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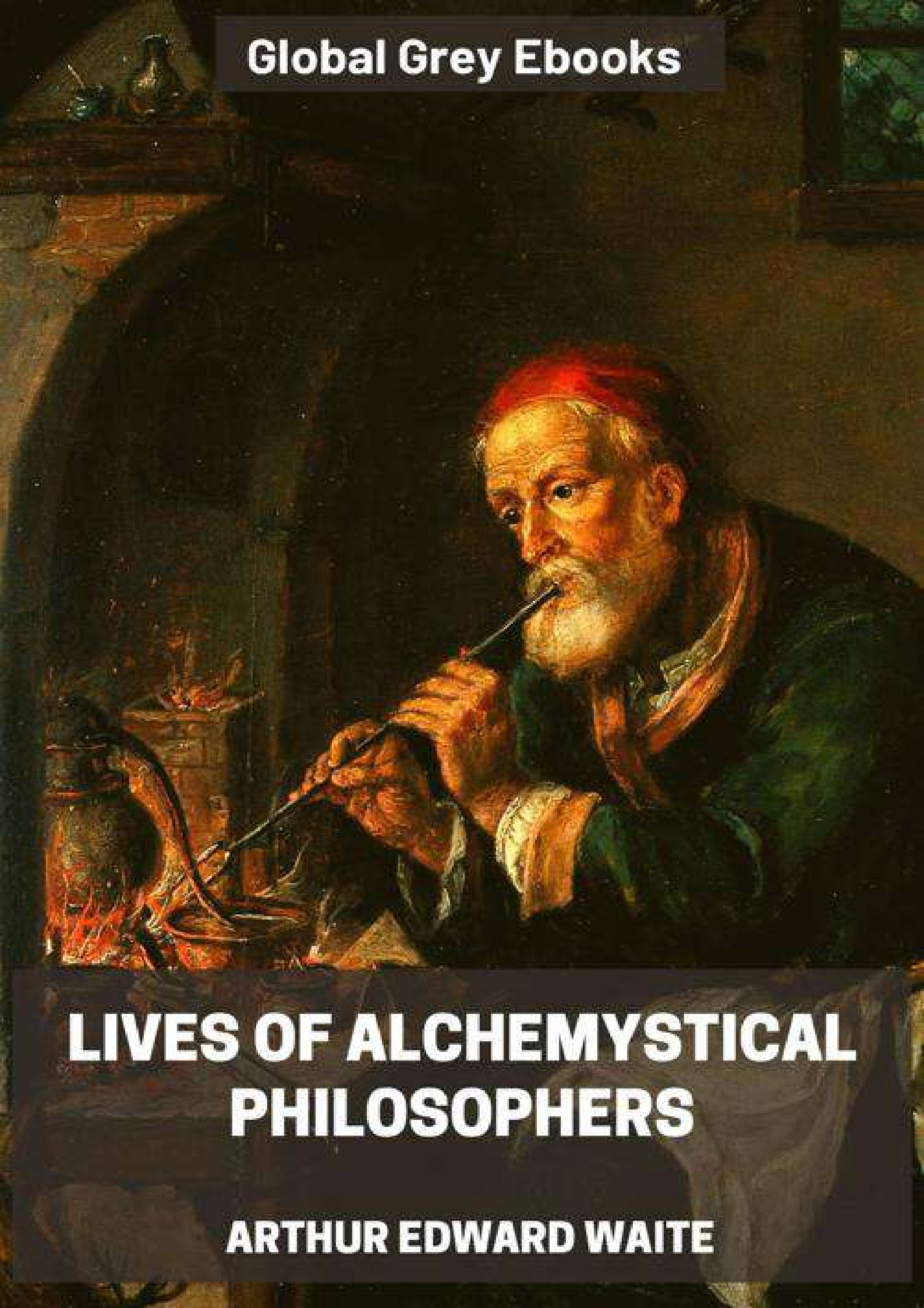

LIVES OF ALCHEMYSTICAL PHILOSOPHERS

ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE

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Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers
by Arthur Edward Waite

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Preface

The foundation of this work will be found in “The Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers; with a Critical Catalogue of Books in Occult Chemistry, and a Selection of the most celebrated Treatises on the Theory and Practice of the Hermetic Art,” which was published in the year 1815 by Lackington, Allen, & Company, of Finsbury Square, London. This anonymous book has been attributed by certain collectors to Francis Barrett, author of the notorious treatise entitled “The Magus, or Celestial Intelligencer;” but it may be safely affirmed that, alike in matter and treatment, it far transcends the extremely meagre capacities of that credulous amateur in occultism. It is indeed a work of much sense and unpretentious discrimination, and is now a bibliographical rarity which is highly prized by its possessors.

The independent researches which have supplemented the biographical materials of the original compilation have produced in the present volume what is practically a new work under an old title; those lives which have been left substantially untouched as to facts have been more or less rewritten with a view to the compression of prolixities and the elimination of archaic forms, which would be incongruous in a work so extensively modified by the addition of new details. The “Alphabetical Catalogue of Works on Hermetic Philosophy” has been considerably enlarged from such sources as Langlet du Fresnoy’s *Histoire de la Philosophie Hermétique*. The preliminary account of the “Physical Theory and Practice of the Magnum Opus” is a slight original sketch which, to readers unacquainted with alchemy, will afford some notion of the processes of accredited adepts. The introductory essay on the object of alchemical philosophy advocates new and important views concerning the great question of psychal chemistry, and appreciates at their true worth the conflicting theories advanced by the various schools of Hermetic interpretation.

IMPORTANT NOTE.

I am forced to append to this Preface a correction of one or two errors of absolutely vital importance, which were unfortunately overlooked in the text. On page 188, line 18, the date was intended to read 1643; on page 189, line 5, read *anno trigesimo tertio* for *trigesimo anno*; and on line 6, *anno vigesimo tertio* instead of *vigesimo anno*. But if these emendations restore the passage to its original integrity, a discovery which I have made while this work was passing through the press has entirely cancelled its value. I have been gratified with a sight of the original edition of Philalethes' *Introitus Apertus*—a small octavo pamphlet in the original paper cover as it was published at Amsterdam in the year 1667. It definitely establishes that its mysterious author was born in or about the year 1623, or two years later than the Welsh adept, Thomas Vaughan, with whom he has so long been identified. This original edition is excessively scarce; I believe I am the only English mystic who has seen it during the present generation. The reader must please understand that the calculation in the pages referred to was based on the date 1643; this date, in the light of the original edition, has proved erroneous, and by a curious chance, that which was accidentally printed, turns out to be correct at the expense of the calculation.

Introductory Essay

ON THE TRUE PRINCIPLES AND NATURE OF THE MAGNUM OPUS, AND ON ITS RELATION TO SPIRITUAL CHEMISTRY.

Those unfamiliar with modern alchemical criticism, even if they have some acquaintance with the mystical labyrinth of the *turba philosophorum*, will probably learn with astonishment that the opinions of competent judges are divided not only upon the methods of the mysterious Hermetic science, but upon the object of alchemy itself. That it is concerned with transmutation is granted, but with the transmutation of metals, or of any physical substance, into material gold, is strenuously denied by a select section of reputable students of occultism. The transcendental theory of alchemy which they expound is steadily gaining favour, though the two text-books which at present represent it are both out of print and both exceedingly scarce.

In the year 1850 “A Suggestive Inquiry concerning the Hermetic Mystery and Alchemy, being an attempt to recover the Ancient Experiment of Nature,” was published anonymously in London by a lady of high intellectual gifts, but was almost immediately withdrawn for reasons unknown, and which have given occasion, in consequence, to several idle speculations. This curious and meritorious volume, quaintly written in the manner of the last century, originated the views which are in question and opened the controversy.

Fifteen years after the appearance of the “Suggestive Inquiry,” an American writer, named Hitchcock, after apparently independent researches arriving at parallel conclusions, made public, also anonymously, in the year 1865, some “Remarks on Alchemy and the Alchemists,” in a small octavo volume of very considerable interest. A psychic interpretation was placed by the previous author on the arcana of Hermetic typology, and Mr Hitchcock, by adopting a moral one, brought

the general subject within the reach of the most ordinary readers, and attracted considerable attention in consequence.

The views thus enunciated have filtered slowly through, and, combined with the Paracelsian theory of the psychic manufacture of material gold by the instrumentality of the interior magnes, have considerably influenced the revived occultism of the present day. The question in itself, taken at its lowest standpoint, is one of the most curious to be found within the whole circle of esoteric archæology; and for students whose interest in the great alchemical mystery is of another than antiquarian kind, it is truly of palmary interest, and of supreme importance. In an account of the lives and labours of the Hermetic adepts, it calls for adequate consideration; and, after careful researches, I believe myself to have discovered a true alchemical theory which will be equally acceptable to all schools of interpretation.

The supreme and avowed object of every hierophant, as well as of every postulant and pretender, in the *ars magna* discovered by Hermes Trismegistus, has been commonly supposed to be the chemical manufacture of material gold from commercially inferior substances. On the other hand, Hitchcock, marshalling an impressive series of verbatim citations from writers of all ages and all nationalities, undertakes to demonstrate that the concealed subject of every veritable adept is one only—namely, Man, the triune, and that "the object also is one, to wit, his improvement, while the method itself is no less one, to wit, nature directed by art in the school of nature, and acting in conformity therewith; for the art is nothing but 'nature acting through man.'" Again, "the genuine alchemists were not in pursuit of worldly wealth or honours. Their real object was the perfection, or, at least, the improvement of man. According to this theory, such perfection lies in a certain unity, a living sense of the unity of the human with the divine nature, the attainment of which I can liken to nothing so well as to the experience known in religion as the New Birth. The desired perfection, or unity, is a state of the soul, *a condition of Being*, and not a mere condition of Knowing. This condition of Being is a development of the nature of man from within, the result of a process by which whatever is evil in our nature is cast out or suppressed, under the name of superfluities, and the good thereby allowed opportunities for free activity. As this result is scarcely accessible to the unassisted natural

man, and requires the concurrence of divine power, it is called *Donum Dei*."

When the individual man, by a natural and appropriate process, devoid of haste or violence, is brought into unity with himself by the harmonious action of intelligence and will, he is on the threshold of comprehending that transcendent Unity which is the perfection of the totality of Nature, "for what is called the 'absolute,' the 'absolute perfection,' and the perfection of Nature, are one and the same."

In the symbolism of the alchemists this writer tells us that *sulphur* signifies Nature, and *mercury* the supernatural. The inseparable connection of the two in man is called *Sol*, but "as these three are seen to be indissolubly one, the terms may be used interchangeably." According to Hitchcock, the mystical and mysterious instrument of preparation in the work of alchemy is the conscience, which is called by a thousand misleading and confessedly incongruous names. By means of this instrument, quickened into vital activity under a sense of the presence of God, the matter of the stone, namely, Man, is, in the first place, purged and purified, to make possible the internal realisation of Truth. "By a metonymy, the conscience itself is said to be purified, though, in fact, the conscience needs no purification, but only the man, to the end that the conscience may operate freely."[1]

One of the names given by the alchemists to the conscience, on this theory, is that of a middle substance which partakes of an azurine sulphur—that is, of a celestial spirit—the Spirit of God. "The still small voice is in alchemy, as in Scripture, compared to a *fire*, which prepares the way for what many of the writers speak of as a *Light*."

Hitchcock elsewhere more emphatically asserts that there is but one subject within the wide circle of human interests that can furnish an interpretation of the citations which he gives, and it is that which is known under the theological name of spiritual Regeneration. This gift of God the alchemists investigated as a work of Nature within Nature. "The repentance which in religion is said to begin conversion, is the 'philosophical contrition' of Hermetic allegory. It is the first step of man towards the discovery of his whole being. They also called it the black state of the matter, in which was carried on the work of dissolution, calcination, separation, &c., after which results purification, the white

state, which contains the red, as the black contained the white.” The evolution of the glorious and radiant red state resulted in the fixation or perfection of the matter, and then the soul was supposed to have entered into its true rest in God.

As this interpretation is concerned chiefly with the conscience, I have called it the moral theory of alchemy; but Hitchcock, as a man of spiritual insight, could not fail to perceive that his explanatory method treated of the way only, and the formless light of an “End,” which he could not or would not treat of, is, upon his own admission, continually glimmering before him.

For the rest, when the alchemists speak of a long life as one of the endowments of the Stone, he considers that they mean immortality; when they attribute to it the miraculous properties of a universal medicine, it is their intention to deny any positive qualities to evil, and, by inference, any perpetuity. When they assert that the possession of the Stone is the annihilation of covetousness and of every illicit desire, they mean that all evil affections disappear before the light of the unveiled Truth. By the transmutation of metals they signified the conversion of man from a lower to a higher order of existence, from life natural to life spiritual, albeit these expressions are inadequate to convey the real meaning of the adepts. The powers of an ever active nature must be understood by such expressions as “fires,” “menstruums,” &c., which work in unison because they work in Nature, the alchemists unanimously denying the existence of any disorder in the creation of God.

In conclusion, Hitchcock states once more that his object is to point out the *subject* of alchemy. He does not attempt to make its practical treatment plain to the *end* of the sublime operation. It is, therefore, evident that he, at any rate, suspected the existence of more transcendent secrets which he distrusted his ability to discuss, and declined to speak of inadequately.

The author of the “Suggestive Inquiry” had already taken the higher standpoint of psychic interpretation, and developed her remarkable principles, which I must endeavour to reproduce as briefly as possible.

According to this work, the modern art of chemistry has no connection with alchemy except in its terminology, which was made use of by the adepts to veil their divine mysteries. The process of the whole

Hermetic work is described with at least comparative plainness in the writings of the philosophers, with the exception of the *vessel* which is a holy arcanum, but without the knowledge of it no one can attain to the magistery. Now, the publication of the writings of Jacob Böhme caused the alchemists who were his contemporaries to fear that their art could not much longer remain a secret, and that the mystic vase in particular would be shortly revealed to all. This vase is the *vas insigne electionis*, namely, Man, who is the only all-containing subject, and who alone has need to be investigated for the eventual discovery of all. The modern adepts describe the life of man as a pure, naked, and unmingled fire of illimitable capability. Man, therefore, is the true laboratory of the Hermetic art; his life is the subject, the grand distillery, the thing distilling, and the thing distilled; and self-knowledge is at the root of all alchemical tradition.

"Modern discoveries are now tending to the identification of light, the common vital sustenant, as in motive accord throughout the human circulatory system with the planetary spheres, and harmonious dispositions of the occult medium in space; and as human physiology advances with the other sciences, the notion of our natural correspondency enlarges, till at length the conscious relationship would seem to be only wanting to confirm the ancient tradition."

In addition to the faculties which he commonly exerts to communicate with the material universe, man possesses within him the germ of a higher faculty, the revelation and evolution of which give intuitive knowledge of the hidden springs of nature. This Wisdom-faculty operates in a magical manner, and constitutes an alliance with the Omniscient Nature, so that the illuminated understanding of its possessor perceives the structure of the universe, and enjoys free perspicacity of thought in universal consciousness.

In support of this statement it is argued that the evidence of natural reason, even in the affairs of common life, is intuition, that intuitive faith has a certainty above and independent of reason, that the subsistence of universals in the human mind includes a promise far beyond itself, and is stable proof of another subsistence, however consciously unknown.

The true methods and conditions of self-knowledge are to be learned from the ancient writers. The discovery of the veritable Light of alchemy

is the reward of an adequate scrutiny of true psychical experience. Alchemy proposes “such a reducation of nature as shall discover this latex without destroying her vehicle, but only the modal life; and professes that this has not alone been proved possible, but that man by rationally conditionating has succeeded in developing into action the Recreative Force.”

The One Thing needful, the sole act which must be perfectly accomplished that man may know himself, is the exaltation, by the adequately purified spirit, of the cognising faculty into intellectual reminiscence. The transcendental philosophy of the mysteries entirely hinges on the purification of the whole understanding, without which they promise nothing.

The end in view is identical with Hermetists, Theurgists, and with the ancient Greek mysteries alike. It is the conscious and hypostatic union of the intellectual soul with Deity, and its participation in the life of God; but the conception included in this divine name is one infinitely transcendental, and in Hermetic operations, above all, it must ever be remembered that God is within us. “The initiated person sees the Divine Light itself, without any form or figure—that light which is the true *astrum solis*, the mineral spiritual sun, which is the Perpetual Motion of the Wise, and that Saturnian Salt, which developed to intellect and made erect, subdues all nature to His will. It is the Midnight Sun of Apuleius, the Ignited Stone of Anaxagoras, the Triumphal Chariot of Antimony, the Armed Magnet of Helvetius, the Fiery Chariot of Mercaba, and the Stone with the new name written on it which is promised to him that overcometh, by the initiating Saviour of mankind.”

This method of interpreting the Hermetic allegories is calculated to exalt the alchemists indefinitely in the estimation of all thinking minds. From possibly avaricious investigators of a by-way of physical science, they are transfigured into dreamers of the sublimest imaginable dream, while if that which they conceived was accomplished, they are divine and illuminated monarchs who are throned on the pinnacles of eternity, having dominion over their infinite souls.

A theory so attractive, devised in the interests of men whom romance has already magnified in the auriferous cloud of mystery which envelopes both their claims and their persons, is eminently liable to be

accepted on insufficient grounds, because of its poetical splendour, so it will be well to ascertain the facts and arguments on which it is actually based.

Both Hitchcock and the unparalleled woman to whom we are indebted for the “Suggestive Inquiry” appeal to alchemical writings in support of their statements. A few of their quotations and commentaries must therefore be submitted to the reader.

The first point which strikes the alchemical student is the unanimous conviction of all the philosophers that certain initiatory exercises of a moral and spiritual kind are an indispensable preliminary to operations which are commonly supposed to be physical. Here the incongruity is evident, and it is therefore urged that the process itself is spiritual, and that it was materialised in the writings of the adepts to confuse and mislead the profane, as well as for the protection of esoteric psychologists in the days of the Inquisition and the stake.

