and animals ?

PYTHAGORAS.

Because a symbol is necessary to the rude intellects of mortals and Metempsychosis is the symbol of the eternal destinies of the soul

FAUSTINUS.

And God, O sage , tell me what He is , do you know ?

PYTHAGORAS.

God is the supreme MONAD and the sacred TRIAD.

[Starts to go.]

FAUSTINUS.

O ! stay . Hast thou nothing more to reveal ?

PYTHAGORAS.

Young man , remember, one of the *Golden Verses* of Pythagoras was :— “ Mortal , speak thou not , until eternity ...of the great mystery of divinity ”. Adieu .

FAUSTINUS.

O tell me , tell me the entire truth !

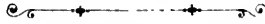
PYTHAGORAS.

Worthier lips will reveal it to thee. I have been but the early dawn .

[Exit.]

FAUSTINUS.

It is strange ! There is in my soul a mixture of light and darkness . I see as if 't were in the twilight But , here is another sage . Heavens ! it is Socrates .



SCENE 3

[SOCRATES , LARGE OF STATURE , WEARING A PHILOSOPHER'S CLOAK .]

FAUSTINUS.

O thou who comest hither ! under this coarse aspect , I recognize and salute thee , O Socrates , saviour of philosophy , creator of moral science , thee whom the oracle hath declared " TO BE THE MOST VIRTUOUS OF MEN "

SOCRATES.

Young man , praise God alone . He only is Being and Infallible Wisdom .

FAUSTINUS.

O ! Socrates , if I admire the life of the sage , I honor thy death which was that of a martyr , and I say with Cicero :- " I weep whenever I read in PLATO , ' The death of Socrates . ' "

SOCRATES.

I was dying for truth and justice . I was rising to immortality . Is it not a pleasure and glory to die thus ? But there is One whose life and death is more than those of man .

FAUSTINUS.

O Socrates . I understand of Whom thou speakest But what was the cause of thy death ?

SOCRATES.

The principal accusation of my enemies was that I did not acknowledge the gods of Athens and that I spoke of another divinity . They were right because I taught that above all things there is a superhuman and invisible God , Who hath made heaven and earth . As a philosopher , it was only my duty ,

and my right to pronounce these great truths . But as a citizen,
I was guilty of changing the institutions of the State I was con-
demned .

FAUSTINUS.

And you died

SOCRATES.

Without fear or regret, in the midst of my disciples , after having
conversed with them on the truth and beauty of immortal life.

FAUSTINUS.

But why , son of Saphroniscus , did you order , when dying ,
that a fowl should be sacrificed to Esculapius ?

SOCRATES.

It was to thank the Divinity for having cured me of life for,
that which you call life, is a fleeting dream, and death an awaken-
ing .

FAUSTINUS.

What was thy greatest work on earth ?

SOCRATES.

To have educated Plato . Adieu . (exit.)

FAUSTINUS.

Adieu ! martyr of truth . Oh ! to what height philosophy eleva-
tes great minds ! Socrates
would that I had been there , in the prison of Athens , before
that audience of young but faithful disciples ! Holding in your
hand the cup that contained the fatal draught , you conversed
quietly on the soul and on immortality But here come
two sages speaking together with animation ; can it be , great
God ! Yes, I see the divine Plato and the great Aristotle .

SCENE 4

[PLATO AND ARISTOTLE ENTER SPEAKING TOGETHER .]

PLATO

Founder of the Lyceum , to contradict me thus , dost thou for-
get that Greece and Rome and all Europe have called me the
DIVINE Plato ? Dost thou forget that thou hadst been for
twenty years my disciple ?

ARISTOTLE .

Founder of the Academy . I have forgotten nothing . I have admired . I have loved thee . But if I loved Plato , I loved truth still more : *"amicus Plato magis amica veritas ."*

PLATO .

Confess that my philosophy is more elevated . It touches the earth and leaps thence into the bright domain of ideas , and from ideas to reach the primary unity , the infinite , the absolute .

