

## THE GREAT PHARMACIST.

BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

God—however you choose to name Him—  
 Blended a potion maddening strong:  
 Gave it to man, and can you blame him  
 If he cry with a fevered song?  
 Beauty beyond his tongue's describing,  
 Tints of dust on the tawny hills,  
 Crystalline lungs of air imbibing,  
 Cold wet cheeks where the rain-cloud spills!

Song made him shiver, and windy spaces  
 Turned his heart to a wordless flame—  
 Haunted and stricken by golden faces,  
 Through the tumultuous years he came.  
 Dream and doubt and folly and passion,  
 Each he grappled, assured of Truth;  
 Drained or tasted, after his fashion,  
*This, the elixir that men call Youth.*

God—however your priests devise Him—  
 Blended a magic wild and new:  
 Gave it to man, and thus He tried him  
 Whether his fiber is false or true.  
 Trembling looks, and his heart is shaken—  
 Lo, the answer of all desires!  
 Undreamed paradoxes awaken  
 A tender flame to halt fiercer fires.

Eyes that had scanned the world's far turnings  
 Enter glad through a homely door;  
 See, with sudden and painful yearnings,  
 Childish toys on the bedroom floor,  
 He that was frantic can never be lonely,  
 But unguessed pangs in his breast will  
 move—  
 Such is the riddle he meets, he only,  
*This is the magic men call Love.*

God—however your creed defines Him—  
 Blended a sirup rich and clear:  
 And, as a tonic to man, assigns him  
 This new draught for the passing year.  
 Gives him peace, and relief from doubting,  
 Practiced eye and the word well-weighed;  
 Quiet hearth-fires apart from shouting,  
 Sunset light as the vistas fade.

Yet is his mind all quick to ponder,  
 Hot to grapple the problem shrewd,  
 Watching, as he grows softer, fonder,  
 Youth with its lusty hunger crude,  
 He, with an infinite affection,  
 Watches the torment, stage by stage—  
 Knowing no goal, he points direction:  
*This is the sirup men call Age.*

God—however your mind conceives Him—  
 Blended the physic unexplained:  
 As for the drinker, one task He leaves him—  
 The manner in which the cup is drained.  
 Yet it seems but a surly gesture  
 Toward this liquor so sweet and wild,  
 Toward this earth's bright comely vesture,  
 To face it like an unwilling child.

Maddening draught of young veins' crazing,  
 Eyes that linger, eyes that evade,  
 Half-seen glimpses that find no phrasing,  
 Pangs and passions so quick to fade—  
 Speechless appeal of human faces,  
 Strife unwinable, but still strife,  
 Lilac dusk on the mountain places—  
*This is the physic that men call Life!*

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above was written for and printed November 19, 1919, in the "Chaffing Dish," a department of the Philadelphia *Evening Public Ledger*, in charge of the author.