The following preparation for the study of Antimony is recommended by Basil Valentin. “First, Invocation to God, with a certain heavenly intention, drawn from the bottom of a sincere heart and conscience, pure from all ambition, hypocrisy, and all other vices which have any affinity with these; as arrogance, boldness, pride, luxury, petulancy, oppression of the poor, and other similar evils, all of which are to be eradicated from the heart; that when a man desires to prostrate himself before the throne of grace, for obtaining health, he may do so with a conscience free from unprofitable weeds, that his body may be transmuted into a holy temple of God, and be purged from all uncleanness. For God will not be mocked (of which I would earnestly admonish all), as worldly men, pleasing and flattering themselves with their own wisdom, think. God, I say, will not be mocked, but the Creator of all things will be invoked with reverential fear, and acknowledged with due obedience…. Which is so very true that I am certainly assured no impious man shall ever be partaker of the true medicine, much less of the eternal, heavenly bread. Therefore place your whole intention and trust in God; call upon him, and pray that he may impart his blessing to you. Let this be the beginning of your work, that by the same you may obtain your desired end, and at length effect what you intended. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

The second qualification is contemplation, by which, says Basil, “I understand an accurate attention to the business itself, under which will fall these considerations first to be noted. As, what are the circumstances of anything; what the matter; what the form; whence its operations proceed; whence it is infused and implanted; how generated … also how the body of everything may be … resolved into its first matter or essence. This contemplation is celestial, and to be understood with spiritual reason; for the circumstances and depths of things cannot be conceived in any other way than by the spiritual cogitation of man: and this contemplation is two-fold. One is called possible, the other impossible. The latter consists in copious cogitations which never proceed to effects, nor exhibit any form of matter which falls under the touch, as if any should endeavour to comprehend the Eternity of the Most High, which is vain and impossible; yea, it is a sin against the Holy Ghost, so arrogantly to pry into the Divinity itself, which is immense, infinite, and eternal; and to subject the incomprehensible counsel of the secrets of God to human inquisition. The other part of contemplation which is possible is called theory. This contemplates that which is perceived by touch and sight, and hath a nature formed in time; this considers how that nature may be helped and perfected by resolution of itself; how every body may give forth from itself the good or evil, venom or medicine, latent in it; how destruction and confection are to be handled, whereby, under a right proceeding, without sophistical deceits, the pure may be severed and separated from the impure. This separation is made and instituted by divers manual operations … some of which are vulgarly known by experience, others remote from vulgar experience. These are calcination, sublimation, reverberation, circulation, putrefaction, digestion, distillation, cohobation, fixation, and the like of these; all the degrees of which are found in operating, learned, and perceived, and manifested by the same. Whence will clearly appear what is movable, what is fixed, what is white, what red, black, blue, green, namely, when the operation is rightly instituted by the artificer; for possibly the operation may err, and turn aside from the right way; but that Nature should err, when rightly handled, is not possible. Therefore if you shall err, so that nature cannot be altogether free, and released from the body in which it is held captive, return again unto your way; learn the theory more perfectly, and inquire more practically into the method of your operating, that you may discover the foundation and certainty in the

separation of all things; which is a matter of great concern. And this is the second foundation of philosophy which follows prayer; for in that the sum of the matter lies, and is contained in these words:—Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness by prayer, and all other things shall be added unto you.”

Perhaps it will be thought, even at this preliminary stage of citation, that there is much to be said for the physical theory of alchemy. A particular appeal is, however, made to the celebrated “Canons of Espagnet,” and to the following passage:—”The light of this knowledge is the gift of God, which by his freeness he bestoweth upon whom he pleaseth. Let none, therefore, set himself to the study hereof, until, having cleared and purified his heart, he devote himself wholly unto God, and be emptied of all affection to things impure. Those that are in public honours and offices, or be always busied with private and necessary occupations, let them not strive to attain to the top of this philosophy; for it requireth the whole man; and being found, possesseth him, and being possessed, challengeth him from all long and serious employments, esteeming all other things as strange unto him, and of no value. Let him that is desirous of this knowledge clear his mind from all evil motions, especially pride, which is abomination to heaven, and the gate of hell. Let him be frequent at prayers and charitable; have little to do with the world; abstain from too much company-keeping, and enjoy constant tranquillity, that the mind may be able to reason more freely in private, and be more highly lifted up; for unless it be kindled with a beam of divine light, it will hardly be able to penetrate the hidden mysteries of truth…. A studious Tyro of a quick wit, constant mind, inflamed with the love of philosophy, very quick in natural philosophy, of a pure heart, perfect in manner, mightily devoted to God, even though ignorant of chemistry, may enter with confidence the highway of Nature, and peruse the books of the best philosophers. Let him seek out an ingenious companion for himself, and not despair of accomplishing his desire.”

Here Hitchcock points out that the operation is obviously not chemical, for the chief instrument is determined and concentrated thinking on the loftiest intellectual planes. The inference that skill in natural philosophy is indispensable, is contradicted by the counter-statement that ignorance of chemistry is not necessarily a source of

failure. In this connection, it must be remembered that the distinction between alchemy and chemistry can scarcely be said to have existed at the period of Espagnet, and the statement would at first sight seem almost equivalent to asserting that it was unnecessary to be versed in the properties of metals to accomplish the *magnum opus*.

"Let a lover of truth," continues the author of the Canons, "make use of but a few philosophers, but of best note and experienced truth; let him suspect things that are quickly understood, especially in mystical names and secret operations, for truth lies hid in obscurity; nor do philosophers ever write more deceitfully than when plainly, nor ever more truly than when obscurely."

In the same manner, "The New Light of Alchemy," falsely ascribed to Sendivogius, and which is in high appreciation among Hermetic students, declares that "the most commendable art of alchemy is the gift of God, and truly it is not to be attained but by the alone favour of God enlightening the understanding, together with a patient and devout humility, or by an ocular demonstration from some experienced master."

In *Anima Magica Abscondita*, Eugenius Philalethes gives the following advice to the student, whether of magic or alchemy: —"Attempt not anything rashly. Prepare thyself till thou art conformable to Him whom thou wouldst entertain. Thou hast Three that are to receive, and there are three that give. Fit thy house to thy God in what thou canst, and in what thou canst not, He will help thee. When thou hast set thy house in order, do not think thy guest will come without invitation. Thou must tyre Him out with pious importunities. This is the way in which thou must walk, in which thou shalt perceive a sudden illustration, *eritque in te cum Lumine Ignis, cum Igne Ventus, cum Vento Potestas, cum Potestate Scientia, cum Scientiâ sanæ mentis integritas*. This is the chain that qualifies a magician. This is the place (viz., the abode of the Archetype) where if thou canst but once ascend, and then descend—

Tunc ire ad Mundum Archetypum sæpe atque redire,

Cunctarumque Patrem rerum spectare licebit'—

thou hast got that spirit *Qui quicquid portentosi Mathematici, quicquid prodigiosi Magi, quicquid invidentes Naturæ persecutores Alchymistæ, quicquid Dæmonibus deteriores malefici Necromantes*

promittere audent. Ipse novit discernere et efficere idque sine omni crimine, sine Dei offensâ, sine Religionis injuria. Such is the power he shall receive, who from the clamorous tumults of this world ascends to the supernaturall still voice, from this base earth and mind whereto his body is allyed, to the spirituall, invisible elements of his Soul."

After the same fashion, the still greater Eirenæus Philalethes declares that God alone communicates the whole secret of the *aqua philosophorum*, that all untaught by Him must wander in mists and error, but that it is revealed to those who labour in study and prayer.

Quotation might be continued indefinitely. The *Centrum Naturæ Concentratum*, ascribed to Alipili, and a treatise of some reputation, declares that "The highest wisdom consists in this, for man to know himself, because in him God has placed his eternal word, by which all things were made and upheld, to be his Light and Life, by which he is capable of knowing all things in time and eternity…. Therefore let the high inquirers and searchers into the deep mysteries of nature, learn first what they have in themselves, before they seek in foreign matters without them; and by the divine power within them, let them first heal themselves and transmute their own souls; then they may go on prosperously and seek with good success the mysteries and wonders of God in all natural things."

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These quotations, some of which are unknown to, or, at any rate, uncited by Hitchcock, do not by any means establish the points which are debated in his book. If the philosophers from whom they are selected were in possession of the whole secret of wealth, they saw fit to conceal it from the profane, and their works, full of practically insoluble enigmas, are proclamations of the fact of their success, rather than lights for those who sought to follow in their steps. Under these circumstances, they saw that in the blind guess-work which their symbols created of necessity, no student would ever attain to the true light of alchemy except by pure chance—in other words, by the favour of Heaven, which, accordingly, they counselled him to supplicate. None of the passages in question are inconsistent with the physical object of alchemy, and in the citation from Alipili, it is evident that the mysteries and wonders referred to include metallic transmutation in the mind of the writer. The

investigator of natural secrets was advised to take counsel with the Author of natural secrets after the only possible manner.

“Whoever attempteth the search of our glorious stone, he ought, in the first place, to implore the assistance of the all-powerful Jehova, at the throne of his mercy, who is the true and sole author of all mysteries of nature; the monarch of heaven and earth, the King of kings, omnipotent, most true and most wise; who not only maketh manifest in the microcosm, the truth of every science to worthy philosophers, and liberally bestoweth both natural and divine knowledge on the deserving and faithful; but also layeth open his treasures of wealth and riches which are locked up in the abyss of nature to those who devoutly worship him. And forasmuch as none are permitted to touch the mysteries of nature with foul fingers, therefore it behoveth all who attempt such matters, to lay aside their natural blindness from which, by the light of the holy Scripture and a stedfast faith, they may be freed, that being the means by which the Holy Spirit doth clearly make manifest the most profoundly hidden light of nature, which light alone lays open the way to the wisdom of nature, and to unlock the most abstruse mysteries thereof.”

Even the subdued imagination which is claimed by the author of “Remarks on Alchemy and the Alchemists,” is likely to go astray in the labyrinth of alchemical symbolism, and some of the interpretations of Hitchcock are exceedingly forced and unnatural. His citations are indiscriminately gathered from the most transcendental writers, and from those who, like George Starkey, have exhausted language in emphatic declarations that their subject and their object are actual metallic gold.

“Zoroaster’s Cave, or the philosopher’s intellectual echo to one another from their caves,” is the title of a small work quoted by Hitchcock. It opens thus:—”Dry water from the Philosophers’ Clouds! Look for it and be sure to have it, for it is the key to inaccessibles and to those locks that would otherwise keep thee out. It is a middle nature between fixed and not fixed, and partakes of a sulphureous azurine. It is a raw, cool, feminine fire, and expects its impregnation from a masculine solar sulphur.” Hitchcock’s interpretation is this:—a pure conscience! Look for it and be sure that you have it, &c. It is of a middle nature between soul and body, and partakes of a heavenly spirit. It expects its life from God.

It is needless to say that with this method any meaning could be extracted from any allegorical writings. The author of the “Suggestive Inquiry” is far more profound and evinces a far keener insight. It is evident, however, that the truth (or the fallacy) of both methods of interpretation depends on the connection of the alchemists with practical chemistry. On this vital question, the uniocular condition of both writers is utterly astounding.

“No modern art or chemistry has anything to do with alchemy, beyond the borrowed terms which were made use of in continuance chiefly to veil the latter.” That is to say, the alchemists did not lay the foundations of the science, the beginnings of which are attributed to them, and in this matter we are not by any means indebted to them. This extreme statement is qualified by the later commentator, who gives a more detailed expression to his views.

“That chemistry is indebted for its introduction among the sciences indirectly to the alchemists is certainly true; at least I have no disposition to question it; but not to the immediate labours of the alchemists themselves, whose peculiar work was one of contemplation and not of the hands. Their alembic, furnace, cucurbit, retort, philosophical egg, &c., in which the work of fermentation, distillation, extraction of essence and spirits, and the preparation of salts is said to have taken place, was man—yourself, friendly reader; and if you will take yourself into your own study, and be candid and honest, acknowledging no other guide or authority but Truth, you may easily discover something of Hermetic philosophy; and if at the beginning there should be ‘fear and trembling,’ the end may be a more than compensating peace.

“It is a plain case, that, for the most part, the experiments which led the way to chemistry were made by men who were misled by the alchemists, and sought gold instead of truth; but this class of men wrote no books upon alchemy. Many of them no doubt died over their furnaces, ‘*uttering no voice*,’ and none of them wrote books upon the philosopher’s stone, for the simple reason that they never discovered anything to write about. I know that some impostors purposely wrote of mysteries to play upon the credulity of the ignorant, but their works have nothing alchemical about them. It is true also that many books were written by men who really imagined that they had discovered the secret, and were nevertheless mistaken. But this imaginary success could never have had

place when gold was the object, because in the *bald fact* no man was ever deceived: no man ever believed that he had discovered a method of making gold out of inferior metals. The thing speaks for itself. It is impossible that any man can ever be deluded upon this bare fact; but it is quite otherwise with the real object of alchemy, in which men have been deceived in all ages … for the *subject* is always in the world, and hence the antiquity claimed for the art by the alchemists."

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This passage is a long series of simply incredible misstatements. The history of chemistry and the lives of the adepts alike bear witness against it. My object in publishing this book is to establish the true nature of the Hermetic experiment by an account of those men who have undertaken it, and who are shewn by the plain facts of their histories to have been in search of the transmutation of metals. There is no need for argument; the facts speak sufficiently. It is not to the blind followers of the alchemists that we owe the foundation of chemistry; it is to the adepts themselves, to the illustrious Geber, to that grand master Basilius Valentinus, to Raymond Lully, the supreme hierophant. What they discovered will be found in the following pages; here it will be sufficient for my purpose to quote the views of a French scientist who has made a speciality of alchemy, and who is also a high authority on the subject of modern chemistry.

"It is impossible to disown that alchemy has most directly contributed to the creation and the progress of modern physical sciences. The alchemists were the first to put the experimental method in practice, that is, the faculty of observation and induction in its application to scientific researches; moreover, by uniting a considerable number of facts and discoveries in the order of the molecular actions of bodies, they have introduced the creation of chemistry. This fact … is beyond every doubt. Before the eighth century, Geber put in practice the rules of that experimental school, the practical code and general principles of which were merely developed later on by Galileo and Francis Bacon. The works of Geber, the 'Sum of all Perfection,' and the 'Treatise on Furnaces,' contain an account of processes and operations wholly conformed to the methods made use of to-day in chemical investigations; while Roger Bacon, in the thirteenth century, applying the same order of ideas to the study of physics, was led to discoveries which, for his time,

were astounding. It is impossible, therefore, to contest that the alchemists were the first to inaugurate the art of experience. They prepared the arrival of the positive sciences by basing the interpretation of phenomena on the observation of facts, and openly breaking with the barren metaphysical traditions which had so long checked the progress of the human mind."[2]

With all their mystery, their subterfuges, and their symbolism, the testimony of the alchemists themselves to the physical nature of their object is quite unequivocal and conclusive. One of the most celebrated experimental treatises in the English language is that entitled "The Marrow of Alchemy." It professes to discover the secrets and most hidden mystery of the philosopher's elixir, both in theory and practice. It was published by Eirenæus Philoponos Philalethes, that is George Starkey, and is generally supposed to be the work of the true Philalethes; at any rate it develops his principles, and derives its inspiration from the author of the *Introitus Apertus.* Now, this little book testifies over and over again, and that in the most emphatic manner, to the physical object of the alchemists, and to the fact that they operated on common gold.

"The first matter which we take for our work is gold, and with it mercury, which we decoct till neither will forsake the other, in which work both die, rot by putrefaction, and after that are regenerate in glory. *It is actual gold and nothing else.* What does not equal a metal in weight will never enter it in flux. Nothing but the metalline will dwell with metals." A severe criticism is passed on the blind folly of those who endeavour to reap the secret stone from strange material subjects. "Gold is the subject of our art alone, since by it we seek gold." Those who, like the noble son of art, Morien, advise students to descend into themselves to find the true matter, only intended to point out how kind begets kind: —

"As then himself his likeness did beget,

So gold must gold, this law's to Nature set."

Morien adds that the secret stone must be sought in the dunghill, which signifies, says the "Marrow of Alchemy," that the metal must be brought to putrefaction. "Those who assert that common gold is not the matter are in error. Gold is one. No other substance under Heaven can compare with it. Gold is the noble seed of our art. Yet it is dead. It needs

to be unloosed, and must go to water. It must be tempered with its own humidity; it must be blent with our true water, disposed in a due vessel, closed with all caution, settled in a due nest, and with due fire inclined to motion." It becomes the true gold of the philosophers when by a retrograde motion it tends to resolution. "Then it is our Sun, our Marchasite, and, joined with our Moon, it becomes our bright crystal Fountain."

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But if the lives and the writings of the alchemists so clearly establish the physical nature of the Hermetic aim and *opus*, it may well be demanded how a psychical or moral interpretation could be reasonably set upon the symbols and the ambition of all the adepts. Such interpretations can never be wholly exonerated from the charge of extravagance, and of a purblind indifference to the most plain and notorious facts, but they may be to some extent justified by a consideration of the allegorical methods of the alchemists and by the nature of the Hermetic theory.

The profound subtleties of thought seldom find adequate expression even when the whole strength of a truly intellectual nature is brought to bear upon the resources of language, and where the force of direct appeal is unwillingly acknowledged to be insufficient, the vague generalities of allegory can scarcely be expected to succeed. It is the province of symbolism to suggest thought, and the interpretation of any sequence of typology inevitably varies in direct proportion with the various types of mind. Each individual symbol embodies a definite conception existing in the mind of its inventor, and in that symbol more or less perfectly expressed, but every student of allegory out of every individual symbol extracts his own meaning, so that the significance of typology is as infinite as the varieties of interpreting intelligence. For this reason, the best and truest adepts have always insisted on the necessity of an initiated teacher, or of a special intellectual illumination which they term the grace of God, for the discovery of the actual secret of the Hermetic art. Without this light or guidance the unelected student is likely to be adrift for ever on a chaotic sea of symbols, and the *prima materia*, concealed by innumerable names and contradictory or illusory descriptions, will for ever escape him. It is in this way that a thousand unassisted investigators have operated upon ten thousand material

substances, and have never remotely approached the manufacture of the Grand Magisterium, and, after the same manner, outwearied by perpetual failures in the physical process, that others have rejected the common opinion concerning the object of alchemy, and with imaginations at work upon the loftier aspirations expressed by Hermetic adepts, have accredited them with an exclusively spiritual aim, and with the possession of exclusively spiritual secrets.

If the authors of the “Suggestive Inquiry” and of “Remarks on Alchemy and the Alchemists” had considered the lives of the symbolists, as well as the nature of the symbols, their views would have been very much modified; they would have found that the true method of Hermetic interpretation lies in a middle course; but the errors which originated with merely typological investigations were intensified by a consideration of the great alchemical theorem, which, *par excellence*, is one of universal development, which acknowledges that every substance contains undeveloped resources and potentialities, and can be brought outward and forward into perfection. They applied their theory only to the development of metallic substances from a lower to a higher order, but we see by their writings that the grand hierophants of Oriental and Western alchemy alike were continually haunted by brief and imperfect glimpses of glorious possibilities for man, if the evolution of his nature were accomplished along the lines of their theory.

Eugenius Philalethes enlarges on the infinite capacity of our spiritual nature and on the power of our soul’s imagination. “She has an absolute power in miraculous and more than natural transmutations,” and he clothes his doctrine of human evolution in the terminology of alchemical adepts.

In one of the twelve treatises attributed to Sendivogius, there are the following remarkable passages:—”We know the composition of man in all respects, yet we cannot infuse the soul, which is out of the course of nature. Nature does not work before there be material given unto her….” The problem that all composites are subject to dissolution, and that man is composed of the four elements, and how, therefore, he could have been immortal in Paradise, is considered thus. “Paradise was and is a place created of the most pure elements, and of these man also was formed, and thus was consecrated to perpetuity of life. After his fall, he was driven into the corruptible elementated world, and nourished by

corruptible elementated elements, which infected his past nature and generated disease and death. To the original creation of man in state immortal the ancient philosophers have likened their stone, and this immortality caused them to seek the stone, desiring to find the incorruptible elements which entered into the Adamic constitution. To them the Most High God revealed that a composition of such elements was in gold, for in animals it could not be had, seeing they must preserve their lives by corrupt elements; in vegetables also it is not, because in them is an inequality of the elements. And seeing all created things are inclined to multiplication, the philosophers propounded to themselves that they would make tryal of the possibility of nature in this mineral kingdom, which being discovered, they saw that there were innumerable other secrets in Nature, of which, as of Divine secrets, they wrote sparingly."

Here the reference probably intended is to the possibilities which their theory revealed for other than the mineral kingdoms, a theory the truth of which they believed themselves to have demonstrated by accomplishing metallic transmutation. In this connection, it should be noticed that the philosophical stone was generally considered a universal medicine—a medicine for metals and man, the latter, of course, by inference.