ARISTOTLE .

Yes , thy philosophy indulges in bold flights , but it is often lost in the clouds . Thou soarest so high in the skies that thou forgettest earth and its realities . But I have brought back to its proper sphere that wandering philosophy which thou wast leading astray . I have wished to study our own world in its phenomena . It is not so lofty , but it is more real . Thou hadst wings to fly . I asked of nature but leaden feet to trace on the earth a deep furrow . Thou hast spoken like a brilliant poet . I adopted geometrical method and precision . It is less animated than that of yours but much clearer .

PLATO .

But thy philosophy is almost silent about God , whilst He fills and governs mine . He is for me the only essential Being . He alone IS , the rest is not but EXISTS . He is the supreme Reason of all things , O LOGOS . He is the eternal Sun of intellects . He is Moral Law personified .

ARISTOTLE ,

Yes , Plato , thou hast so well spoken of God that I , coming after thee , found nothing to add . I confined myself to saying that He is a most pure actuality , the first immovable Motor . But it is in Psychology that I surpass thee . Thou hadst made of the soul , I know not what , a celestial spirit wandering in this world : I have reduced it to be only what it is ; a human soul , a form of the organic body . I have analysed all its faculties and all phenomena of its intellectual life .

PLATO

Well , but thou hadst said nothing on the immortality of the soul ; and yet thou hadst read my PHÆDON !

ARISTOTLE

Immortality ! Why . I have not denied it .

PLATO.

Good excuse indeed for a founder of a school!

ARISTOTLE.

But at least I excel in *Metals*. No one has analysed the virtues as well as I did.

PLATO.

Yes but thy moral teaching, although ingenious, is radically vicious since it is absolutely godless; it is without definite result since it has no sanction. Thou hast conceived no higher ideal for man, than to be a learned Peripatetician, a faithful husband, a tender father, and a healthy man. I always taught that free creatures should tend to God as their end. I said that true wisdom consists in loving God.

ARISTOTLE.

Thou knowest what I replied to thee: "How can we love Jupiter.?"

PLATO.

This saying condemns thee! — When dying I foresaw that He would come on earth, that Divine Man who would give to men the entire truth, and with truth, eternal life. Wherefore I ordered that on my ashes be set this inscription engraved on a golden tablet: "CHRIST WILL BE BORNE OF A VIRGIN AND I BELIEVE IN HIM."

ARISTOTLE.

Well, Plato, here at least we agree. In my last moments, I exclaimed: "I came to this world, stained with iniquity; in it I have lived in anxiety; I leave it in trouble; CAUSE OF CAUSES HAVE PITY ON ME!"

PLATO.

Philosopher, give me your hand: let us be friends.

Exeunt.

FAUSTINUS.

O immortal sages, let peace reign in your Elysium! — You have both been the guides, the beacon-lights of humanity before Redemption. For the advancement of Philosophy you were necessary. Alone, O divine Plato, you would perhaps have thrown me into the seductive doctrine of idealism. Alone, O wise Aristotle, — forgive me for saying it, — you would perhaps have plunged me into gross materialism!

D SCENE 6 D

[CICERO ENTERS CLAD AS A ROMAN PATRICIAN

FAUSTINUS.

Who art thou noble philosopher ? The Sages who have preceded thee were children of the learned Hellad , but thou seemest to be a Roman .

CICERO.

Thou art not mistaken ,young man ,I am Cicero .

FAUSTINUS.

I salute the prince of orators .

CICERO.

Child, do not forget that I have also loved and cultivated philosophy ! Dost thou remember the solemn eulogy I made of it ?

FAUSTINUS.

Yes ! noble Roman ,I have read it on the very ruins of thy villa , amidst the ruins of Tusculum,where thou didst write them in time of yore . And thy words have kindled in my soul the first spark of passion for that divine science . Thou wast saying : "O philosophy , sole guide of our life ! O thou who teachest virtue and expellest vice , what would we be without thee ? Thou it is who hast brought forth cities , and inspired scattered men with the love of society . Thou hast made laws , formed morals , civilised nations . I seek refuge with thee . I implore thy assistance . And to what power should we have recourse but to thee , to give us tranquillity in life and drive away the terrors of death ? "

CICERO.

I have exaggerated a great deal in my pompous encomium : I know now that there is another light , another hope than philosophy . And the proof that it does not suffice is that at the very hour in which I wrote those words , Brutus , my friend , the last of the Roman republicans, was putting an end to his life in the fields of Philippi ; causing virtue, the daughter of philosophy , exclaiming : " Cursed be virtue ! Thou art but a name . False phantom or vile slave of fortune, be thou for ever the lot of my enemies . "

FAUSTINUS.

Now, Tullius, where hast thou expressed the most beautiful of thy meditations on philosophy?

CICERO.

In my treatise on *The nature of the Gods*, where I proclaimed the existence of God, while hesitating on His nature: but especially in morals, where my lasting genius was more at ease: these were my *Tusculanæ*, my books on *Duties* or *Letters* and on the *Republic*. I have especially dwelt upon this sentence, of which I must say, I am proud,—since it won for me the uncies of eternity: “I know that the thought of all wise men has been: There is a law, the fundamental law, which is not the fruit of the genius of man nor a skilful invention of the people; but the eternal decree that commands and forbids. This law, foundation of all others, is the supreme thought of God who orders and forbids all with an infallible reason.”

FAUSTINUS.

Yes, Roman philosopher these are great ideas. But first thou wast speaking to me of another light, of another hope. Explain to me

CICERO.

No, my lips are unworthy of it. Another will disclose to thee that sublime secret. Adieu. exit.

FAUSTINUS.

My heart leaps for joy in my bosom. Oh! what happiness to converse with the glorious minds of the past. Thanks, noble philosophy: to thee I owe these delights! Yet there is a mystery that hovers about these sages. Their words are full of restrictions that I cannot understand. Perhaps they do not know or cannot tell me all. But who is this coming hither with the look of an inspired prophet? A greater peace, a softer light seems to shine on his brow.

SCENE 7

(ENTERS AUGUSTINE, DRESSED AS AN AFRICAN BISHOP OF THE FOURTH CENTURY.)

God be with you young man! Since like Daniel you are a man of desire, a passionate lover of truth, the heavenly Father permits me to come and speak to thee. Haste! Thou hast but a fleeting moment to listen to Augustine.

FAUSTINUS.

What! A Father of the Church with philosophers! A man of the Bible with men of reason!

AUGUSTINE.

Young thinker, knowest thou not that the human eye can contemplate the light of God, only when it has first been accustomed to the glimmer of reason?

FAUSTINUS.

So then venerable man, whom I honor and respect, thou hast loved philosophy!

AUGUSTINE.

Dost thou forget that I have written these words which represent the tendencies of the christian soul: "Love thou passionately intelligence!" and that I have also said "I keep away from both those who do not sanctify philosophy by religion and those who do not enlighten religion by philosophy. No philosophy without religion, no religion without philosophy." Such was the inspiration of all my life.

FAUSTINUS.

In fact I remember that the gentle Fenelon said: "There is more philosophy in Augustine than in all the ancients and the moderns"

AUGUSTINE.

Exaggerated admiration of a good heart! In philosophy I have especially loved the platonician doctrines because they unceasingly speak of God, of the ideal world, and of pure love.

FAUSTINUS.

Then, divine doctor, what hast thou thought on the great problem of the origin of ideas?

AUGUSTINE.