The occasional presence of these possibilities in the minds of adepts, and the comprehensive nature of the Hermetic theory, fully explain the aberrations of mystical commentators, who have mistaken the side issues for the end in view, not altogether inexcusably, because the end in view sinks into complete unimportance when compared with the side issues, and all that is of value in alchemy for the modern student of occultism is comprised in these same possibilities, in the application of the Hermetic theory to the supreme subject, Man. It is impossible within the limits of a brief introduction to do justice to an illimitable subject, to the art of psychic transmutation, to the spiritual alchemistry, the principles of which are contained in the arcane theory of the adepts, and which principles are by no means dependent for their truth on the actuality of metallic transmutation, so I must confine myself to a few general observations.

The admirable lesson which we may learn of the alchemists is the exaltation of things in virtue beyond the unassisted ability of Nature.

Such exaltation is possible, according to the adepts, both within and without the metallic kingdom. Man and the animals are alike included by this comprehensive theory of development, and it is therefore conceivable that a few of the Hermetic symbolists taught in their secret and allegorical fashion the method of alchemical procedure when man was the subject, and revealed the miraculous results of this labour in the typewritten books which they bequeathed to posterity. That Henry Khunrath was in search of the transmutation of metals up to a certain point and period is, I think, very clearly indicated by his visit to Dr Dee. That the *Amphitheatrum Sapientiæ Æternæ*, which was published in 1609, treats of a spiritual alchemy, is, however, evidenced by the nature of its symbols and by the general tenor of the strange esoteric commentary on some of the Hebrew psalms. Those who worked in metals may, or may not, have failed; it is by no means a point of importance to the discriminating student of occultism; but they have left behind them a theory which is wholly true in its application to that one substance in Nature which we know to be capable of indefinite perfectibility, and the splendour and glory of the accomplished *Magnum Opus*, when the young King issues from the Everlasting East, from the land of the Morning and of Paradise,

"Bearing the crescent moon upon his crest,"

though it be a dream—say even, which no one can actually affirm—though it be an impossibility for the metal, is true for the man; and all that is beautiful and sublime in alchemical symbolism may be rigorously applied to the divine flower of the future, the young King of Humanity, the perfect youth to come, when he issues from the Spiritual East, in the dawn of the genuine truth, bearing the Crescent Moon, the woman of the future, upon his bright and imperial crest.

I am of opinion, from the evidence in hand, that metallic transmutations did occur in the past. They were phenomena as rare as a genuine "materialisation" of so-called spirits is generally considered at the present day among those believers in physical mediumship who have not been besotted by credulity and the glamour of a world of wonders. Like modern spiritualism, the isolated facts of veritable alchemy are enveloped in a crowd of discreditable trickery, and the trade of an adept in the past was as profitable, and as patronised by princes, as that of modern dealers with familiar spirits.

But the fact of an occasional transmutation gives little reason to suppose that the *praxis alchemiæ* in metallic subjects is ever likely to succeed with modern students of the *turba philosophorum*. The enigmas of the alchemists admit, as I have said, of manifold interpretations. Their recipes are too vague and confused to be followed. They insist themselves that their art can only be learned by a direct revelation from God, or by the tuition of a master. Their fundamental secrets have not only been never revealed in their multitudinous treatises, but they scarcely pretend to reveal them, despite the magnificent assurances which are sometimes contained in their titles. The practical side of alchemy must be surrendered to specialists in chemistry, working quite independently of the books or the methods of the philosophers. Only the theory is of value to neophytes, or initiates, or to any student of the higher occultism; and it is of value, as I have said, because it can be applied outside the kingdom of metals, as the alchemists themselves acknowledge, and as some of them seem to have attempted.

The psychic method of interpretation as propounded in the "Suggestive Inquiry" exalted the seekers for the philosophical stone into hierophants of the mystery of God; it endowed them with the *altitudo divitiarum sapientiæ et scientiæ Dei*. They had crossed the threshold of eternity; they had solved the absolute; they had seen Diana unveiled; they had raised the cincture of Isis, and had devoured her supernatural beauties—that is, they had accomplished the manifestation of the incarnate spirit of man, and had invested it with deific glory. They did not grope after physical secrets; they did not investigate, with Paracelsus, the properties of ordure and other matter in putrefaction; they did not work with mercury and sulphur; they did not distil wine; they did not decoct egg-shells. They were soul seekers, and they had found the soul; they were artificers, and they had adorned the soul; they were alchemists, and had transmuted it. Sublime and romantic hypothesis! But we know that they worked in metals; we know that they manipulated minerals; we know that they ransacked every kingdom of nature for substances which, by a bare possibility, through some happy guess, might really transform the baser metals into gold. They were often extravagant in their views, they were generally absurd in their methods; they seldom found their end, but, judged as they actually were, stripped of all glamour and romance, self-educated seekers into Nature at the dawn of a physical science, they are eminently entitled to our respect, because, in the first

place, unenlightened and unequipped, with their bare hands, they laid the foundations of a providential and life-saving knowledge, and in the second, because their furnaces were erected, intellectually, “on a peak in Darien”—that is, they worked in accordance with a theory which had an unknown field of application, and through the smoke of their coals and their chemicals they beheld illimitable vistas where the groaning totality of Nature developed its internal resources, and advanced by degrees to perfection, upon lines which were quite in accordance with their vision of mineral culture. “A depth beyond the depth, and a height beyond the height,” were thus revealed to them, and their glimpses of these glorious possibilities transfigured their strange terminology, and illuminated their barbarous symbolism.

Eliminating obviously worthless works, the speculations of needy impostors and disreputable publishers, it is from those who have least contributed to the advancement of chemical science that we must seek information concerning the spiritual chemistry—those who have elaborated the theory rather than those who exclusively expound the practice. In all cases, we shall do well to reflect that the object in view was metals, except in such rare instances as are presented by Henry Khunrath and the anonymous author of the treatise concerning Mary of Alexandria, with a few Rosicrucian philosophers. We must read them for what they suggest, and not for what they had in view.

The dream of the psycho-chemistry is a grand and sublime scheme of absolute reconstruction by means of the Paracelsian *Orizon Æternitatis*, or supercelestial virtue of things, the divinisation, or deification, in the narrower sense, of man the triune by an influx from above. It supposes that the transmutation or transfiguration of man can be accomplished while he is on this earth and in this body, which then would be magically draped *in splendoribus sanctorum*. The Morning Star is the inheritance of every man, and the woman of the future will be clothed with the sun, and Luna shall be set beneath her feet. The blue mantle typifies the mystical sea, her heritage of illimitable vastness. These marvels may be really accomplished by the cleansing of the two-fold human tabernacle, the holy house of life, and by the progressive evolution into outward and visible manifestation of the infinite potencies within it.

In the facts and possibilities of mesmerism and in the phenomena of ecstatic clairvoyance, in ancient magic and modern spiritualism, in the

doctrines and experiences of religious regeneration, we must seek the *raison d'être* of the sublime dream of psycho-chemistry—that, namely, there is a change, a transmutation, or a new birth, possible to embodied man which shall manifestly develop the esotoric potencies of his spiritual being, so that the flesh itself shall be purged, clarified, glorified, and clothed upon by the essential light of the divine pneuma. Those of my readers who are interested in this absorbing subject I must refer to a work entitled, "Azoth, or The Star in the East," which, I trust, will be ready for publication early in 1889, and which will treat of the First Matter of the *Magnum Opus*, of the evolution of Aphrodite Urania, of the supernatural generation of the Son of the Sun, and of the alchemical transfiguration of humanity.

On The Physical Theory And Practice Of The Magnum Opus

The physical theory of transmutation is based on the composite character of metals, on their generation in the bowels of the earth, and on the existence in nature of a pure and penetrating matter which applied to any substance exalts and perfects it after its own kind. This matter is called The Light by Eugenius Philalethes and by numerous other writers. In its application to animals, it exalts animals; in its application to vegetables, it exalts vegetables, while metals and minerals, after the same manner, are refined and translated from the worst to the best condition.

All the elements which enter into the composition of metals are identical, but they differ in proportion and in purity. In the metallic kingdom, the object of nature is invariably to create gold. The production of the baser metals is an accident of the process, or the result of an unfavourable environment.

The generation of metals in the earth is a point of great importance, and must be well studied by the amateur, for without this, and the faithful imitation of Nature, he will never achieve anything successful. It is by means of the seed of metals that their generation takes place. Their composite character indicates their transmutable quality. Such transmutation is accomplished by means of the philosophical stone, and this stone is, in fact, the combination of the male and female seeds which beget gold and silver. Now the matters or elements of this stone, and the *prima materia* above all, are concealed by a multitude of symbols, false and allegorical descriptions, and evasive or deceptive names.

According to Baron Tschoudy, all who have written on the art have concealed the true name of the *prima materia* because it is the chief key of chemistry. Its discovery is generally declared to be impossible without

a special illumination from God, but the sages who receive this divine favour and distinction have occasionally perpetuated its knowledge by the instruction of suitable pupils under the pledge of inviolable secresy. The author of *L'Étoile Flamboyante* supplies an immense list of the names which have been applied to this mysterious substance under one or other of its phases. "As those that sail between Scylla and Charybdis are in danger on both sides," says D'Espagnet, "unto no less hazard are they subject, who, pursuing the prey of the golden fleece, are carried between the uncertain rocks of the philosophers' sulphur and mercury. The more acute, by their constant reading of grave and credible authors, and by the irradiant sun, have attained unto the knowledge of sulphur, but are at a stand in the entrance of the philosophers' mercury, for writers have twisted it with so many windings and meanders, and involved it with so many equivocal names, that it may be sooner met with by the force of the seeker's intellect than be found by reason or toil."

The *prima materia* has been defined as a fifth element, or quintessence, the material alpha and omega, the soul of the elements, living mercury, regenerated mercury, a metallic soul, &c. It is designated by such allegorical names as the Bird of Hermes, the Virgin's Son, the Son of the Sun and Moon, the Virgin's Head, Azoth, &c.

Where it appears to be seriously described the adepts are in continual contradiction, but it is generally allowed to be a substance found everywhere and continually seen and possessed by those who are ignorant of its virtues. "Although some persons," says Urbiger, "possessed with foolish notions, dream that the first matter is to be found only in some particular places, at such and such times of the year, and by the virtue of a magical magnet, yet we are most certain, according to our divine master, Hermes, that all these suppositions being false, it is to be found everywhere, at all times, and only by our science."[3]

In similar terms, we are told by the "Commentary on the Ancient War of the Knights," that the matter of the art, so precious by the excellent gifts wherewith Nature has enriched it, is truly mean with regard to the substances from which it derives its original. "Its price is not above the ability of the poor. Tenpence is more than sufficient to purchase the Matter of the Stone…. The matter is mean, considering the foundation of the art, because it costs very little; it is no less mean if one considers exteriorly that which gives it perfection, since in that regard it costs

nothing at all, in as much as *all the world has it in its power*, says Cosmopolite, so that it is a constant truth that the stone is a thing mean in one sense but most precious in another, and that there are none but fools that despise it, by a just judgment of God."

The same authority assures us, with regard to the actual nature of the *prima materia*, that it is one only and self-same thing, although it is a natural compound of certain substances from one root and of one kind, forming together one whole complete homogeneity. The substances that make up the philosophical compound differ less among themselves than sorrel water differs from lettuce water. Urbiger asserts that the true and real matter is only "a vapour impregnated with the metallic seed, yet undetermined, created by God Almighty, generated by the concurrence and influence of the astrums, contained in the bowels of the earth, as the matrix of all created things." In conformity with this, one earlier writer, Sir George Ripley, describes the stone as the potential vapour of metals. It is normally invisible, but may be made to manifest as a clear water. So also Philalethes cries in his inspired way:—"Hear me, and I shall disclose the secret, which like a rose has been guarded by thorns, so that few in past times could pull the flower. There is a substance of a metalline species, which looks so cloudy that the universe will have nothing to do with it. Its visible form is vile; it defiles metalline bodies, and no one can readily imagine that the pearly drink of bright Phœbus should spring from thence. Its components are a most pure and tender mercury, a dry incarcerate sulphur, which binds it and restrains fluxation…. Know this subject, it is the sure basis of all our secrets…. To deal plainly, it is the child of Saturn, of mean price and great venom…. It is not malleable, though metalline. Its colour is sable with, with intermixed argent, which mark the sable field with veins of glittering argent."[4]

The poisonous nature of the stone is much insisted on by numerous philosophers. "Its substance and its vapour are indeed a poison which the philosophers should know how to change into an antidote by preparation and direction."[5]

No descriptions, supplied *ad infinitum* by the numberless adepts who were moved by unselfish generosity to expound the arcana of alchemy, for the spiritual, intellectual, and physical enrichment of those who

deserved initiation, expose the true nature of the *prima materia*, while the *vas philosophorum* in which it is contained and digested is described in contradictory terms, and is by some writers declared a divine secret.

Given the matter of the stone and also the necessary vessel, the processes which must be then undertaken to accomplish the *magnum opus* are described with moderate perspicuity. There is the Calcination or purgation of the stone, in which kind is worked with kind for the space of a philosophical year. There is Dissolution which prepares the way for congelation, and which is performed during the black state of the mysterious matter. It is accomplished by water which does not wet the hand. There is the Separation of the subtle and the gross, which is to be performed by means of heat. In the Conjunction which follows, the elements are duly and scrupulously combined. Putrefaction afterwards takes place,

"Without which pole no seed may multiply."

Then in the subsequent Congelation the white colour appears, which is one of the signs of success. It becomes more pronounced in Cibation. In Sublimation the body is spiritualised, the spirit made corporeal, and again a more glittering whiteness is apparent. Fermentation afterwards fixes together the alchemical earth and water, and causes the mystic medicine to flow like wax. The matter is then augmented with the alchemical spirit of life, and the Exaltation of the philosophic earth is accomplished by the natural rectification of its elements. When these processes have been successfully completed, the mystic stone will have passed through three chief stages characterised by different colours, black, white, and red, after which it is capable of infinite multiplication, and when projected on mercury, it will absolutely transmute it, the resulting gold bearing every test. The base metals made use of must be purified to insure the success of the operation. The process for the manufacture of silver is essentially similar, but the resources of the matter are not carried to so high a degree.

According to the "Commentary on the Ancient War of the Knights," the transmutations performed by the perfect stone are so absolute that no trace remains of the original metal. It cannot, however, destroy gold, nor exalt it into a more perfect metallic substance; it, therefore, transmutes it into a medicine a thousand times superior to any virtues which can be

extracted from it in its vulgar state. This medicine becomes a most potent agent in the exaltation of base metals.

Among the incidental properties of the perfect mineral agent is the conversion of flints into precious stones, but the manufacture of gold and of jewels is generally declared to be the least of the philosophical secrets, for the spirit which informs the mysterious *prima materia* of the great and sublime work can be variously used and adapted to the attainment of absolute perfection in all the “liberal sciences,” the possession of the “whole wisdom of nature, and of things more secret and extraordinary than is the gift of prophecy which Rhasis and Bono assert to be contained in the red stone.”

Geber

The first, and, according to the general concensus of Hermetic authorities, the prince of those alchemical adepts who have appeared during the Christian era, was the famous Geber, Giaber, or Yeber, whose true name was Abou Moussah Djafar al Sofi, and who was a native of Haman, in Mesopotamia, according to the more probable opinion. He is also said to have been a Greek, a Spanish Arabian born at Seville, and a Persian of Thus. Romance represents him as an illuminated monarch of India. According to Aboulfeda, he flourished during the eighth century, but later and earlier periods have been also suggested. His life is involved in hopeless obscurity; but his experiments upon metals, undertaken with a view to the discovery of their constituent elements and the degrees of their fusibility, led him to numerous discoveries both in chemistry and in medicine, including suroxydised muriate of mercury, red oxyde of mercury, and nitric acid. “It is thus that Hermetic philosophy gave rise to chemistry,” says a writer in the *Biographie Universelle*, “and that the reputation of Geber is permanently established, not upon his search for an impossible chimera, but for his discovery of truths founded on actual experience.”

With the characteristic prodigality of the Middle Ages, no less than five hundred treatises have been attributed to the Arabian adept. They are supposed to have embraced the whole circle of the physical sciences, including astronomy and medicine. A few fragments, comparatively, alone remain of all these colossal achievements. Cardan included their author among the twelve most penetrating minds of the whole world, and Boerhave spoke of him with consideration and respect in his celebrated *Institutiones Chemicæ*. According to M. Hoefer, he deserves to be ranked first among the chemists and alchemists who flourished prior to Van Helmont. “He is the oracle of mediæval chemists, who frequently did nothing in their writings but literally reproduce their

master. Geber for the history of chemistry is what Hippocrates is for the history of medicine.”

The name of Geber has been borne or assumed by several writers subsequent to the Hermetic adept; in this way the few extant facts concerning his life have been variously distorted, and books of later date and less value falsely ascribed to him. An astronomical commentary on the *Syntaxis Magna* of Ptolemy, in nine books, must be included in this number. It is a work of the twelfth century, as may be proved by internal evidence.

The extant works of Geber are, for the most part, in Latin, and are all open to more or less legitimate suspicion. In the library at Leyden there are said to be several Arabic manuscripts which have never been translated, and there is one in the Imperial Library at Paris, together with a *Fragmentum de Triangulis Sphæricis* which is still unprinted. The most complete edition of Geber is that of Dantzich, published in 1682, and reproduced in the Collection of Mangetus.[6] First in importance among the works of the Arabian adept must be ranked his “Sum of Perfection”—*Summæ Perfectionis magisterii in suâ naturâ Libri IV.* The next in value is the treatise entitled *De Investigatione perfectionis Metallorum*, with his Testament, and a tract on the construction of furnaces.

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The “Sum of Perfection, or the Perfect Magistery,” claims to be a compilation from the works of the ancients, but with the doubtful exception of pseudo-Hermes, we are acquainted with no alchemical authors previous to the supposed period of Geber. A knowledge of natural principles is declared to be necessary to success in the art. The natural principles in the work of nature are a potent spirit, and a living or dry water. The disposition of the philosophical furnace and of the *vas philosophorum* is clearly described; the latter is a round glass vessel with a flat round bottom, and has several elaborate arrangements. A marginal note, however, declares that the account of it is hard to be understood. Among all the obscurities of the treatise, it is absolutely plain that it is concerned with metals and minerals. The properties of sulphur, mercury, arsenick, gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, iron, magnesia, lut, marchasite, are discussed in such a manner that it is impossible to establish an

allegory, or to interpret the words of the writer in other than a physical sense.

Rhasis

Rhazes, or Rasi, whose true name was Mohammed-Ebn-Secharjah Aboubekr Arrasi, was a celebrated Arabian physician and chemist, who was born about the year 850 at Ray in Irâk, upon the frontiers of Khorassan. In his youth he was passionately devoted to music and to frivolous amusements; he did not begin the study of medicine till he was thirty years of age, but he soon surpassed, both in skill and in knowledge, all the physicians of his time. He devoted himself with equal zeal to philosophy, is said to have journeyed into Syria, Egypt, and even into Spain, and successively took charge of the famous hospital at Bagdad, and of another in his native town. He was naturally good and generous, and he devoted himself to the service of the poor. His oriental panegyrists call him the Imam among the scholars of his time, and western writers describe him as the Galen of the Arabians. By his assiduous attention to the multitudinous varieties of disease he obtained the appellation of the experimenter, or the experienced. No less than two hundred and twenty-six treatises are said to have been composed by him. To some of these Avicenna was largely indebted, and even in Europe he exercised considerable influence, for his writings on medicine were the basis of university teaching up to the seventeenth century.