God is the generating centre of our thoughts. He is the intellectual light in which, for which and by which the intelligible world is reflected in our intelligence. He has put in our being a rational soul, which can be illumined and beatified only by the very essence of God. We see the immutable truth of all things in the eternal causes, in the very light of God. The atheist himself who turns away his eyes from that everlasting light, which reflects its rays on every soul, nevertheless conceives eternity, the immutable laws of truth and good. Where does he

FAUSTINUS

Light of Africa, the noble ideas which thou hast just exposed seem to resemble the tenets of that modern system of Malebranche: the *vision in God!*

AUGUSTINE.

Child, know thou that nothing is more mysterious than human thought, that very thought which desires to know everything and can not understand itself. But know this-well: the human thought feels at a double source. the personal activity of the soul and the illumination of God: and this latter is by far the greatest.

FAUSTINUS.

Holy man, show me also the way to felicity.

AUGUSTINE.

Young philosopher, the time has not yet come Farewell,
I bless you! [exit.]

SCENE 8

FAUSTINUS.

Ah! I feel myself ascending into a higher sphere of light and peace The sage of Hippona may have borrowed from the schools of the Academy and of Alexandria, but he has, certainly been enlightened by a superior light Go, kind and noble philosopher, go and enjoy that repose which thou hast so well painted out to wandering humanity: for it is then who hast said: "O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is always troubled until it rests in Thee!" — But who is this monk with the white frock? Has philosophy ever haunted the cloister?

THOMAS.

Yes young man, philosophy lives in the cloister! For the soul never takes a better flight towards the infinite of truth than when it is pure and freed from material bonds. Learn who I am. In a small town of Campania were Hannibal in former times was lost by its voluptuous pleasures, it is there that I first saw the light of day. Gregory IX. was then governing the Church; Frederick II. was the Caesar of the holy Roman Empire: and Louis VIII., the *Lion*, was King of France. My ancestors, with their blood, infused in their descendant a little of their soul. I can therefore tell thee that I was the nephew of the great Frederic Barbarossa and that the Kings of Germany called me their cousin. On the other hand, my mother had infused in my

veins the blood of the valorous Norman dukes, Robert Guiscard, and Tancrede the hero of the Crusades. But no, I will not pride myself upon having been born on the steps of the throne but rather of having been the humble disciple of eternal wisdom.

Mount-Cassins where died the patriarch Benedict cast its shadow upon my cradle: it was the blessed refuge of my childhood. At the age when life opens wide its doors to youth, I asked to be inscribed in the glorious militia of Dominic and I donned the white tunic, and on my head the mysterious crown.

FAUSTINUS. [enthusiastically]

Oh! I know now Thou art Thomas of Aquinas! thou art the Angel of the School! Be blessed for having left a moment to converse with me, that sphere of radiant light, where in olden times Dante saw thee, when Beatrice led him into Paradise. But continue thy recital, Oh Angelic Doctor, thou my guide and my master! Like the dawning of the day, it sends a thrill of exultation through my very frame.

THOMAS.

My parents, dazzled by the chimerical dignities of this world, dragged me by per force from that refuge of wisdom and locked me in a feudal dungeon. But Heaven strenghtened me and when a vile agent of hell, an impure courtesan laid snares to rob me of my innocence, I seized upon a blazing brand and drove that wretched creature from me. Then I fell on my knees and made the solemn vow to live in inviolable purity and to love but God in all this world. Heaven ratified my oath, for since then I have never known vain loveliness of the heart, and the mortal sting of the flesh

FAUSTINUS.

O truly Angelic Doctor!

THOMAS.

From that time, I was free, and Brother Thomas went to Paris, which was already the centre of science and of art, to study Letters, Metaphysics and the Bible. Albert the Great was my master. As I was silent in class, always attentive to the lessons of the teachers, always meditating upon great problems, my co-disciples had named me "The Mute Ox". One day after having fortunately solved a problem of high metaphysics, Albert the Great said to the students: "You call Brother Thomas the mute ox, but one day the bellowings of this ox will fill the universe: Heaven had revealed to him the future.