Of the twelve books of chemistry which have been attributed to Rhasis several are probably spurious, and few have been printed. He was an avowed believer in the transmutation of metals, and, having composed a treatise on the subject, he presented it in person to Emir Almansour, Prince of Khorassan, who was highly delighted, and ordered one thousand pieces of gold to be paid to the author as a recompense. However, he desired to witness the marvellous experiments and the prolific auriferous results with which the work abounded. Rhasis replied that he might certainly be gratified in his sublime curiosity if he provided the necessary instruments and materials for the accomplishment of the *magnum opus*. The Emir consented; neither pains nor expenses were

spared over the preliminary preparations, but when the time came the adept failed miserably in his performance, and was severely belaboured about the head by the enraged potentate with the unprofitable alchemical treatise. Rhasis was old at the time, and this violence is by some declared to have been the cause of his subsequent blindness. He died in poverty and obscurity, a point which is not supposed to disprove his possession of the powerful metallic medicine. The date of his death is uncertain, but it was probably in the year 932.

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The writings of Rhasis, like those of Geber, enlarge on the planetary correspondences, or on the influence exerted by the stars in the formation of metallic substances beneath the surface of the earth. The explicit nature of the recipes which he gives may be judged by such directions as *Recipe aliquid ignotum, quantum volueris*. It is to him, nevertheless, that we owe the preparation of brandy and several pharmaceutic applications of alcohol. He was the first to mention orpiment, realgar, borax, certain combinations of sulphur, iron, and copper, certain salts of mercury indirectly obtained, and some compounds of arsenic.[7] He was also a zealous promoter of experimental methods.

Alfarabi

The middle of the tenth century was made illustrious by one of those celebrated men who do honour to the sciences in which they engage. This was Abou-Nasr-Mohammed-Ibn-Tarkan, commonly called Farabi and Alfarabi—a man of universal genius, who penetrated all subjects with equal facility, fathoming the most useful and interesting sciences, and passing for the greatest philosopher of his time.

He was born at Farab, now known as Othrar, in Asia Minor. He was of Turkish origin, but repaired to Bagdad to acquire a more perfect knowledge of Arabic; there he devoted himself with zeal and enthusiasm to the study of the Greek philosophers under Abou Bachar Maltey, an expounder of Aristotle. From Bagdad he proceeded to Harran, where John, a Christian physician, was teaching logic. In a short time Alfarabi surpassed all his other scholars, but he left Harran and visited Damas, thence penetrating into Egypt. Early attracted towards the secrets of nature, he spent a great portion of his life in incessant wanderings, collecting the opinions of all the philosophers he could meet with on these and on kindred subjects. He despised the world, and took no pains to acquire wealth, though he wrote upon alchemy, that is, if the Hermetic works which are attributed to him be genuine. His erudition and indefatigable activity are attested by his other writings, which variously treat of philosophy, logic, physics, astronomy, and mathematics. His chief reputation is based on a sort of encyclopædia, where he gives a description, with an exact definition, of all the arts and sciences; and on a celebrated musical treatise, wherein he ridicules the pythagorean speculations upon the music of the spheres, and proves the connection of sound with atmospheric vibrations.

According to several authorities, he was protected and supported in his later years by the cultured and enlightened Seïf Eddoula, who is represented as Prince of Damas, but who seems to have been Sultan of

Syria, and to have made the acquaintance of the scholar in the following curious manner.

Alfarabi was returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, when, passing through Syria, he stopped at the Court of the Sultan, and entered his presence while he was surrounded by numerous sage persons, who were discoursing with the monarch on the sciences.

Alfarabi, ignorant of, or else wholly ignoring, the usages of society, presented himself in his travelling attire; and when the Sultan desired that he should be seated, with astonishing philosophical freedom, he planted himself at the end of the royal sofa. The prince, aghast at his boldness, called one of his officers, and in a tongue generally unknown commanded him to eject the intruder. The philosopher, however, promptly made answer in the same tongue: “Oh, Lord, he who acts hastily is liable to hasty repentance!” The prince was equally astounded to find himself understood by the stranger as by the manner in which the reply was given. Anxious to know more of his guest, he began to question him, and soon discovered that he was acquainted with seventy languages. Problems for discussion were then propounded to the philosophers who had witnessed the discourteous intrusion with considerable indignation and disgust, but Alfarabi disputed with so much eloquence and vivacity that he reduced all the doctors to silence, and they began writing down his discourse. The Sultan then ordered his musicians to perform for the diversion of the company. When they struck up, the philosopher accompanied them on a lute with such infinite grace and tenderness, that he elicited the unmeasured admiration of the whole distinguished assembly. At the request of the Sultan he produced a piece of his own composing, sung it, and accompanied it with great force and spirit to the delight of all his hearers. The air was so sprightly that even the gravest philosopher could not resist dancing, but by another tune he as easily melted them to tears, and then by a soft unobtrusive melody he lulled the whole company to sleep.

Great was the anxiety of the Sultan to retain so accomplished a person about him, and some say that he succeeded, others that the philosopher declined the most brilliant offers, declaring that he should never rest till he had discovered the whole secret of the philosopher’s stone of which he had been in search for years, and to which, from his discourse, he appeared to be on the point of attaining. According to these

biographers, he set out, but it was to perish miserably. He was attacked by robbers in the woods of Syria, and, in spite of his courage, was overpowered by numbers and killed. This occurred in the year 954. Others say that he died at Damas, enjoying the munificence of the Sultan to the last.

Avicenna

Khorassan produced another celebrated adept at the end of the tenth, or, according to an alternative opinion, about the middle of the eleventh century. This was the illustrious Ebn Sina, commonly called Avicenna, who was born at Bacara, the principal city of that province of Persia. The exact date of his birth has been fixed, but in the absence of sufficient authority, at the year 980. He is equally celebrated for the multiplicity of his literary works and for his adventurous life. At an early age he had made unusual progress in mathematics, and his gifted mind soon penetrated the mysteries of transcendental philosophy. He was only sixteen when he passed from the preparatory sciences to that of medicine, in which he succeeded with the same celerity; and great is the sagacity attributed to him in the knowledge of diseases. He is praised in particular for having discovered that the illness of the King of Gordia's nephew was occasioned by an amorous passion which he had carefully concealed, and for the stratagem by which he discovered the object of the young man's affections.

His credit as a physician and philosopher became so great that the Sultan Magdal Doulet determined to place him at the head of his affairs, and appointed him to the distinguished position of Grand Vizier; but, notwithstanding the religion of Mohammed, which Avicenna professed, he drank so freely, and his intemperance led to so much immorality and disorder, that he was deprived of his dignities in the State, and died in comparative obscurity at the age of fifty-six. He was buried at Hamadan, a city of Persia, which was the ancient Ecbatana.

Though his history gave rise to the saying that he was a philosopher devoid of wisdom, and a physician without health, the Arabs long believed that he commanded spirits, and was served by the Jinn. As he sought the philosophic stone, several oriental peoples affirm him to be still alive, dwelling in splendid state, invested with spiritual powers, and

enjoying in an unknown retreat the sublime nectar of perpetual life and the rejuvenating qualities of the *aurum potabile*.

Six or seven treatises on Hermetic philosophy are ascribed to Avicenna; some of them are undoubtedly spurious. There is a treatise on the “Congelation of the Stone” and a *Tractatulus de Alchimia*, which may be found in the first volumes of the *Ars Aurifera*, Basle, 1610. In 1572 the *Ars Chimica* was printed at Berne. Two Hermetic tracts are also attributed to Avicenna by the compilers of the *Theatrum Chimicum*, and an octavo volume *Porta Elementorum*, appeared under his name at Basle during the third quarter of the sixteenth century.

The grimoires and magical rituals frequently appeal to Avicenna as the authority for their supernatural secrets.

The *Tractatulus Alchimiæ* treats of the nature of the sophic mercury, which contains the sophic sulphur, and wherefrom every mineral substance was originally created by God. This mercury is the universal vivific spirit; there is nothing in the world to compare with it; it penetrates, exalts, and develops everything; it is a ferment to every body with which it is united chemically; it is the grand metallic elixir, both to the white, or silver, and red, or gold producing, degrees. Its potencies develop under the action of fire. Though found in all minerals, it is a thing of the earth. It possesses lucidity, fluidity, and a silverine colour. The perfection and the praise of gold are elaborately celebrated in succeeding pages. The *prima materia* is declared to be of a duplex nature, and the duplex elixir, which is the result of successful operation, has powers that are beyond nature, because it is eminently spiritual. The strength of the perfect magisterium is one upon a thousand.

The chemical knowledge of Avicenna is derived from Geber, as his medical erudition was borrowed from Galen, Aristotle, and other anterior writers. He describes several varieties of saltpetre, and treats of the properties of common salt, vitriol, sulphur, orpiment, sal ammoniac, &c.

Morien

Morein or Morienus, was a recluse born at Rome in the twelfth century, and who took up his habitation in Egypt, where he became profoundly versed in the chemistry and physics of the period. While his education was still progressing in his native city, and under the eyes of a father and mother who tenderly cherished him, he heard of the reputation of Adfar, the Arabian philosopher of Alexandria, and contrived to get a sight of his writings, when he was immediately seized with a desperate desire to understand their meaning. The first impressions of youth carried him away; he abandoned his home, and set out for Alexandria, where, after some difficulty, he discovered the abode of the philosopher. He made known to him his name, his country, and his religion, and both appeared well contented with each other—Adfar at having found a young man whose docility he could depend on, and Morien that he was under the discipline of a master who promised to unveil to him the source of all treasures.

They studied together; the amiability of the pupil encouraged his instructor to make known to him all his secrets, after which, according to one account, Morien went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and then turned hermit. It seems more probable that he tarried with Adfar till his death, which in spite of his immense treasures, his illumination, and his acquirements in arcane philosophy, eventually occurred, and that then Morien, having paid the last duties to his deceased initiator, quitted Alexandria, and proceeded on his pilgrimage. He purchased a retreat near the city of Jerusalem, where he settled in the company of a pupil, whom he doubtless intended to form for science.

In the meantime, the papers of the adept Adfar appear to have fallen into the hands of Kalid, the Soldan of Egypt, a wise and curious prince. On the title-page of these manuscripts it was stated that they contained the priceless secret of the philosophical stone. The Soldan studied them with avidity, but made no progress towards their comprehension, and not

being able to accomplish the *magnum opus* in his own person, he instituted a careful search for some one who was qualified to interpret the unintelligible mysteries of the manuscripts. He convened all the philosophers to Cairo, promised to maintain them, and to provide them with all the materials and machinery required for the success of alchemical processes, and guaranteed a magnificent reward to any person who succeeded. As it might happen even at this day, many persons presented themselves who had their minds fixed upon the profits to be derived from such transactions.

Morien, hearing with pain how much Kalid was deceived by worthless pretenders, quitted his retreat and repaired in all haste to Egypt, with the ultimate conversion of the Soldan quite as much at heart as the communication of the mysteries of Adfar. The labours of the pretended alchemists had produced nothing, as the initiated hermit had expected, but something in the manner of Morien impressed the prince, who appointed him a house in which he might remain until he had finished the process. The work in due course was brought to its absolute perfection; the philosopher inscribed these words on the vase in which he placed the elixir:—”He who possesses all has no need of others,” and, immediately quitting Alexandria, he returned to his hermitage.

Possessed though he now was of the great and supreme elixir, Kalid had no notion how to make use of it for the transmutations he desired to accomplish. He was equally penetrated with regret at the loss of a veritable artist, and filled with indignation at the false alchemists who had promised him all things, but had accomplished nothing, he ordained by an edict the capital punishment of every exposed pretender. Some years passed away, during which the Soldan vainly sought the possessor of the potent secret. At length one day, being at the chase, and accompanied by a favourite slave, an incident occurred which led to the eventual fulfilment of his ambition. The slave, whose name was Galip, riding a little apart, discovered an aged man at prayer in a solitary place. He questioned him, and learned that he came from Jerusalem, where he had been abiding in the hermitage of a holy man. He had heard of the anxiety of Kalid to accomplish the mystery of Hermes, and knowing that the hermit in question was a man of unparalleled skill in the sacred, supernal science, he had quitted Palestine to inform the prince thereof.

“Oh! my brother, what do you say?” exclaimed Galip. “No more! I do not wish you to die like those impostors who have vaunted themselves to my master.”

“I fear nothing,” returned the hermit. “If you be able to present me to the prince, I will at once go before him with confidence.”

Galip accordingly presented him, and the old man informed Kalid that he could enable him to accomplish the Hermetic work, that he was acquainted with an adept hermit of the solitudes of Jerusalem, who, by illumination from the Deity, had received supernatural wisdom, and by his own admission was in possession of the precious gift. The quantity of gold and silver which he brought each year to Jerusalem was a conclusive proof of the fact.

The Soldan represented the danger of false promises to the venerable man, and warned him how many deceptive and boasting adventurers had already met their death. The hermit, however, persisted in his confident assertions, and Kalid, hearing the description of Morien, commanded Galip, his slave, to accompany the old man with a sufficient escort to Jerusalem, where they eventually arrived after many labours, and were rejoiced by the discovery of Morien, who beneath his hair-cloth shirt is declared to have preserved a perpetually youthful frame. Galip recognised him at once, saluted him on the part of his master, and persuaded him to return to the prince, who received him with unbounded satisfaction, and would have engaged him in a worldly situation at his court. Morien, however, was intent only on the conversion of Kalid; he made known to him the mysteries of Christianity, but in spite of his wisdom was unable to effect the desired end. He appears, notwithstanding, to have discovered to him the secret of the transcendent science, and the conversation of Morien and Kalid has been written in Arabic, and translated into Latin and French.

The subsequent history of Morien is not recorded. In the collections of Hermetic philosophy there are some small tracts attributed to Kalid, and also to Galip, who appears to have participated in the secret. Morien himself is cited as the author of three works, said to have been translated from the Arabic, but their authenticity is, of course, very doubtful. The first is entitled *Liber de Distinctione Mecurii Aquarum*, of which a manuscript copy existed in the library of Robert Boyle. The second is

the *Liber de Compositione Alchemiæ*, printed in the first volume of the *Bibliotheca Chemica Curiosa*. Finally, several editions have appeared of a treatise entitled *De Re Metallica, metallorum Transmutatione, et occulta summaque antiquorum medicina libellus*. It was first printed at Paris in the year 1559.

Bacon and Arnold, who appeared one at the beginning, and the other at the end of the thirteenth century, have cited Morien as an authority among the Hermetic philosophers, and Robertus Castrensis assures us that he translated Morien's book from the Arabic language in the year 1182.

The *Liber de Compositione Alchemiæ* contains a Hermetic conversation between Morien, Kalid, and Galip. It appeals to the authority of Hermes, whom it states to have been the first who discovered the grand magisterium, the secret of which he transmitted to his disciples. It declares the *prima materia* to be one, quoting the testimony of the wise king and philosopher Hercules and the adept Arsicanus, with other pseudo authorities, which discredit the date of the dialogue far more than they support the alchemical theory in question.

Albertus Magnus

The universal genius of Albert, joined to a laudable curiosity in so great a philosopher, say the original “Lives of Alchemysticall Philosophers,” did not allow him to pass by the Hermetic science without giving it due attention.

Counter authorities, while admitting that in things scientific he must be counted the most curious and investigating of the children of men, emphatically assert that he has been erroneously included by demonographers among the number of magicians, and that in the twenty-one goodly folio volumes which comprise his *opera omnia*, there is no trace of sorcery. In one place he declares formally that “all those stories of demons prowling in the regions of the air, and from whom the secrets of futurity may be ascertained, are absurdities which can never be admitted by sober reason.” The works on incredible secrets, so numerously attributed to him, are, therefore, condemned as spurious, Albertus Magnus having no more hand in their production than in the invention of the cannon and the pistol, which has been attributed to him by Matthias de Luna.

So early, however, as the year 1480 the Great Chronicle of Belgium records him *magnus in magia, major in philosophia, maximus in theologia*. It is futile for the historians of his order to argue that Albert never applied himself to the Hermetic art, says an anonymous writer. His books alone—those which are his incontestably—bear witness to his alchemical erudition, and as a physician he carefully examined what regards Natural History, and above all the minerals and metals. His singular experiments are recorded in the *Secretum Secretorum*, which first appeared at Venice in 1508.

Michael Maier declares that he received from the disciples of St Dominic the secret of the philosophical stone, and that he communicated it in turn to St Thomas Aquinas; that he was in possession of a stone

naturally marked with a serpent, and endowed with so admirable a virtue that on being set down in a place infested with such reptiles, it would attract them from their hiding places; that for the space of thirty years he employed all his knowledge as a magician and astrologer to construct, out of metals carefully chosen under appropriate planetary influences, an automaton endowed with the power of speech, and which served him as an infallible oracle, replying plainly to every kind of question which could possibly be proposed to it. This was the celebrated Androïd, which was destroyed by St Thomas under the impression that it was a diabolical contrivance.

The most marvellous story of his magical abilities is extant in the history of the University of Paris. He invited William II., Count of Holland and King of the Romans, to a supper in his monastic house at Cologne. Although it was midwinter Albertus had tables prepared in the garden of the convent; the earth was covered with snow, and the courtiers who accompanied William murmured at the imprudence and folly of the philosopher in exposing the prince to the severity of such weather. As they sat down, however, the snow suddenly disappeared, and they felt not only the softness of spring, but the garden was filled with odoriferous flowers; the birds flew about as in summer, singing their most delightful notes, and the trees appeared in blossom. Their surprise at this metamorphosis of nature was considerably heightened when, at the end of the repast, these wonders disappeared in a moment, and the cold wind began to blow with its accustomed rigour.

The life of Albertus belongs to the history of theology. He was born in Suabia, at Larvigen, on the Danube, in 1205. He is accredited with excessive stupidity in his youth, but his devotion to the Virgin was rewarded by a vision, which was accompanied by an intellectual illumination, and he became one of the greatest doctors of his time. He was made provincial of the Dominicans, and was appointed to the bishopric of Ratisbon, which he subsequently resigned to pursue his scientific and philosophic studies in a delightful conventual retreat at Cologne. In his old age he relapsed into the mediocrity of his earlier years, which gave rise to the saying that from an ass he was transformed into a philosopher, and from a philosopher he returned into an ass.

The term Magnus, which has been applied to him, is not the consequence of his reputation. It is the Latin equivalent of his family

name, Albert de Groot.

Among the spurious works attributed to him is that entitled *Les Admirables Secrets d'Albert le Grand*, which is concerned with the virtues of herbs, precious stones, and animals, with an abridgment of physiognomy, methods for preservation against the plague, malignant fevers, poisons, &c. The first book treats of the planetary influences in their relation to nativities, of the magical properties possessed by the hair of women, of the infallible means of ascertaining whether a child still in the womb is male or female, &c. In the others there is a curious chaos of remarkable superstitions concerning urine, vermin, old shoes, putrefaction, the manipulation of metals, &c.

A magical grimoire entitled *Alberti Parvi Lucii Liber de Mirabilibus Naturæ Arcanis*, adorned with figures and talismans, appeared at Lyons, bearing the Kabbalistic date 6516. The composition of philtres, the interpretation of dreams, the discovery of treasures, the composition of the hand of glory, the ring of invisibility, the sympathetic powder, the sophistication of gold, and other marvels, are familiarly explained; but this work is another forgery, and an insult to the memory of a really illustrious man.

In the treatise which he wrote upon minerals, Albert informs us that he personally tested some gold and silver which had been manufactured by an alchemist, and which resisted six or seven exceptionally searching fusions, but the pretended metal was reduced into actual scoriæ by an eighth. He recognises, however, the possibility of transmutation when performed upon the principles of Nature. He considers that all metals are composed of an unctuous and subtle humidity, intimately incorporated with a subtle and perfect matter.

If the purely alchemical works which are ascribed to Albertus have any claim to authenticity, he must be ranked as a skilful practical chemist for the period in which he flourished. He employed alembics for distillation, and aludels for sublimation; he also made use of various lutes, the composition of which he describes. He mentions alum and caustic alkali, and seems to have been aware of the alkaline basis of cream of tartar. He knew the method of purifying the precious metals by means of lead and of gold, by cementation, likewise the method of testing the purity of gold. He mentions red lead, metallic arsenic, and

liver of sulphur. He was acquainted with green vitriol and iron pyrites. He knew that arsenic renders copper white, and that sulphur attacks all the metals except gold.[8]

Thomas Aquinas

If Albertus Magnus must be considered an adept in possession of the philosophic stone, there is little doubt that he discovered it to his favourite pupil, St Thomas, the most illustrious of the kings of intelligence who glorified the scholastic period of Christian philosophy. There are some alchemical treatises ascribed to the angel of the schools which he certainly did not write. “That of the ‘Nature of Minerals’ is unworthy of so great a philosopher,” says a certain anonymous authority, “and so is the ’Comment on the *Turba*.’ But his *Thesaurus Alchemiæ*, addressed to Brother Regnauld, his companion and friend, is genuine. He cites Albert in this as his master in all things, especially in Hermetic philosophy. He addressed other books to Regnauld on the curious sciences, amongst which is a treatise on Judicial Astrology.”

This opinion deserves due consideration, yet in all his theological works St Thomas carefully avoided every suspicion of alchemy, persuaded, says the same writer, that it would bring dishonour to his name as the height of human folly. Moreover, in one of his treatises he distinctly states that “it is not lawful to sell as good gold that which is made by Alchemy,” proof positive that he considered the transmutatory art to be simply the sophistication of the precious metal.

On the other hand, the *Thesaurus Alchemiæ*, generally attributed to him by adepts, testifies that “the aim of the alchemist is to change imperfect metal into that which is perfect,” and asserts the possibility of the thing. These contradictions scarcely afford convincing proof of a common authorship; but spurious or otherwise, the works on the Hermetic science which are attributed to the angelic doctor are of importance in the history of alchemy. Their leading character is secrecy, and they insist on the preservation of the sublime operation from unworthy men, only the children of light, who live as in the presence of God, being fit for the knowledge or custody of so supernal a mystery.

The *Thesaurus Alchemiæ* has the brevity which characterised St Thomas, for it is comprised in a very few leaves. The other works attributed to him are *Secreta Alchymiæ Magnalia* and *De Esse et Essentia Mineralium*, together with the comment on the *Turba*. Some of the terms still employed by modern chemists occur for the first time in these supposititious writings of Thomas Aquinas—*e.g.*, the word amalgam, which is used to denote a compound of mercury and some other metal.

In the tractates addressed to Brother Regnauld, we learn that the students of alchemy are in search of a single substance which absolutely resists the fierce action of fire, which itself penetrates everything, and tinges mercury. The work is a work of the hands, and great patience is required in it. Instruments are necessary, but in the true Hermetic operation there is but one vase, one substance, one way, and one only operation.

Roger Bacon

Roger Bacon was the first Englishman who is known to have cultivated alchemical philosophy. This learned man was born in 1214, near Ilcester, in Somerset. He made extraordinary progress in the preliminary studies of boyhood; when his age permitted he entered the order of St Francis, and passed from Oxford to Paris, where he learned mathematics and medicine. On his return he applied himself to languages and philosophy, and made such progress that he wrote grammars of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew tongues.

Pronouncing the panegyric of Bacon, Figuier calls him the greatest intellect which has arisen in England, a student of nature who was more physician than chemist, and a scientist to whom the world owes many extraordinary discoveries. He was almost the only astronomer of his time, and to him we are indebted for the rectification of the Julian Calendar, in regard to the solar year, which in 1267 he submitted to Clement IV., but which was not put in practice till the pontificate of Gregory. The physical analysis of the properties of lenses and convex glasses, the invention of spectacles and achromatic lenses, the theory, and possibly the first construction, of the telescope, are all due to the superior and penetrating genius of Bacon.

An adequate notion of his schemes in mechanical science may be gathered from one of his own letters—*Epistola Fratris Rogerii Baconis de Secretis Operibus Artis et Naturæ et de nullitate Magiæ*, Hambourg, 1618. Having undertaken to demonstrate that by the help of natural science it is possible to actually perform the pretended prodigies of magic, he further assures us that machines may be constructed for navigation without the aid of rowers, in such a manner that vessels will be borne through the water with extraordinary velocity, under the direction of a single man. “It is equally possible to construct cars which may be set in motion with marvellous rapidity, independently of horses or other animals. Flying machines may also be made, the man seated in

the centre, and by means of certain contrivances beating the air with artificial wings." In the same way Bacon anticipated the invention of the crane, diving apparatus, suspension bridges, &c. These things, he declares, were known to the ancients, and may still be recovered.

"Should we be surprised," demands one of his biographers, "if all these prodigies obtained for him the name of magician in an age of superstition and ignorance? the friars of his own order refused to let his works into their library, as if he were a man who ought to be proscribed by society. His persecution increased till, in 1278, he was imprisoned and forced to confess his repentance of his pains in the arts and sciences. He was constrained to abandon the house of his order, and to form a retreat where he might work in quiet."

The reputation of Bacon as a magician spread over Western Europe. He was supposed to be indebted for his wisdom to incessant communication with demons. Wierus accuses him of goëtic magic, and erudite persons affirm that Antichrist will make use of his enchanted mirrors for the performance of lying miracles. He really believed in judicial astrology and in the philosophical stone. "By neglecting the lights of experience," he says, "alchemy can seldom produce gold of twenty-four carats. Few persons have carried the science to so high a point. But with the help of Aristotle's 'Secret of Secrets,' experimental science has manufactured not only gold of twenty-four degrees, but of thirty, forty, and onward according to pleasure."

The application of alchemy to the extension of life was another subject of study with Roger Bacon. The grand secret, he assures us, does not only ensure the welfare of the commonwealth and of the individual, but it may be used to prolong life, for that operation by which the most inferior metals is purged from the corrupt elements which they contain till they are exalted into the purest gold and silver, is considered by every adept to be eminently calculated to eliminate so completely the corrupt particles of the human body, that the life of mortality may be extended to several centuries.

A citation by Franciscus Picus from Bacon's "Book of the Six Sciences" recounts how a man may become a prophet and predict the future by means of a mirror which Bacon calls *Almuchefi*, composed in accordance with the laws of perspective under the influence of a benign

constellation, *and after the body of the individual has been modified by alchemy*.

On the word of a man who enjoyed his full confidence, he tells us how a celebrated Parisian savant, after cutting a serpent into fragments, taking care to preserve intact the skin of its belly, subsequently let loose the animal, which began immediately to roll upon certain herbs, and their virtues speedily healed him. The experimenter examined these herbs, and found them of a remarkably green colour. On the authority of Artephius, he relates how a certain magician, named Tantalus, and who was attached to the person of the King of India, had discovered by his proficiency in planetary lore, a method of preserving life over several centuries. He enlarges on the potency of theriac in the excessive prolongation of life. He lauds the flesh of winged serpents as a specific against senility in mankind. By the hygiene of Artephius he informs us that that adept lived over a thousand years. If Plato and Aristotle failed to prolong their existence it is not surprising, for they were ignorant even of the quadrature of the circle, which Bacon declares to have been well known at his time, and which is indefinitely inferior to the grand medical doctrine of Artephius.[9]

The chemical investigations of the great English Franciscan have proved valuable to the science which he loved. He studied carefully the properties of saltpetre, and if he did not discover gunpowder, he contributed to its perfection by teaching the purification of saltpetre by its dissolution in water and by crystallisation. He also called attention to the chemical rôle played by the air in combustion.[10]

Many of Bacon's works still remain in manuscript, but his *Speculum Alchimiæ* was done into French by Girard de Tourmes, and published at Lyons in duodecimo and octavo in 1557. *De Potestate Mirabili Artis et Naturæ*, which is merely a chapter of the Epistle already cited, was translated by the same hand.

In another work, entitled *Radix Mundi*, the supreme secret of Hermetic philosophy is said to be hidden in the four elements. This treatise, which quotes Paracelsus, is, however, an impudent forgery.

The "Mirror of Alchemy," like other works of the philosophers, appeals to Hermes as to a master-initiate, whose authority is not only sufficient but final. The natural principles of all metals are argent vive,

that is, sophic mercury, and sulphur. The various proportions in which these principles are combined, together with their degrees of purity, constitute the sole difference between the best and the basest metal.

Alain Of Lisle

An alchemical treatise, entitled *Dicta de Lapide Philosophico*, appeared in octavo at Leyden during the year 1600. It was attributed to Alanus Insulensis, and was reprinted in the *Theatrum Chimicum*, Argentorati, 1662. It is denied that this work is the production of that Alain de Lisle who was called the universal doctor, and who, after a brilliant period passed in the University of Paris, retired to a cloister as a lay brother, in order to be master of his time, and to devote himself entirely to philosophy. Migne's *Dictionnaire des Sciences Occultes* asserts that another Alanus flourished at the same period, but the existence of the alchemical volume is the sole ground for this statement. It cannot be shown, on the other hand, that Alain practised the Hermetic Science, but he was the author of a "Commentary on the Prophecies of Merlin." He was made bishop of Auxerre, and died in 1278. The publishers of alchemical treatises were accustomed to trade upon brilliant reputations of the past by attributing worthless works to great authorities. The name of Alanus Insulensis appearing on the title-page of the *Dicta de Lapide Philosophico* may perhaps be accounted for in this manner.

The treatise itself is short and not of abnormal value. It represents the Hermetic art as the gift of God, and counsels the neophyte to love Him with all his heart and soul. It describes the mysteries of sublimation, and follows preceding authorities on the problem of the *prima materia*. Its generally indefinite and unprofitable character from any practical standpoint should make it an exceptional field for every species of fanciful interpretation.

Raymond Lully

The comparison of a brilliant but ephemeral reputation to “the comet of a season” has been transferred from the region of poetry into that of proverb, and is certainly applicable to no figure in the history of literature or science more completely than to the subject of this memoir. The name of Raymond Lully has indeed passed so completely into oblivion that it awakes no recollections whatever except in the minds of certain specialists in history and philosophy. Yet he exercised no small influence on his generation, while for a century after his death all intellectual Europe was acquainted with his method for the acquisition of the sciences and his voluminous literary and evangelistic labours. Raymond Lully united the saint and the man of science, the philosopher and the preacher, the apostle and the itinerant lecturer, the dialectician and the martyr; in his youth he was a courtier and a man of pleasure; in mature age he was an ascetic who had discovered the universal science through a special revelation from God; after his death he was denounced as a heretic, and then narrowly escaped beatification as a saint. While his relics worked miracles in Majorca, colleges were founded in various parts of Europe for teaching the *Ars Lulliana*, which was to replace the scholastic method; but the miracles ceased, the universal science fell into neglect, and, as the last scene in this eventful history, Raymond Lully appears in popular legends as an adept in alchemy, whose age was prolonged through centuries by the discovery of the elixir of life.

Having succeeded in rescuing from oblivion and misrepresentation this singular man, whose sanctity was as eminent as his attainments were unique, I shall here present the first true history of his life and works to the reading public of England; the romantic narrative will be as interesting to the general student as to the occultist and the man of letters.

The father of Raymond Lully was a gentleman of Barcelona, who, having served under the banner of John I., King of Arragon, at the

conquest of the Balearic Isles from the Mohammedans, was gifted with lands in Majorca, and there settled. He was of an old and noble Catalonian family, and was wedded to a lady whose name is not known. Though possessed of considerable wealth, his happiness was marred by the sterility of his wife; but, addressing themselves to the goodness of God, the lady was eventually delivered of a son, who was named, like his father, Raymond Lully. He was born, according to Ségui, in 1229, but according to Jean Marie de Vernon, and other authorities, in 1235, which, on the whole, is the more probable date. When the young Raymond had attained the use of reason, his parents endeavoured to imbue him with love for the liberal arts, but his mercurial and impetuous disposition was unsuited to serious study, and he was permitted to follow his father's profession of arms. He was made page to the King, with whom he acquired such high favour that he was installed as Grand Prevôt, or Master of the Palace, and subsequently as Seneschal of the Isles; but he employed the advantages of these distinguished positions in the dissipations of a youth without curb or restraint. The flower of his manhood was wasted in the gaieties of court life, in winning the favours of ladies, and in composing amorous verses in their honour. He spared no pains to make himself pleasing to those who were beautiful, and his excesses were so glaring that his parents, and King James II. himself, were forced to make great complaints to him. As a remedy for the irregularities of his life, it was proposed that he should marry, and a wife at once beautiful, virtuous, and wealthy was selected by his advisers and friends. She was named Catherine de Sabots. Though he became much attached to this lady, the bond of marriage did not prove strong enough to confine his errant inclinations, and there was one person in particular for whom he conceived a great passion, though he was already the father of two male children and of one girl. This was the Signora Ambrosia Eleonora de Castello de Gênes, whose virtue was superior to her personal attractions, though she eclipsed in loveliness all the beauties of the Court. She was married to a man whom she loved, but such was the infatuation of Raymond Lully that he paid her the most marked attentions, and on one occasion, lost to all around him except the object of his admiration, he is said to have followed her on horseback into the church of Palma, a town in Majorca, where she had gone one morning to mass. So outrageous an act could not fail to cause great scandal, more particularly on account of the high rank of both parties concerned. The

lady, thus suddenly raised to such undesirable notoriety, took counsel with her husband as to the course which she should pursue to put an end to the persecutions of her admirer. In the meantime, Raymond Lully, conscious no doubt that he had exceeded all bounds of moderation, wrote an incoherent apology, accompanied with a sonnet, in which he particularly described the beauty of her neck. To this the lady replied by a letter, written in the presence of her husband, and which is here copied *verbatim* from the old French writer who relates this portion of the story.

Letter from the Signora di Castello de Gênes to Raymond Lully, which is a civil reply to a lover to dissuade him from profaning love.

"Sir,—The sonnet which you have sent me is evidence of the superiority of your genius and the imperfection, or, rather, the perversity of your judgment. With what vivacity would you depict true beauty since by your verses you even embellish ugliness! But how can you employ such exalted talents in the laudation of a little clay briefly tinged with vermilion? Your industry should be employed in eradicating and not in publishing your passion.

"'Tis not that you are unworthy of the affection of the noblest woman in the world, but you become unworthy of it by devoting yourself to the service of one who is the least of all. Is it possible that an intelligence created for God alone, and illuminated as it is, can be so blind on this point?

"Abandon then a passion which deprives you of your native nobility. Do not tarnish your reputation by the pursuit of an object which you can never possess. I could terribly disillusion you by showing you that what you so much admire should rather be held in aversion. Yet rest well assured that I love you all the more truly because I appear to have no regard for you."

This letter served only to feed the flame in the breast of Raymond Lully, till, other means having failed, the lady, still acting under the advice of her husband, called her lover into her presence, and exposed to him her breast which was almost eaten away by a cancer, whence an offensive odour issued.

“Look on what thou lovest, Raymond Lully,” she cried, with tears in her eyes, “Consider the condition of this wretched body in which thy spirit centres all its hopes and pleasures, and then repent of thy useless attempts; mourn for the time which thou hast wasted in persecuting a being whom thou didst fondly deem perfect, but who has so dreadful a blemish! Change this useless and criminal passion into holy love, direct thine affections to the Creator, not to the creature, and in the acquisition of eternal bliss take now the same pains which thou hast hitherto vainly spent to engage me in thy foolish passion!”

The sight had already melted the heart of Raymond Lully and restored him to reason. After expressing to the noble-hearted lady how deeply he felt for her misfortune, he withdrew from the house, ashamed of the passion he had conceived, and reaching home, overwhelmed with confusion, he cast himself at the feet of a crucifix, and vowed to consecrate himself henceforth to the service of God alone. He passed a more than usually tranquil night, being filled with this zealous resolution, and the vision of Christ is said to have appeared to him, saying, “Raymond Lully, from henceforth do thou follow me!” This vision was repeated several times, and he judged it to be an indication of the Divine Will. Raymond was at this period about thirty years old; he filled one of the most noble situations at court, and might have aspired to any honour for himself or his family. He resolved, nevertheless, to renounce the world, and soon arranged his affairs, dividing so much of his estate among his family as would enable them to live honourably, retaining a small portion for his personal necessities, and distributing the rest among the poor. His plans in the matter were so punctually fulfilled, that he was accused of plunging from one folly to another.

At this period he is said to have made a pilgrimage to St John in Galicia, and a retreat thereat. He returned in due course to Majorca, and took the habit of religion, but did not, however, embrace the religious life. He retired to a small dwelling on the mountain of Randa, a possession which had not been included in the general sale of his estate. Here he fell ill, and was consoled by two visions of the Saviour.

After his change of life, the first boon which he asked of God was so to illuminate his mind that he might compose a book capable of completely annihilating the errors of Mahomet, and of forcing the infidels, by good and solid reasoning, to embrace the faith of Jesus

Christ. In answer to this prayer, he was conscious, it is asserted, of a perfect spiritual illumination, and became instantaneously capable of reasoning powerfully on all subjects, so that he passed henceforth for a great and subtle doctor both in human and divine sciences. A more sober account informs us that “he prepared himself to labour for the conversion of the Mahometans, by studying their books in the Arabic language,” and that his preparation continued for the space of six years. According to another authority, this missionary zeal did not date from an earlier period than 1268—three years after his reformation—when in another of his visions he beheld upon the leaves of a myrtle or a mastic tree, certain marks which resembled Turkish or Arabic characters. On awaking, he regarded himself as called to a mission among the heathen.

Convinced, says one of his biographers, that the Spirit of God had not inspired him with the Celestial Science to let it rest idle, and that he would be betraying his vocation if his light were hidden under a bushel, he resolved to journey to Paris and there publish the eternal truths which had been revealed to him. Others have supposed that in undertaking this journey he was simply seeking instruction in the Latin tongue at one of the centres of learning. Several of his treatises on Philosophy, Theology, Medicine, and Astronomy are, however, referred to this period, as well as some works on alchemy, but this point will receive adequate consideration hereafter.

Still imbued with his evangelistic and missionary zeal, he engaged a young Arab as his valet, that he might perfect himself in colloquial Arabic; but he, discovering that his master intended to demolish the divine principles of the Koran, and preach against the holy law of Mahomet, piously resolved to assassinate him, and one day plunged a dagger into his breast. He sought to repeat the blow, but Raymond Lully, wounded and bleeding as he was, contrived to disarm him, perhaps with the assistance of a holy and opportune anchorite, who is advanced at this critical moment by one of the biographers. The young Arab was imprisoned with the reluctant consent of his over magnanimous master, who does not appear to have proceeded further against him; but the unhappy Mohammedan enthusiast was so overwhelmed with vexation at the failure of his heroic design to destroy, at all costs, the implacable foe of the prophet, that he strangled himself in his dungeon in a paroxysm of impotent fury.