Yes, O Angelic Doctor, your teachings to your contemporaries, your books to men of all ages, have proclaimed truth more eloquently than the human tongue had ever done before or will ever do after. Thy forty books, but especially these master-pieces, *Summa Contra Gentes* and the *Summa Theologica* are sources of light whence all human generations draw wisdom. Thou hast performed many miracles as thou hast composed articles, and for six centuries you have occupied the throne of divine science, and as yet Providence has raised no successor, no rival to thee.

THOMAS.

This wisdom which men admire is not the fruit of my genius, but the gift of God. My prayers have given me more insight into the great problems than my books and meditations.

FAUSTINUS.

And what was thy aim, Angelic Doctor, when thou wast consuming thy life in the production of these immense works?

THOMAS.

What I wished was what I answered one day to my heavenly Master when He told me:—"Thomas, you have well written of Me, what reward do you desire?" And I answered:—"Nothing but Thou, O Lord!"

FAUSTINUS.

And on earth, thou hast an incomparable glory; since thy authority is supreme and solves all questions. Thou hast turned to thine own account the renowned saying of the disciples of Pythagoras: *autos epha*. THE MASTER SAID IT!

THOMAS.

And yet I like not the absolute enthusiasm of many of my disciples. I refuse not to be a beacon that casts light, but I do not wish to be a limit that stops it. Say that to all! Adieu! exit.

SCENE 9

FAUSTINUS.

He disappears like a flash of lightning, vanishing in the dark night . . . His words have filled my bosom with light and peace. Oh! what will then be the eternal revelations, if already the lips of the sages afford such rapturous delights . . . I see

[ENTER DESCARTES AND LEIBNITZ.]

DESCARTES.

The ages had flown, the faint lights of the past no longer satisfied the intellect. Man sought new fields of learning, their minds needed new methods. Aristotle held thought in a worse bondage than the body ever knew. It was necessary to free thought from that yoke. The old scholastic method had reigned long enough. Philosophy wanted new formulas. I came, my book of method in one hand, a finger of the other on my forehead and proclaimed: "*Cogito, ergo sum!*" - I think, therefore I am! - And a brighter light shone on the world: the idols fell and thought freed from bondage took its flight into the realm of truth.

LEIBNITZ.

Truly, Descartes, thou speakest with the enthusiasm of a prophet, thou seemest as Moses on Mount Sinai. But Aristotle did not deserve so much disdain, and there was much of good in that old scholastic method, which you have so ill-treated!

DESCARTES.

But it was unable to save the soul from the negations of materialism.

LEIBNITZ

Ah! and your philosophy had that power?

DESCARTES.

Yes, and that for a most simple reason. I had but to say: "The soul thinks: therefore it is unextended, simple and immaterial: therefore it is indivisible and incorruptible; therefore immortal."

LEIBNITZ.

But brutes also have a soul and then.....

DESCARTES.

But hold! I have shown that animals have no soul, that they are automata, simple machines.

LEIBNITZ.

A marvel! but it is a doctrine that mankind will hardly admit.

DESCARTES.

But it belongs not to us, Philosophers, to seek the opinions of mankind, it is our right to dictate what must be believed.

LEIBNITZ.

Then Descartes, thou sayest with Bacon for whom however thou hadst no great love: "Everyone says it, therefore

everyone is in the wrong!"—But hast thou succeeded better than ancient philosophy in establishing the notion of God.

DESCARTES.

Yes, I have had this mighty argument: The idea which everyone has of God, the idea of the most perfect being; but the most perfect being must exist, since otherwise He would not be the most perfect. Therefore God exists.

LEIBNITZ.

Humph! it is an argument of seducing appearance. I, myself, was pleased with it, and I have given it this more concise form: "God is possible, therefore He is!" But I have always had doubt of its validity.

DESCARTES.

In a word thou dost as thou hast always done, thou raillest at my philosophy.

LEIBNITZ.