It was after this episode, and after the recovery of Raymond Lully from the violence of his valet, that, according to another historian, he retired to Mount Randa, and that then, and then only, he received from the Father of Lights that new illumination with which others have accredited him at a much earlier period. This was probably a second visit paid to his Balearic solitude; he tarried there seven months, “always absorbed in prayer, and conversing, as it seemed to him, continually with angels, whose consolations he received—consolations,” says the pious writer, “which the soul can indeed realise, but which the lips cannot worthily describe.”

Having left his retreat, he determined to travel to Rome, to exhort his Holiness to establish in Europe several monasteries, where monks should be occupied in acquiring and teaching languages, in order to spread everywhere the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to labour for the conversion of the infidels. But Honorius IV., from whose piety he had everything to hope, died as soon as Lully reached Rome, and he therefore returned to Paris, where he explained publicly his General or Universal Art for the acquisition of all sciences. From Paris he went to Mont Pelin, where he also taught and wrote; thence to Genoa, where he translated his *Art Inventif* into Arabic. From Genoa he again proceeded to Rome, but seeing that it was impossible to attain his ends on account of the obstacles which presented themselves in the Sacred Court, he returned to Genoa, intending to start for Africa, and personally labour in the conversion of the infidels. He made terms with the owner of a vessel, shipped his books on board, with the other necessities of his journey, but, when he was himself on the point of embarking, a vision of all the dangers he was about to encounter so worked upon his mind, that he was deprived even of the power of walking, and was obliged to renounce his intention. His effects were consequently returned to him, and with these he re-entered Genoa in the midst of a crowd of vagabonds, who derided his weakness. Whether consequent on this raillery, or through shame at his cowardice, he became dangerously ill.[11] On the Vigil of Pentecost, 1291, he was carried to the Convent of Friars Preachers, and received the care which his condition required. He received the last sacraments, and dictated his last will and testament; nevertheless, he was destined to recover, and had scarcely regained his strength when, to repair his

previous fault, he embarked upon the first vessel bound for Tunis. During the voyage he composed his “General Tabulation of the Sciences.”

Immediately on his arrival at Tunis, he held conferences with those who were most erudite in the law of Mahomet. He proved, at least to his own satisfaction, that they were in error and darkness, and that truth was on the side of Jesus Christ. He was accused before the King of Tunis of seducing the people, was arrested, cast into prison, and ultimately condemned to death. But a learned Arabian priest, overcome by his arguments, obtained his pardon on condition of his instant departure. He left the town amidst the insults and opprobrium of the populace, prohibited to return, on pain of certain death.

In 1293 he arrived at Genoa from this disastrous mission, and he appears to have proceeded immediately to Naples, where he remained till the pontificate of Celestin V., teaching publicly his *Ars Magna* and *Arbor Scientiarum*. In December 1294, he repaired to Rome to persuade the Pope to send missionaries to the infidels, and he appears to have obtained the establishment of several colleges for the study of oriental languages. Moreover, the University of Paris, by an authentic act, adopted and recommended the use of his short method of acquiring knowledge, and some of his more important philosophical doctrines. Still, his missionary efforts were not generally successful, and he again wandered from place to place, confuting heretics. He travelled to Montpellier, where he was received with distinction by Raymond Gauffredy, General of the Order of St Francis. He obtained letters of association, as a benefactor to the order, the superiors of which were put under his direction, and he taught his method in their houses. He preached in Cyprus against the Nestorians and Georgians, striving to bring them back to the bosom of the Church. He addressed himself for assistance in his manifold enterprises to the Kings of France, Sicily, Majorca, and Cyprus, but generally in vain.

In 1308 he returned to Paris, where he conversed with the celebrated Johannes Scotus, who is known as the subtle doctor. He had the satisfaction to find that King Philip le Bel had directed the oriental languages to be taught in the University of Paris. This induced Raymond to proceed in the following year to Ferdinand IV., King of Castile, to engage him to unite with the King of France for the recovery of the Holy Land, but this oft-repeated and invariably disastrous and futile enterprise was fortunately not undertaken. He ventured again to Africa, landed at

Bona, that ancient Hippo which was the diocese of St Augustine, and despite the opposition of its Mohammedan inhabitants he succeeded in converting seventy followers of the philosopher Averroës. Thence he travelled to Algiers and converted many, which brought down on him the persecution of the authorities. A bridle was put into his mouth, as if he were a horse, and he was deprived by this means of the free use of speech for the space of forty days; he was then publicly beaten, and expelled from the kingdom. He had no other road open to him but to return to Tunis, where sentence of death awaited him, but he remained concealed, and shortly after proceeded to Bugia. There he confounded the doctrines of the Mohammedan priests, successfully avoiding innumerable deadly snares prepared by the people against him at the suggestion of their religious teachers. He was at length cast into a miserable dungeon, where he might well have perished, but the solicitations of certain Genoese merchants obtained him a better prison, in which he was confined for six months. Here the Mohammedan doctors came to him in troops, to persuade him to embrace their law, promising him the most alluring recompences—slaves, palaces, wealth, beautiful women, and the King's friendship. "The result," says one of Lully's biographers, "was that they were almost persuaded to embrace *His* law, Who alone could promise them eternal beatitude."

The gates of Raymond's prison were at length thrown open, and, as a disturber of the public peace, he was enjoined to quit those parts at once. The illustrious wanderer embarked in a Genoese vessel with his books and papers, but he was wrecked ten miles from the town of Pisa, escaping hardly with the loss of all his effects. At Pisa he fell sick, and was carefully attended by the Dominicans. On his recovery he resumed his public teaching. The conversion of the Mohammedans and the conquest of the Holy Land were still his chief ends, and he so eloquently solicited the inhabitants of Pisa to institute an order of Christian Knights for the deliverance of Judea, that they sent him with letters to the Holy Father; he was entrusted by the inhabitants of Genoa with similar documents, and bore also the voluntary offer of the ladies in that town to contribute towards such a pious and praiseworthy purpose a considerable sum of money. With these assurances he sought the Pope at Avignon, presented his letters, and added the most powerful reasons of his own to persuade him to proclaim another crusade. Naturally, he obtained nothing from the Papal Court, and he retired to Paris, sorrowful at his failure and

at the coldness of the prelates of the Church. He continued writing and teaching, and in October 1311, hearing that a general council would be held at Vienna, he considered this a favourable opportunity and presented himself before it to demand three things:—1. The establishment of several monasteries composed of learned and courageous men, who, willing to expose their lives in the quarrel of Christ, would take pleasure in acquiring languages in order to publish the Gospel more effectually. 2. The reduction of all the Military Orders in the Christian world into a single order, so that living under one religious rule, and inspired with the same desires, they might all do battle with the Saracens, and, suppressing all seeds of jealousy, all selfish interests, by a laudable emulation, with true Christian piety, seek to deliver the Holy Place from the hands of the miscreants. 3. The condemnation, by authority of the Pope and the Council, of all the works of Averroës used in Christian colleges and schools, because they were distinctly and directly opposed to the doctrines of true religion. In order to throw more light on this last point he composed a treatise entitled *De Natale Pueri*. He was again unsuccessful, and returned to Paris without having accomplished anything. With unconquerable perseverance he again set himself more diligently than ever to the composition of books in Latin, Spanish, and Arabic, for the edification of the Faithful and the instruction of the Saracens. He became indeed one of the most voluminous authors in the world, and when weary of the repose of letters he returned to Majorca, far advanced in years, he embarked, despite the peril, for Tunis, hoping to work secretly in the conversion of its inhabitants.

According to another account, he publicly proclaimed his return, crying, “Do you not remember that I am the man whom your princes formerly hunted from this country and from Tunis in dread that I should illuminate your souls with the truths of our holy religion, towards which you already had some disposition? The single hope of your salvation, and the resolution I have taken to suffer all the torments of the world for the love of my God, lead me back among you, to do with me as you please.”

In either case his return was discovered; as one man the people rose in tumult against him, and having covered him with opprobrium and atrocious injuries, they chased him with stones from the town to the port, where he fell miserably overwhelmed.

According to numerous biographers, certain merchants, either of Majorca or Genoa, passing Tunis, saw a great light, in the shape of a pyramid, near to the port, on the night of this catastrophe. This light seemed to issue from a heap of stones, and, curious to discover its cause, they put ashore in a boat, and thus came upon the precious body of Raymond Lully, whom, in spite of his disfigured condition, they immediately recognised.

But M. E. J. Delécleuze, writing in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, gives us the same narrative unadorned by the veneer of the miraculous. “The night fell, and the body of Raymond Lully remained on the sea-shore. During the whole of this terrible scene none of the converts, and still less the European Christians then sojourning in the town, had dared to defend the missionary, or even to intercede in his favour. Certain Genoese merchants, however, desiring to pay the last honours to his corpse, came in a boat, under cover of the darkness, to bear it away. In the accomplishment of this pious duty they perceived that Raymond Lully was still breathing. They carried him in haste to their ship, and immediately set sail for Majorca, in sight of which island that holy and learned man expired on the 29th of June 1315, at the age of eighty years.”[12]

It has already been stated that Raymond Lully was one of the most prolific writers of his own or of any age. The following list of his works is given by Alfonso de Proaza in 1515, and is reproduced by A. Perroquet:—

Names of Subjects.

No. of Treatises.

On the *Ars Veritatis Demonstrativus*,

60

Grammar and Rhetoric,

7

Logic,

22

On the Understanding,

7

On Memory,

4

On Will,

8

On Moral and Political Philosophy,

12

On Law,

8

Philosophy and Physics,

32

Metaphysics,

26

Mathematics,

19

Medicine and Anatomy,

20

Chemistry,

49

Theology,

212

Total number of treatises,

486

This list is accepted without suspicion or criticism by M. Delécleuze, but as Raymond Lully did not begin writing till 1270, and as he died in 1318 at latest, this calculation requires us to suppose that he produced ten treatise every year without intermission for the space of eight and forty years, which would have been perfectly impossible for the most cloistered, book-devoted student, and Raymond Lully was a man of

indefatigable activity, as the facts of his itinerant existence abundantly reveal. A writer in the *Biographie Universelle*, Paris, 1820, has the following pertinent remarks on this subject:—”Some of his biographers have extended the number of his treatises to several thousand.[13] The more moderate have reduced them from five hundred to three hundred, which lie scattered among the libraries of Majorca, Rome, Barcelona, the Sorbonne, St Victor, and the Chatreux at Paris; but scarcely two hundred can be found distinguished by their titles and the first words of the work; and this number must be still further diminished as the difference between some of them is very slight, as chapters have been given for the titles of separate works, and as the explanations of professors or disciples have often been mistaken by uncritical writers for the lessons of the master.”

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Now, the great problem in the chequered life of the illuminated theosophist and possessor of the universal science who died thus violently at Tunis, or Bugia, in the cause of his Master, is this—whether or not he is to be identified with that Raymond Lully whom Éliphas Lévi terms “a grand and sublime adept of Hermetic science,” who is said to have made gold and Rose nobles for one Edward, King of England, and who left behind him, as monuments of his unparalleled alchemical proficiency, those world-famous treatises, testaments, and codicils which, rightly or wrongly, are attributed, under the title “chemistry, 49 treatises,” to the heroic martyr of Majorca. On this important point, the writer, already quoted, in the *Bibliothèque Universelle*, testifies that “the works on alchemy must be referred to another Raymond, of Ferrago, a Jewish neophyte, who lived after 1315, and with whom Abraham Bzovius confounded the first in attributing to him some propositions condemned by Gregory XI.” And again:—”The works on alchemy attributed to him are too opposed to the evangelical poverty of a man who had renounced everything in his zeal for the religion of Jesus Christ, and who protests in many places against the chimera of the philosopher’s stone, sought in his time by Arnaud de Villeneuve, whose disciple he was supposed to be. The circumstances and the dates even in several of these books—of which that on natural wisdom is addressed to Edward III.—prove, moreover, that they must be referred to a later epoch.”

The problem is eminently difficult of solution, and must be considered at some length.

Raymond Lully repaired to Vienna to be present at a general council of the Church in the year 1311. While in this city it is alleged that he received letters from Edward, King of England, who had ascended the throne in 1307, and from Robert, King of Scotland, who both invited him with much persuasion to visit their realms. Hoping to encourage these princes to assist him in his plans against the infidels, he soon arrived in London in the company of John Cremer, Abbot of Westminster.

This ecclesiastic is said to have been one of the most celebrated Hermetic artists of his age. He worked thirty years to attain the end of alchemy, but the obscurities of the Hermetic writers, which he could not clear up, cast him into a labyrinth of errors. The more he read, the more he wondered; at last, tired of the loss of his money, and much more of his precious time, he set out to travel, and had the good fortune to meet with Raymond Lully in Italy. With him he formed a strict friendship, remaining some time in his company, edified by his penitent life, and illuminated by his philosophical conversations. The adept, though he spoke upon alchemy, would not, however, entirely discover the essential points of the operation. Cremer was insinuating and affectionate; he perceived that Lully's zeal for the conversion of the infidels extended to the false enthusiasm of exciting open war against the Mohammedans, and easily persuaded him to visit England, in the hope of King Edward's assistance. The adept lodged with his friend in the Abbey of Westminster, where he worked, and perfected the stone which Cremer had so long unsuccessfully sought. He was duly presented to the King, who, previously informed of the talents of the illustrious stranger, received him with regard and attention.

When he "communicated his treasures," the single condition which he made was that they should not be expended in the luxuries of a court or in war with a Christian prince, but that the King should go in person with an army against the infidels.

Edward, under pretence of doing honour to Raymond, gave him an apartment in the Tower of London, where the adept repeated his process. He transmuted base metal into gold, which was coined at the mint into six millions of nobles, each worth three pounds sterling at the present

day. These coins are well known to antiquarians by the name of Rose Nobles. They prove in the assay of the test to be a purer gold than the Jacobus, or any other gold coin made in those times. Lully in his last testament declares that in a short time, while in London, he converted twenty-two tons weight of quicksilver, lead, and tin into the precious metal.

His lodging in the Tower proved only an honourable prison, and when Raymond had satisfied the desires of the King, the latter disregarded the object which the adept was so eager to see executed, and to regain his own liberty Lully was obliged to escape surreptitiously, when he quickly departed from England.

Cremer, whose intentions were sincere, was not less grieved than Raymond at this issue of the event, but he was subject to his sovereign, and could only groan in silence. He declares his extreme affliction in his testament, and his monastery daily offered up prayers to God for the success of Raymond's cause. The Abbot lived long after this, and saw part of the reign of King Edward III. The course of operations which he proposes in his testament, with apparent sincerity, is not less veiled than are those in the most obscure authors.[14]

Now, in the first place, this story is not in harmony with itself. If Raymond Lully were at Vienna in 1311, how did John Cremer contrive to meet him in Italy at or about the same time? In the second place, the whole story concerning the manufacture of Rose Nobles is a series of blunders. The King who ascended the throne of England in 1307 was Edward II., and the Rose Nobles first appear in the history of numismatics during the reign of Edward IV., and in the year 1465.

"In the King's fifth year, by another indenture with Lord Hastings, the gold coins were again altered, and it was ordered that forty-five nobles only, instead of fifty, as in the last two reigns, should be made of a pound of gold. This brought back the weight of the noble to one hundred and fifty grains, as it had been from 1351 to 1412, but its value was raised to 10s. At the same time, new coins impressed with angels were ordered to be made, sixty-seven and a half to be struck from one pound of gold, and each to be of the value of 6s. 8d.—that is to say, the new angel which weighed eighty grains was to be of the same value as the noble had been which weighed one hundred and eight grains. *The new*

nobles to distinguish them from the old ones were called Rose Nobles, from the rose which is stamped on both sides of them, or ryals, or royals, a name borrowed from the French, who had given it to a coin which bore the figure of the King in his royal robes, which the English ryals did not. Notwithstanding its inappropriateness, however, the name of royal was given to these 10s. pieces, not only by the people, but also in several statutes of the realm."[15]

In the third place, the testament ascribed to John Cremer, Abbot of Westminster, and to which we are indebted for the chief account of Lully's visit to England, is altogether spurious. No person bearing that name ever filled the position of Abbot at any period of the history of the Abbey.

The only coinage of nobles which has been attributed to alchemy was that made by Edward III. in 1344. The gold used in this coinage is supposed to have been manufactured in the Tower; the adept in question was not Raymond Lully, but the English Ripley.

Whether the saint of Majorca was proficient in the Hermetic art or not, it is quite certain that he did not visit the British Isles. It is also certain that in the *Ars Magna Sciendi*, part 9, chapter on Elements, he states that one species of metal cannot be changed into another, and that the gold of alchemy has only the semblance of that metal; that is, it is simply a sophistication.

As all the treatises ascribed to Raymond Lully cannot possibly be his, and as his errant and turbulent life could have afforded him few opportunities for the long course of experiments which are generally involved in the search for the *magnum opus*, it is reasonable to suppose that his alchemical writings are spurious, or that two authors, bearing the same name, have been ignorantly confused. With regard to "the Jewish neophyte," referred to by the *Biographie Universelle*, no particulars of his life are forthcoming. The whole question is necessarily involved in uncertainty, but it is a point of no small importance to have established for the first time the fabulous nature of the Cremer Testament. This production was first published by Michael Maier, in his *Tripus Aureus*, about the year 1614. The two treatises which accompany it appear to be genuine relics of Hermetic antiquity.

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The “Clavicula, or Little Key” of Raymond Lully is generally considered to contain the arch secrets of alchemical adeptship; it elucidates the other treatises of its author, and undertakes to declare the whole art without any fiction. The transmutation of metals depends upon their previous reduction into volatile sophic argent vive, and the only metals worth reducing, for the attainment of this *prima materia*, are silver and gold. This argent vive is said to be dryer, hotter, and more digested than the common substance, but its extraction is enveloped in mystery and symbolism, and the recipes are impossible to follow for want of the materials so evasively and deceptively described. At the same time, it is clear that the operations are physical, and that the materials and objects are also physical, which points are sufficient for our purpose, and may be easily verified by research.

Moreover, the alchemist who calls himself Raymond Lully was acquainted with nitric acid and with its uses as a dissolvent of metals. He could form *aqua regia* by adding sal ammoniac, or common salt, to nitric acid, and he was aware of its property of dissolving gold. Spirit of wine was well known to him, says Gruelin; he strengthened it with dry carbonate of potash, and prepared vegetable tinctures by its means. He mentions alum from Rocca, marcasite, white and red mercurial precipitate. He knew the volatile alkali and its coagulations by means of alcohol. He was acquainted with cupellated silver, and first obtained rosemary oil by distilling the plant with water.[16]

Arnold De Villanova

The date and the birthplace of this celebrated adept are alike uncertain. Catalonia, Milan, and Montpellier have been severally named for the locality, and 1245 is, on the whole, the probable period.