Far from it, Descartes, I have always attempted to conciliate whatever good there is in it with the good and true that ancient philosophy has produced, and to allow my way between sensualism and idealism. I confess that I have hardly succeeded, and that thy influence has strongly attracted me towards idealism. I have not sufficiently considered the sensible world. But I have not refrained from saying that thy philosophy is productive of many grievous errors.

DESCARTES.

Yes! and what are they, if thou pleasest?

LEIBNITZ.

By thy methodical doubt, thou hast given support to scepticism; by thy definition of substance, thou hast approved of the pantheism of Spinoza; by thy theory on the automatism of brutes, thou hast opened the way to materialism; by thy logic of evidence, thou hast produced rationalism, which threatens

DESCARTES. [dully]

I see that thou hast entirely misunderstood my philosophy: and besides, thou wast too much occupied in building thy MONADS, and inventing thy novel of the PRE-ESTABLISHED HARMONY.

LEIBNITZ.

Hey! philosopher of Touraine, thy nerves are very irritable to-day . . .

DESCARTES.

And thou, Prussian philosopher thou seest double.

FAUSTINUS (who has silently listened to the last scene)

Heavens! my mind wonders and my heart is afflicted. . . Here then they are, those precursors and messiahs of modern thought.

Their sole occupation is to heap system upon system; hesitating when they should affirm, they are bent upon each other's destruction. And these conflicts of thought have no longer the serenity of olden times. No wonder that the intellectual world is now-a-days a chaos, where all struggle confusedly, the pandemonium of all errors. But why have they spoken of ancient and modern philosophy? Does philosophy grow older? Can truth change? Doubt again takes possession of my soul; Yet I had hoped so much from the presence of the sages! O light! O truth!

—Act 3.—

SCENE 1

[At rising of curtain Faustinus walks in excitedly.]

FAUSTINUS.

They have come the sages of the past, they have been with me; Their words have filled my soul with delight! The bishop and the monk especially, seem to have brought with them the eternal oracles; they were not men, but angels of light. The sun of truth has not yet reached its zenith in my soul, I see but shadows! ... O God! That I may see! That all difficulties may vanish! I wish (Enter Positivus.)

SCENE 2

POSITIVUS

Hang yourself Faustinus! I have seen Trilby and you were not there. Exquisite! Incomparable! an enchantment! a fascination! unrivaled beauties and harmonies! and what life in that world that speaks loves and dies before your eyes! Little Billee Mrs. Bagot, Geeko, and especially that fiendish magician Svengali, who hypnotizes Trilby and gives her the gift of song.

But Trilby, Trilby especially is the charm, is the beauty of this grand drama. O if you had heard her sing you would have thought her a heavenly nightingale! She sang even upon her death bed and died in an hypnotic trance crying out, "Svengali Svengali Svengali" That's the sublime, that's the beautiful, friend!

I am really sorry you were not there. We learn more in a night at such a grand drama than in all the old books of philosophers. But how, Faustinus, you do not answer me, you do not even notice me, you look feverish! Tell me what ails you?

FAUSTINUS [warily.]

I have seen them! They have passed before me! They have spoken to me!

POSITIVUS.

Who were they?

FAUSTINUS.

The sages of olden time, Pythagoras, Socrates, and the others; and their presence has filled my soul and even my little room with a ray of light which mortal men ignore.

POSITIVUS. [aside]

Upon my word philosophy drives him crazy [aloud] See here my friend, it is hallucination of your brain. If you have come to see Trilby and her ideal feet, this would not have happened to you.

FAUSTINUS

Leave me alone with your Trilby and her feet: I care not for them. I tell you, I have seen the great Sages with my very eyes.

POSITIVUS.

Faustinus, you know I am your friend. But, I fear that instead of leading you to the academy it will drive you to an asylum. Take care: when one reasons too much, reasoning banishes reason.

FAUSTINUS.

Stop your sneers! I tell you, I have seen the philosophers as I see you now, and they have spoken things that have enraptured my soul.

POSITIVUS.

O well yes, believe that they have appeared to you. In fact philosophers have always liked to show themselves and parade their wisdom. Why should they not take a fancy now and then to visit this world to tell their ravings to amateurs?

FAUSTINUS.

You have not heard what they said to me.

POSITIVUS.

No, nor do I care. I have always had but little sympathy with that world of dreamers and idealists, fakirs of wisdom, fools, worse than those who people our lunatic asylums. Do you know what was said of one of them, Descartes I believe "*Lui qui voit tout en Dieu, n'y voit pas qu'il est fou*" - He who sees everything in God could not see there, that he, himself was a fool. - The poor fellow, by force of abstractions imagined there was a leg of mutton hanging from his nose! And moreover these individuals are half the time dangerous fools. They would fire the four corners of the world to try their systems. And if they are not fools they at least knaves who mock the imbecile. I could never understand how two philosophers could greet each other without laughing.

FAUSTINUS.

You cease not to show your disdain for philosophy and those who love its noble aspirations. You slander at leisure the great philosophers of the past, the honor of humanity. You have even dared to say that they are so many jokers and montebanks ... Well poor unfortunate, you shall be punished. See! Here they come, those sublime intellects who have appeared to me one by one! Behold this senate of sages, the most august that the universe has ever seen. And now dare to blaspheme philosophy and to insult those who represent it. (During these words the nine philosophers appear, grave, in silence, in same order as before. Faustinus and Positivus move to the right and gaze upon them, filled with wonder.)

POSITIVUS

Heavens what light! } At the same moment a tableau, and in the rear appears a large luminous cross. All look at it in an attitude of awe and veneration, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Cicero standing, their hands extended towards the cross, Augustine, Descartes and Leibnitz on one knee. Thomas standing with right hand pointing to the cross.

THOMAS

Philosophers of ancient times and ye also young who still tread this obscure path of life, behold the plenitude of truth, behold the source of immortal life. For Christ is "the Way, the Truth and the Life."

AUGUSTINE. [rises with enthusiasm]

Yes! I repeat to all that which I proclaimed to the Romans of the decadance. "*Solutio omnium difficultatum Christus.*"-- Christ is the solution of all problems, of all doubts and of all difficulties.

DECARTES.

The faith of Christ is also victory. It is the glorious sign which appeared to Constantine, the luminous cross with these words:- "By this sign thou shalt conquer."

LEIBNITZ.

Yes Christ and He alone has spoken to the world the words of eternal life.

PLATO.

For me I repeat here my last words: "Christ was born of a Virgin and I believe in Him."

ARISTOTLE.

And I, my last prayer. "Cause of causes, have pity on me."

CICERO.

And I with this glorious obelisk that rises to heaven on the spot where stood the palace of Nero. I proclaim Christ has conquered. Christ reigns, Christ governs the world. May Christ deliver us from all evil.

SCENE III

ALL TOGETHER

Amen. (Lights go out and philosophers disappear .)