Arnold studied medicine at Paris for twenty years, after which for ten more he perambulated Italy, visiting the different universities. He subsequently penetrated into Spain, but hearing that Peter d'Apono, his friend, was in the hands of the Inquisition, he prudently withdrew, and abode under the patronage of Frederick, King of Naples and Sicily, writing his tracts on medicine and his "Comment on the School of Salerno." He is said to have perished in a storm during the year 1314, but a circular letter written by Pope Clement V. in 1311 conjures those living under his authority to discover, if possible, and send to him, the "Treatise on Medicine," written by Arnold, his physician, who promised it to the Holy Father, but died before he could present it. In this case the date of his decease may be more accurately fixed at 1310.

Arnold was, according to the custom of the period, charged with magical practices. François Pegna declares that all his erudition in alchemy was derived from the demon. Mariana accuses him of attempting to create a man by means of certain drugs deposited in a pumpkin. But he is justified by Delrio from these imputations, and the orthodox *Dictionnaire des Sciences Occultes* considers that Clement V. would not have chosen an initiate of magical arts as his physician. In 1317 the Inquisition of Tarragona condemned his books to be burned, but this was for the heretical sentiments which they contained. He wrote strictures on the monastic state and the service of religion, and maintained that works of divine faith and charity were more agreeable to God than the Sacrifice of the Mass.

His skill in Hermetic philosophy has been generally recognised. His contemporary, the celebrated Jurisconsult, John Andre, says of him:—"In

this time appeared Arnold de Villeneuve, a great theologian, a skilful physician, and wise alchymist, who made gold, which he submitted to all proofs." Arnold has also the character of writing with more light and clearness than the other philosophers. His alchemical works were published in 1509, in one folio volume. His *Libellus de Somniorum Interpretatione et Somnia Danielis* is excessively rare in its original quarto edition. Several alchemical and magical works are gratuitously ascribed to him. Among these must be classed the book called *De Physicis Ligaturis*, supposed to be translated from the Arabic—*De Sigillis duodecim Signorum*, which is concerned with the zodiacal signs—and the book of the "Three Impostors," which the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Occultes* denominates "stupid and infamous."

The *Thesaurus Thesaurorum* and the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, the *Speculum Alchemiæ* and the *Perfectum Magisterium*, are the most notable of all his alchemical treatises. To these the student should add his *Scientia Scientiæ* and brief *Testamentum*. The editions are various, but the tracts will be found in collected form in the *Bibliotheca Chemicæ Curiosa* of J. J. Mangetus.

Arnold asserts that argent vive is the medicine of all the metals, that vulgar sulphur is the cause of all their imperfections, that the stone of the philosophers is one, and that it is to be extracted from that in which it exists. It exists in all bodies, including common argent vive. The first physical work is the dissolution of the stone in its own mercury to reduce it to its *prima materia*. All the operations of the *magnum opus* are successively described, including the composition of the white and the red elixirs, and the multiplication of the metallic medicine.

The marcasite frequently mentioned by Arnold is thought to be identical with bismuth. He was acquainted with the preparation of oil of turpentine, oil of rosemary, and performed distillations in a glazed earthen vessel with a glass top and helm.

Jean De Meung

Poet, alchemist, and astrologer, a man of some fortune, and issued from an ancient family, Jean de Meung was one of the chief figures at the Court of King Philippe le Bel. He was born, according to the latest authorities, about the middle of the thirteenth century, and his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, which Guillaume de Lorris had begun some time before the year 1260, was undertaken not in his nineteenth year, as generally stated, but about or a little before the age of thirty, and at the instance of the French King.

The Romance of the Rose, “that epic of ancient France,” as Éliphas Lévi calls it, has been generally considered by alchemists a poetic and allegorical presentation of the secrets of the *magnum opus*. It professes, at any rate, the principles of Hermetic Philosophy, and Jean de Meung was also the author of “Nature’s Remonstrances to the Alchemist” and “The Alchemist’s Answer to Nature.” Hermetic commentaries have been written upon the romance-poem, and tradition has ascribed to the author the accomplishment of great transmutations. The sermon of Genius, chaplain and confessor to Dame Nature, in the Romance, is an exhibition of the principles of chemistry, as well as a satire on the bombastic and unintelligible preaching which was in vogue at that period. From verse 16,914 to verse 16,997 there is much chemical information.

The year 1216 is the probable period of the poet’s death. The story told of his testament has only a foundation in legend, but it is worth repeating as evidence of the general belief in his skill as an alchemist.

He chose by his will, says the story, to be buried in the Church of the Jacobins, and, as an acknowledgment, left them a coffer that appeared, at least by its weight, to be filled with things precious, probably with the best gold which could be manufactured by the skill of the Hermetists. He ordered, however, that this coffer should not be opened till after his funeral, when, touched with the piety of the deceased, the monks

assembled in great numbers to be present at its opening, and to offer up thanks to God. They found to their great disappointment that the coffer was filled with large pieces of slates beautifully engraved with figures of geometry and arithmetic. The indignation of the fathers was excited by the posthumous imposture, and they proposed to eject the body of Jean de Meung from their consecrated precincts; but the Parliament being informed of this inhumanity, obliged the Jacobins, by a decree, to leave the deceased undisturbed in the honourable sepulchre of their conventual cloisters.

In “Nature’s Remonstrance to the Alchemist,” who is described as a foolish and sophistical souffleur, making use of nothing but mechanical arts, the complainant bitterly abuses the fanatical student who diffuses over her beautiful domain the rank odours of sulphur, which he tortures in vain over his furnaces, for by such a method he will assuredly attain nothing. The alchemist in his “Reply” figures as a repentant being, convinced of his errors, which he ascribes to the barbarous allegories, parabolic sentences, and delusive precepts contained in the writings of the adepts.

The Monk Ferarius

About the beginning of the fourteenth century, this Italian artist gave to the world two treatises—*De Lapide Philosophorum* and *Thesaurus Philosophiæ*, which are printed in the *Theatrum Chimicum*.

The “admirable spectacle” of the palingenesis of plants is described by this Jesuit. “Immediately consequent on exposing to the rays of the sun the phial, filled with quintessence of the rose, there is discovered within the narrow compass of the vase a perfect world of miracles. The plant which lay buried in its ashes awakes, uprises, and unfolds. In the space of half-an-hour the vegetable phœnix is resuscitated from its own dust. The rose issues from its sepulchre and assumes a new life. It is the floral symbol of that resurrection by which mortals lying in darkness and in the shadow of death will pass into beautiful immortality.”

The treatise on the philosophical stone very pertinently remarks that in alchemy the first thing to be ascertained is what is really signified by the myrionimous *argentum vivum sapientum*, a point on which the author gracefully declines information. Both works are exceedingly obscure and vexatious. The *Thesaurus Philosophiæ* testifies that the plain speaking of the philosophers is completely illusory, and that it is only in their incomprehensible profundities that we must seek the light of Hermes.

Alchemy is the science of the four elements, which are to be found in all created substances, but are not of the vulgar kind. The whole practice of the art is simply the conversion of these elements into one another. The seed and matter of every metal is mercury, as it is decocted and otherwise prepared in the bowels of the earth, and each of them can be reduced into this *prima materia*, by the help of which they are also, one and all, susceptible of augmentation and multiplication, even to infinity.

Pope John XXII

This pontiff is claimed as an adept by the alchemists, a fact which is denied, but not disproved, by his orthodox biographers. That he believed in the power of magic is shown by the accusation which he directed against Géraud, Bishop of Cahors, whom he accredited with the design of poisoning him, together with the entire college of cardinals, and with having in particular contrived sorceries and diabolical enchantments against all of them. He was the contemporary of Raymond Lully and Arnold de Villanova, and is said to have been the pupil and friend of the latter. Nevertheless, the mischief occasioned at that period by the impostures of pretended alchemists led him to issue a bull condemning the traders in this science as charlatans who promised what they were unable to perform. Hermetic writers assert that this bull was not directed against veritable adepts, and his devotion to his laboratory at Avignon seems a fairly established fact. Franciscus Pagi, in his *Breviarum de Gestis Romanorum Pontificum*, has the following passage:—*Joannes scripsit quoque latino sermone artem metallorum transmutorium; quod opus prodiit Gallici incerto translatore Lugduni, anno 1557 in 8vo*. It is allowed that he was a writer on medicine. His *Thesaurus Pauperum*, a collection of recipes, was printed at Lyons in 1525, and he was the author of a treatise on diseases of the eye, and of another on the formation of the fœtus. He was born at Cahors, according to the general opinion, of poor but reputable parents; he showed at an early period his skill in law and in the sciences. The circumstances of his life are exceedingly obscure until his consecration as Bishop of Fréjus in 1300. Subsequently he was promoted to the see of Avignon, and Clement V. created him cardinal-bishop of Porto. He was raised to the pontificate at Lyons, and reigned at Avignon till his death in 1334. He left behind him in his coffers the sum of eighteen million florins in gold and seven millions in jewels, besides valuable consecrated vessels. Alchemists attribute these vast treasures to his skill in their science, and assert in addition that he manufactured two hundred ingots, apparently on a single occasion. By a calculation of one

of his biographers, this quantity of the precious metal was equivalent to £660,000, British sterling. A treatise entitled “The Elixir of the Philosophers, or the Transmutatory Art of Metals,” is attributed to him. It was translated from the Latin into French, and published in duodecimo at Lyons in 1557. It is written *ad clerum*, and for this reason is probably the more misleading. It represents the constituents of the perfect medicine to be vinegar, salt, urine, and sal ammoniac, with the addition of an undescribed substance called sulphur vive.

Nicholas Flamel

The name of this alchemical adept has been profoundly venerated not only in the memory of the Hermetists but in the hearts of the French people, among whom he is the central figure of many marvellous legends and traditions. “Whilst in all ages and nations the majority of hierophants have derived little but deception, ruination, and despair as the result of their devotion to alchemy, Nicholas Flamel enjoyed permanent good fortune and serenity. Far from expending his resources in the practice of the *magnum opus*, he added with singular suddenness a vast treasure to a moderate fortune. These he employed in charitable endowments and in pious foundations that long survived him and long sanctified his memory. He built churches and chapels which were adorned with statues of himself, accompanied by symbolical characters and mysterious crosses, which subsequent adepts long strove to decipher, that they might discover his secret history, and the kabbalistic description of the process by which he was conducted to the realisation of the Grand Magisterium.”

Whether Flamel was born at Paris or Pontoise is not more uncertain than the precise date of his nativity. This occurred some time during the reign of Philippe le Bel, the spoliator of the grand order of the Temple, and, on the whole, the most probable year is 1330. His parents were poor, and left him little more than the humble house in Paris which he continued to possess till his death, and which he eventually bequeathed to the Church. It stood in Notary Street, at the corner of Marivaux Street, opposite the Marivaux door of the Church of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie.

Authorities disagree as to the amount of education that Flamel obtained in his youth, but it was sufficient to qualify him for the business of a scrivener, which, in spite of his wealth and his accredited wisdom, he continued to follow through life. He was proficient in painting and poetry, and had a taste for architecture and the mathematical sciences; yet he applied himself steadily to business, and contracted a prudent marriage, his choice falling on a widow, named Pernelle, who, though

handsome, was over forty years, but who brought a considerable dowry to her second husband.

In his capacity as a copyist before the age of printing, books of all classes fell into the hands of Flamel, and among them were many of those illuminated alchemical treatises which are reckoned among the rarest treasures of mediæval manuscripts. Acquainted with the Latin language, he insensibly accumulated an exoteric knowledge of the aims and theories of the adepts. His interest and curiosity were awakened, and he began studying them in his leisure moments. Now tradition informs us that, whether his application was great, his desire intense, or whether he was super-eminently fitted to be included by divine election among the illuminated Sons of the Doctrine, or for whatever other reason, the mystical Bath-Kôl appeared to him under the figure of an angel, bearing a remarkable book bound in well-wrought copper, the leaves of thin bark, graven right carefully with a pen of iron. An inscription in characters of gold contained a dedication addressed to the Jewish nation by Abraham the Jew, prince, priest, astrologer, and philosopher.

“Flamel,” cried the radiant apparition, “behold this book of which thou understandest nothing; to many others but thyself it would remain for ever unintelligible, but one day thou shalt discern in its pages what none but thyself will see!”

At these words Flamel eagerly stretched out his hands to take possession of the priceless gift, but book and angel disappeared in an auriferous tide of light. The scrivener awoke to be ravished henceforth by the divine dream of alchemy; but so long a time passed without any fulfilment of the angelic promise, that the ardour of his imagination cooled, the great hope dwindled gradually away, and he was settling once more into the commonplace existence of a plodding scribe, when, on a certain day of election in the year 1357, an event occurred which bore evidence of the veracity of his visionary promise-maker, and exalted his ambition and aspirations to a furnace heat. This event, with the consequences it entailed, are narrated in the last testament of Nicholas Flamel, which begins in the following impressive manner, but omits all reference to the legendary vision:—

“The Lord God of my life, who exalts the humble in spirit out of the most abject dust, and makes the hearts of such as hope in Him to rejoice,

be eternally praised.

“Who, of His own grace, reveals to the believing souls the springs of His bounty, and subjugates beneath their feet the crowns of all earthly felicities and glories.

“In Him let us always put our confidence, in His fear let us place our happiness, and in His mercy the hope and glory of restoration from our fallen state.

“And in our supplications to Him let us demonstrate or show forth a faith unfeigned and stable, an assurance that shall not for ever be shaken.

“And Thou, O Lord God Almighty, as Thou, out of Thy infinite and most desirable goodness, hast condescended to open the earth and unlock Thy treasures unto me, Thy poor and unworthy servant, and hast given into my possession the fountains and well-springs of all the treasures and riches of this world.

“So, O Lord God, out of Thine abundant kindness, extend Thy mercies unto me, that when I shall cease to be any longer in the land of the living, Thou mayst open unto me the celestial riches, the divine treasures, and give me a part or portion in the heavenly inheritance for ever.

“Where I may behold Thy divine glory and the fulness of Thy Heavenly Majesty, a pleasure, so ineffable, and a joy, so ravishing, which no mortal can express or conceive.

“This I entreat of Thee, O Lord, for our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy well-beloved Son’s sake, who in the unity of the Holy Spirit liveth with Thee, world without end. Amen.

“I, *Nicholas Flamel*, Scrivener, living at *Paris*, anno 1399, in the *Notary Street*, near *St James*, of the *Bouchery*, though I learned not much Latin, because of the poorness and meanness of my parents, who were notwithstanding (by them that envy me most) accounted honest and good people.

“Yet, by the blessing of God, I have not wanted an understanding of the books of the philosophers, but learned them and attained to a certain kind of knowledge, even of their hidden secrets.

“For which cause sake there shall not any moment of my life pass, wherein remembering this so vast a good, I will not on my bare knees, if the place will permit of it, or otherwise in my heart, with all the entireness of my affections, render thanks to this my most good and precious God.

“Who never forsakes the righteous generation, or suffers the children of the just to beg their bread, nor deceives their expectations, but supports them with blessings who put their trust in Him.

“After the death of my parents, I, *Nicholas Flamel*, got my living by the art of writing, engrossing inventories, making up accounts, keeping of books, and the like.

“In this course of living there fell by chance into my hands a gilded book, very old and large, which cost me only two *florins*.

“It was not made of paper or parchment, as other books are, but of admirable rinds (as it seemed to me) of young trees. The cover of it was of *brass*; it was well bound, and graven all over with a strange kind of letters, which I take to be Greek characters, or some such like.

“This I know that I could not read them, nor were they either Latin or French letters, of which I understand something.

“But as to the matter which was written within, it was engraven (as I suppose) with an iron pencil or graver upon the said bark leaves, done admirably well, and in fair and neat Latin letters, and curiously coloured.

“It contained thrice seven leaves, for so they were numbered in the top of each folio, and every seventh leaf was without any writing, but in place thereof there were several images or figures painted.

“Upon the first seventh leaf was depicted—1. A Virgin. 2. Serpents swallowing her up. On the second seventh, a serpent crucified; and on the last seventh, a desert or wilderness, in midst whereof were seen many fair fountains, whence issued out a number of serpents here and there.

“Upon the first of the leaves was written in capital letters of gold, Abraham the Jew, Priest, Prince, Levite, Astrologer, and Philosopher, to the nation of the Jews dispersed by the wrath of God in France, wisheth health.

“After which words, it was filled with many execrations and curses, with this word Maranatha, which was oft repeated against any one that should look in to unfold it, except he were either Priest or Scribe.

“The person that sold me this book was ignorant of its worth as well as I who bought it. I judge it might have been stolen from some of the Jewish nation, or else found in some place where they anciently abode.

“In the second leaf of the book he consoled his nation, and gave them pious counsel to turn from their wickedness and evil ways, but above all to flee from idolatry, and to wait in patience for the coming of the Messiah, who, conquering all the kings and potentates of the earth, should reign in glory with his people to eternity. Without doubt, this was a very pious, wise, and understanding man.

“In the third leaf, and in all the writings that followed, he taught them, in plain words, the transmutation of metals, to the end that he might help and assist his dispersed people to pay their tribute to the Roman Emperors, and some other things not needful here to be repeated.

“He painted the vessels by the side or margin of the leaves, and discovered all the colours as they should arise or appear, with all the rest of the work.

“But of the *prima materia* or first matter, or agent, he spake not so much as one word; but only he told them that in the fourth and fifth leaves he had entirely painted or decyphered it, and depicted or figured it, with a desirable dexterity and workmanship.

“Now though it was singularly well and materially or intelligibly figured and painted, yet by that could no man ever have been able to understand it without having been well skilled in their Cabala, which is a series of old traditions, and also to have been well studied in their books.

“The fourth and fifth leaf thereof was without any writing, but full of fair figures, bright and shining, or, as it were, enlightened, and very exquisitely depicted.

“First, there was a young man painted, with wings at his ankles, having in his hand a caducean rod, writhen about with two serpents, wherewith he stroke upon an helmet covering his head.

“This seemed in my mean apprehension to be one of the heathen gods, namely, Mercury. Against him there came running and flying with open wings, a great old man with an hour-glass fixed upon his head, and a scythe in his hands, like Death, with which he would (as it were in indignation) have cut off the feet of Mercury.

“On the other side of the fourth leaf he painted a fair flower, on the top of a very high mountain, which was very much shaken by the north wind. Its footstalk was blue, its flowers white and red, and its leaves shining like fine gold, and round about it the dragons and griffins of the north made their nests and habitations.

“On the fifth leaf was a fair rose-tree, flowered, in the midst of a garden, growing up against a hollow oak, at the foot whereof bubbled forth a fountain of pure white water, which ran headlong down into the depths below.

“Yet it passed through the hands of a great number of people who digged in the earth, seeking after it, but, by reason of their blindness, none of them knew it, except a very few, who considered its weight.

“On the last side of the leaf was depicted a king, with a faulchion, who caused his soldiers to slay before him many infants, the mothers standing by, and weeping at the feet of their murderers.

“These infants’ blood being gathered up by other soldiers, was put into a great vessel wherein Sol and Luna came to bathe themselves.

“And because this history seemed to represent the destruction of the Innocents by Herod, and that I learned the chiefest part of the art in this book, therefore I placed in their churchyard these hieroglyphic figures of this learning. Thus have you that which was contained in the first five leaves.

“As for what was in all the rest of the written leaves, which was wrote in good and intelligible Latin, I must conceal, lest God being offended with me should send His plague and judgments upon me. It would be a wickedness much greater than he who wished that all men in the world had but one head, that he might cut it off at a blow.

“Having thus obtained this delicate and precious book, I did nothing else day and night but study it; conceiving very well all the operations it

pointed forth, but wholly ignorant of the *prima materia* with which I should begin, which made me very sad and discontented.