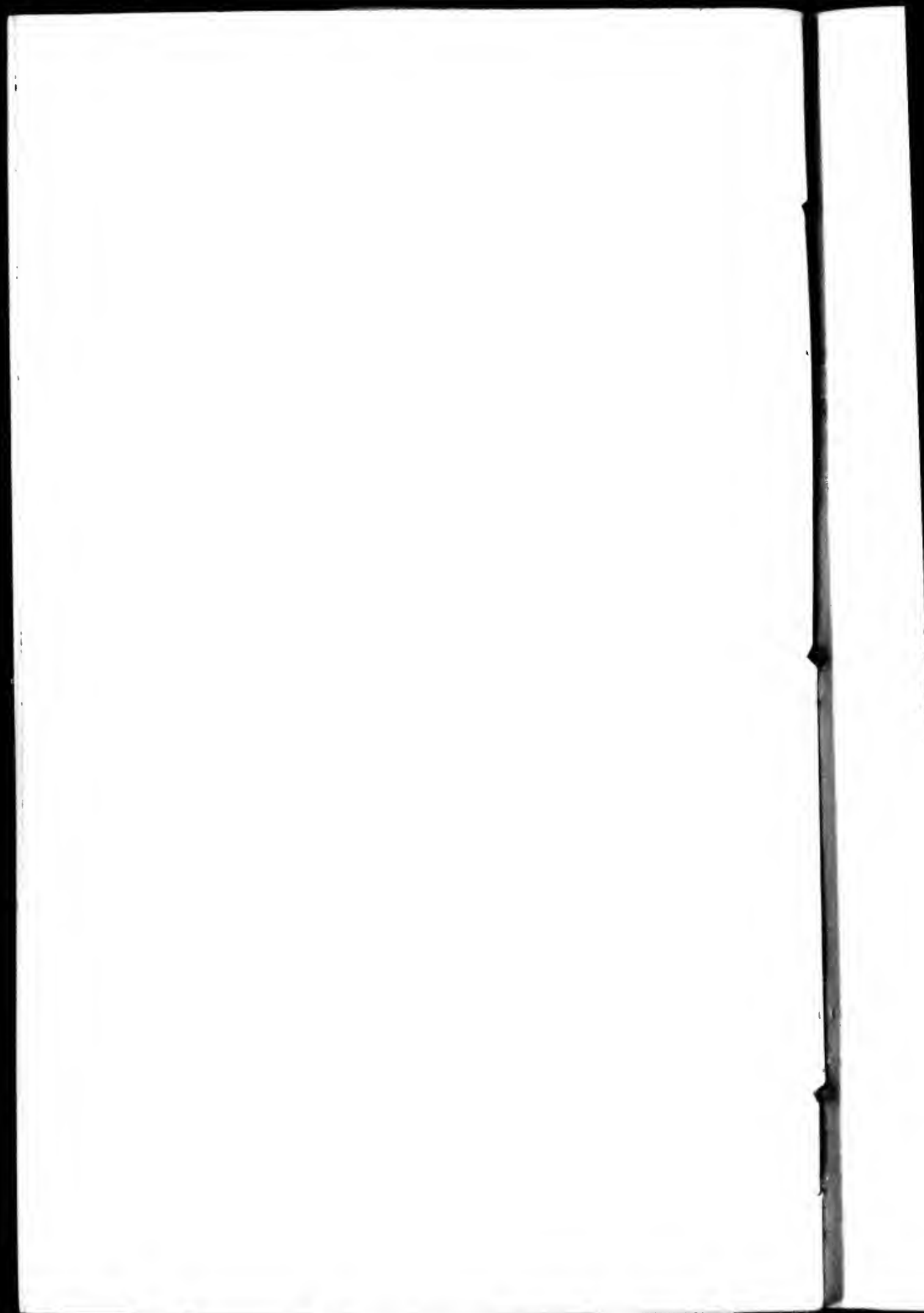
FAUSTINUS.

Well now friend, what do you think of Philosophy? Do you believe it a dream, a chimera?

POSITIVUS.

O pardon me noble friend for having neglected and despised that about which I knew nothing. Yes, I see it now, my eyes have been opened to the lights of the invisible. Philosophy alone penetrates the mystery of the great Unknown. It is not an empty dream. It is a most sublime reality; it is the luminous path which leads to God.





ERRATA

At the foot of page 14 after -- Where does he -- add:
see all this ? It is not in his nature, essentially subject to change .
It is not in the dispositions of his soul, because it is full of injustice .
It is then in God, that he sees all this . In God from whence pro-
ceeds all laws of justice and the entire truth. The just man sees jus-
tice in God and receives its holy impressions in his soul, if the im-
pious man conceives the laws of morality, it is because he is
touched by the divine light, from which however he is turned
away .

At the head of page 17 FAUSTINUS speaks.

“ “ 19 instead of allow read: ELBOW.