“My wife, whose name was Perrenelle, whom I loved equally with myself, and whom I had but lately married, was mightily concerned for me, and, with many comforting words, earnestly desired to know how she might deliver me from this trouble.

“I could no longer keep counsel, but told her all, shewing her the very book, which, when she saw, she became as well pleased with it as myself, and with great delight beheld the admirable cover, the engraving, the images, and exquisite figures thereof, but understood them as little as I.

“Yet it was matter of consolation to me to discourse and entertain myself with her, and to think what we should do to find out the interpretation and meaning thereof.

“At length I caused to be painted within my chamber, as much to the life or original as I could, all the images and figures of the said fourth and fifth leaves.

“These I showed to the greatest scholars and most learned men in Paris, who understood thereof no more than myself: I told them they were found in a book which taught the philosophers’ stone.

“But the greatest part of them made a mock both of me and that most excellent secret, except one whose name was Anselm, a practiser of physic and a deep student in this art.

“He much desired to see my book, which he valued more than anything else in the world, but I always refused him, only making him a large demonstration of the method.

“He told me that the first figure represented Time, which devours all things, and that, according to the number of the six written leaves, there was required a space of six years to perfect the stone; and then, said he, we must turn the glass and see it no more.

“I told him this was not painted, but only to show the teacher the *prima materia*, or first agent, as was written in the book. He answered me that this digestion for six years was, as it were, a second

agent, and that certainly the first agent was there painted, which was a white and heavy water.

“This, without doubt, was *argent vive*, which they could not fix; that is, cut off his feet, or take away his volubility, save by that long digestion in the pure blood of young infants.

“For in that this *argent vive* being joined with Sol and Luna was first turned with them into a plant, like that there painted, and afterwards by corruption into serpents, which serpents, being perfectly dried and digested, were made a fine powder of gold, which is the stone.

“This strange or foreign discourse to the matter was the cause of my erring, and that made me wander for the space of one and twenty years in a perfect meander from the verity; in which space of time I went through a thousand labyrinths or processes, but all in vain; yet never with the blood of infants, for that I accounted wicked and villainous.

“For I found in my book that the philosophers called blood the mineral spirit which is in the metals, chiefly in Sol, Luna, and Mercury, to which sense I always, in my own judgment, assented. Yet these interpretations were, for the most part, not more subtle than true.

“Not finding, therefore, in my operation or course of the process, the signs, at the time written in my book, I was ever to begin again.

“In the end, having lost all hope of ever understanding those symbols or figures, I made a vow to God to demand their interpretation of some Jewish priest belonging to some synagogue in Spain.

“Whereupon, with the consent of my wife Perrenelle, carrying with me the extract or copy of the figures or pictures, I took up a pilgrim’s habit and staff, in the same manner as you see me figured without the said arch, in the said churchyard in which I put these Hieroglyphic Figures.

“Whereupon also I have set on the wall, on both hands, the process, representing in order all the colours of the stone, as they rise and go away again.

“This is, as it were, the very beginning of Hercules his book, entitled ‘Iris, or the Rainbow,’ which treats of the stone in these words:—*The process of the work is very pleasing unto nature*.

“And these words I also put there expressly, for the sake of great scholars and learned men, who may understand to what they allude.

“In this same manner, I say, I put myself upon my journey to Spain, and so much I did that I, in a short time, arrived at Mountjoy, and, a while after, at St James, where, with much devotion, I accomplished my vow.

“This done, in Leon, I, at my return, met with a merchant of Boulogne, who brought me acquainted with a physician, M. Canches, a Jew by nation, but now a Christian, dwelling at Leon aforesaid.

“I showed him the extract or copy of my figures, by which he was, as it were, ravished with great astonishment and joy. He desired immediately if I could tell him any news of the book whence they were drawn.

“I answered him in Latin (in which language he asked me the question) that I doubted not of obtaining the sight of the book, if I could meet with any one who could unfold the enigmas. Hearing this, and being transported with great earnestness and joy, he began to decypher unto me the beginning. To be short, he was much pleased that he was in hopes to hear tidings of the book, and I as much pleased to hear him speak and interpret it. And, doubtless, he had heard much talk of the book, but it was, as he said, of a thing which was believed to be utterly lost. Upon this, we resolved for our voyage, and from Leon we passed to Oviedo, and thence to Sareson, where we took shipping, and went to sea in order to go into France.

“Our voyage was prosperous and happy, and, being arrived in the kingdom of France, he most truly interpreted unto me the greatest part of my figures, in which, even to the points and pricks, he could decypher great mysteries, which were admirable to me. Having attained Orleans, this learned man fell sick, even to death, being afflicted with extreme vomitings, which still continued with him, as being first caused by sea-sickness. Notwithstanding which, he was in continual fear lest I should leave or forsake him, which was a great trouble to him. And although I was continually by his side, yet he would be almost always calling for me. At the end of the seventh day of his sickness he died, which was no small grief to me, and I buried him, as well as my condition would permit me, in a church at Orleans.

“He that would see the manner of my arrival and the joy of Perrenelle, let him look upon us two in the city of Paris, upon the door of the chapel of James of the Boucherie, close by the one side of my house, where we are both painted, kneeling and giving thanks to God. For through the grace of God it was that I attained the perfect knowledge of all I desired.

“Well, I had now the *prima materia*, the first principles, yet not their first preparation, which is a thing most difficult above all other things in the world; but in the end I had that also, after a long aberration, and wandering in a labyrinth of errors for the space of three years, or thereabouts, during which time I did nothing but study and search and labour, so as you see me depicted without this arch where I have placed my process; praying also continually unto God, and reading attentively in my book, pondering the words of the philosophers, and then trying and proving the various operations, which I thought to myself they might mean by their words. At length I found that which I desired, which I also soon knew by the scent and odour thereof. Having this, I easily accomplished the magistery. For knowing the preparations of the prime agents, and then literally following the directions in my book, I could not then miss the work if I would.

“Having attained this, I come now to projection; the first time I made projection was upon mercury, a pound and a half whereof, or thereabouts, I turned into pure silver, better than that of the mine, as I proved by assaying of it myself, and also causing others to assay it for me several times. This was done in the year of our Lord 1382, January 17, about noon, being Monday, in my own house, Perrenelle only present.

“Again, following exactly the directions in my book, literally and word by word, I made projection of the red stone, on the like quantity, Perrenelle only being present, and in the same house, which was done in the same year of our Lord, namely, 1382, April 25, at five in the afternoon. This mercury I truly transmuted into almost as much gold, much better, indeed, than common gold, more soft also, and more pliable.

“I speak it in all truth: I have made it three times, with the help of Perrenelle, who understood it as well as myself, because she assisted me

in my operations. And without doubt, if she would have done it alone, she would have brought it to the same, or full as great, perfection as I had done. I had truly enough when I had once done it; but I found exceeding great pleasure and delight in seeing and contemplating *the admirable works of Nature within the vessels*, and to show to you that I had thus done it three times, I caused to be depicted under the same arch, three furnaces, like to those which serve for the operations of this work.

“I was much concerned for a long time lest Perrenelle, by reason of extreme joy, should not hide her felicity, which I measured by my own, and lest she should let fall some words among her relations concerning the great treasure we possessed. For an extremity of joy takes away the understanding as well as an extremity of grief and sorrow. But the goodness of the most great God had not only given and filled me with this blessing, to give me a chaste and sober wife, but she was also a wise and prudent woman, not only capable of reason but also to do what was reasonable, and was more discreet and secret than ordinarily other women are. Above all, she was exceedingly religious and devout: and therefore seeing herself without hope of children, and now well stricken in years, she made it her business, as I did, to think of God, and to give ourselves to the works of charity and mercy.

“Before the time wherein I wrote this discourse, which was at the latter end of the year of our Lord 1413, after the death of my faithful companion, whose loss I cannot but lament all the days of my life, she and I had already founded, and endowed with revenues, fourteen hospitals, three chapels, and seven churches, in the city of Paris, all which we had new built from the ground, and enriched with great gifts and revenues, with many reparations in their churchyards. We also have done at Boulogne about as much as we have done at Paris, not to speak of the charitable acts which we both did to particular poor people, principally to widows and orphans, whose names should I divulge, with the largeness of the charity, and the way and manner of doing it, as my reward would then be only in this world, so neither could it be pleasing to the persons to whom we did it.

“Building, therefore, these hospitals, chapels, churches, and churchyards in the city, I caused to be depicted under the said fourth arch the most true and essential marks or signs of this art, yet under veils, types, and hieroglyphic covertures, in imitation of those things which are

contained in the gilded book of Abraham the Jew; demonstrating to the wise, and men of understanding, the direct and perfect way of operation, and lineary work of the philosophers' stone. Which being perfected by any one, takes away from him the root of all sin and evil, which is covetousness, changing his evil into good, and making him liberal, courteous, religious, devout, and fearing God, however wicked he was before. For from thenceforward he is continually ravished with the goodness of God, and with His grace and mercy, which he has obtained from the fountain of Eternal Goodness, with the profoundness of His divine and adorable power, and with the consideration of His admirable works."

According to Langlet du Fresnoy, the evidence of these things remained in the year 1742. In the cemetery of the Holy Innocents stood the arch built by Flamel with the hieroglpyhic figures upon it. In two niches, without the arch and on the cemetery side, were statues of St James and St John. Below that of St John was the figure of Flamel himself, reading in a book, with a Gothic N. F. to mark his name. The progression of the colours in the order of the process, originally represented on the wall, was, however, effaced.

In the same cemetery was a charnel house, or receptacle for the skulls and bones disinterred in the digging of new graves. Upon one of the pillars of this charnel there was a Gothic N. F., with this inscription:—

Ce charnier fut fait & donné à l'Eglise,

Pour l'amour de Dieu, l'an 1399.

The second of these evidences was upon the Marivaux door of the Church of Saint Jacques-la-Boucherie, where on the left side at entering was the figure of Flamel, kneeling at the feet of St James, with a Gothic N. upon the pedestal. The figure of Perrenelle was represented on the opposite side, kneeling at the feet of St John, the pedestal bearing a Gothic P.

The third evidence was in the street of Notre Dame, at the portal of Genevieve of Arden. There Flamel's statue was to be seen in a niche, kneeling with a desk at his side, looking towards St James. There was a Gothic N. F. below and the inscription, "This portal was built in 1402, by the alms of many." Flamel is supposed to have concealed in this manner

that he was the principal donor, but the figure may have been erected to his memory.

The fourth and final evidence was in the street of the cemetery of St Nicholas of the Fields, where there was the wall of an unfinished hospital with figures engraven on the stone and the initials of Flamel.

After the death of Perrenelle the bereaved adept is supposed to have prepared for posterity several works on the supreme science which had enriched him:—*Le Livre des Figures Hieroglyphiques*; *Le Sommaire Philosophique*, written in verse after the manner of the *Roman de la Rose*; *Trois Traités de la Transformation Metallique*, also in rhymed verse; *Le Desir Désiré, ou Trésor de Philosophie*; *Le Grand Eclaircissement de la Pierre Philosophale pour la Transmutation de tous Métaux*; *La Musique Chimique*; *Annotationes in D. Zacharmin*, &c.

Approaching near the end of his life, and having no children, he chose his burial place in the parish church of St Jacques-la-Boucherie, before the crucifix. To this end he made a contract with the wardens of the church, which is mentioned in his testament. He then disposed of his property and goods to the church and to the poor, as may be seen in his will, which is lodged in the archives of St Jacques. It is dated the 22nd November 1416, and begins thus:—”To all those to whom these present letters shall come, I, Annegny du Castel, chevalier, counsellor chambellan of the King, our Sire, Keeper of the Prevot of Paris, greeting: Know ye, that before Hugues de la Barre and Jean de la Noe, notary clerks of the King, at the Chatelet, was established personally, Nicholas Flamel, scrivener, sound in body and mind, speaking clearly, with good and true understanding,” &c. It fills four sheets of parchment, which are sewed one to the end of the other, like the rolls of ancient writing. It contains thirty-four articles; in the twentieth he bequeaths to his relations the sum of forty livres. He lived three years after making this will, dying about 1419.

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Hostile criticism has endeavoured to destroy the testimony which the history of Flamel affords to the reality of transmutation, and has adopted various means. It has attempted to disprove his wealth by reducing his munificence, representing him simply as an honest bourgeois, who, thanks to his economy and his assiduity, acquired a comfortable

competence, which a childless condition enabled him to devote to works of benevolence, and to the erection of public buildings on a moderate scale. The alchemical testaments and treatises attributed to him are condemned one and all as absolutely spurious. The chief expositor of this view is the Abbé L. Vilain in his *Essai sur une Histoire de Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie*, published in duodecimo at Paris, in 1758, and again in a *Histoire Critique de Nicolas Flamel et de Pernel sa Femme*, Paris, 1782, &c.

It must be granted out of hand that all the alchemical compositions which have passed under the name of Flamel are open to more or less suspicion, and some are undoubtedly forgeries. The work on metallic transmutation, which is the earliest traceable treatise, was unheard of till a hundred and forty-three years after the death of its accredited author. It was published in the year 1561 by Jacques Goharry. *Le Grand Eclaircissement* first saw the light in 1628, when the editor, who apparently abounded in Flamel manuscripts, promised the publication in addition of *La Joie Parfaite de Moi, Nicolas Flamel, et de Pernelle, ma Femme*, which has not, however, appeared.

On the other hand, there are strong arguments for the genuineness of the *Trésor de Philosophie*. "There exists in the *Bibliothèque du Roi*" says M. Auguste Vallet, "a small manuscript book, *grossement relié*, according to all appearance belonging to the end of the fourteenth century, and which treats of alchemical operations. It commences with these words:—

"'Excipit the True Practice of the Noble Science of Alchemy, the desired desire, and the prize unappraisable, compiled from all the philosophers, and drawn out of ancient works.'

"It teaches the manner of accomplishing the *Magnum Opus* by the aid of successive operations, which are termed *Lavures* in this treatise. On the last leaf of the manuscript is the following inscription written by the same hand as the rest of the text:—'The present book is of and belonging to Nicolas Flamel, of the Parish Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie, who has written and illuminated it with his own hand.'"

With regard to the extent of the scrivener's resources, the genuine testament of Pernelle, dated 1399, and the endowments of hospitals and

churches which undoubtedly took place on a scale of great munificence, are a sufficient evidence that he was an exceedingly wealthy man.

Other critics, including Louis Figuier, admit the fact of his riches, but enlarge upon the remunerative nature of a scrivener's occupation previous to the invention of printing, and upon the careful frugality of the supposed alchemist; but in the teeth of their own theory they are obliged to admit that Flamel did become a student of alchemy, that the hieroglyphics, figures, and emblems in the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents are evidence of this fact; that, unlike most followers of Hermes, he was not impoverished by his experiments; and that he fostered the report that his wealth was in the main a result of his possession of the mysterious book of Abraham, by which he had been able to compose the philosophical stone.

Gabriel Naudé, who detested magic, and seems to have despised alchemy, vilifying the possessors of both of these sciences alike, accounts for the riches of Flamel by asserting that he managed affairs for the Jews, and upon their banishment from the kingdom of France, and the confiscation of their property for the king, "he, knowing the sums due by several individuals, compromised, by receiving a part, which they paid him to prevent his giving information which would oblige them to surrender it entirely."

This explanation of the source of Flamel's riches is a purely unfounded assertion. If we carefully examine history, there were three expulsions of the Jews from France between 1300 and 1420. They were banished in 1308, were soon after allowed to return, and were again banished in 1320. These persecutions occurred before the birth of Flamel. The Jews were re-established by Charles V. in 1364, and they remained in quiet until the riots which occurred in Paris in 1380, at the beginning of the reign of Charles VI., when the people rose up against the Jews, committing great outrages and demanding their expulsion. The sedition, however, was quelled, and the Jews protected until 1393, when, upon several charges preferred against them, they were enjoined to quit France, or else become Christians. The historian Mezeray says that some of them chose rather to quit their religion than the kingdom, but others sold their goods and retired. Thus it appears that the only expulsion of the Jews which could agree with Naudé's surmise was without the confiscation of their property, and, therefore, could not give Flamel the

opportunity alleged, if, indeed, it were reasonable to suppose that all the Parisian Israelites entrusted their affairs to a single person, when it does not appear that necessity required such an agency. There is, therefore, no reason to suppose that Flamel was enriched by the property of the Jews, or that those who owed them money compounded with Flamel, lest he should denounce them to the king.[17]

Thus the theories of hostile criticism break down before impartial examination, and to whatever source we may choose to ascribe the wealth of Nicholas Flamel, we have no reason to question his integrity, nor to deny the explanation of the alchemists, except upon the *à priori* ground of the impossibility of transmutation.

The divine gift which was so fortunate a possession to Flamel is supposed to have been a curse to his descendants. He is reported to have given some of the transmuting powder to M. Perrier, a nephew of Perrenelle. From him it descended to Dr Perrier, and was found among his effects at his death by his grandson, Dubois. The prudence and moderation that accompanied the gift to the Perriers was not found in Dubois. He exhibited the sacred miracle to improper persons, says an anonymous writer on alchemy, and was brought before Louis XIII., in whose presence he made gold of base metal, and this gold augmented its weight in the cupel. The consequence of this generosity was an infamous death. The vanity of Dubois was in proportion to his imprudence. He fancied that he could make or augment the powder, and promised to do so, but without success. It seems that he was, consequently, suspected of withholding the art from the king, a circumstance sufficient in politics to justify strong measures, lest the possessor of the sinews of war should go over to the enemy.

Whatever were the charges against Dubois, he was hanged, and his fate should be a proof, says the writer already quoted, that a science producing unbounded riches is the greatest misfortune to those who are unfitted and unprepared to manage the dangerous trust with discretion.

After the death of Flamel, many persons supposed that there must be doubtless some buried treasures in the house which he had inhabited during so many years, and in which all his Hermetical triumphs had been performed. This opinion existed in all its strength, at least in the mind of one individual, so late as the year 1576, when a stranger applied to the

Prévôt of Paris, and stated that he had been entrusted by a deceased friend with certain sums for the restoration of Flamel's house. As the building was exceedingly dilapidated, the magistrates availed themselves of the opportunity, and repairs were begun under the direction of delegates of the works of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie. The true object of the stranger soon became evident by the determination with which he sought to lay bare the whole foundations of the house, which was ransacked from top to bottom in search of the treasures it was supposed to conceal. No discoveries rewarded the zeal of the investigation, which ended in the sudden disappearance of the stranger, without paying for the operations which he had caused to be set on foot.

As a completion to the history of Flamel, it may be entertaining to quote an extraordinary account which is seriously narrated by Paul Lucas in his "Journey through Asia Minor."

"I was at Bronosa, in Natolia, and going to take the air with a person of distinction, came to a little mosque, which was adorned with gardens and fountains for a public walk; we were quickly introduced into a cloister, where we found four dervishes, who received us with all imaginable civility, and desired us to partake of what they were eating. We were told, what we soon found to be true, that they were all persons of the greatest worth and learning; one of them, who said he was of Usbec Tartary, appeared to be more accomplished than the rest, and I believe verily he spoke all the principal languages of the world. After we had conversed in Turkish, he asked me if I could speak Latin, Spanish, or Italian. I told him, if he pleased, to speak to me in Italian; but he soon discovered by my accent that it was not my mother-tongue, and asked me frankly what country I came from? As soon as he knew that I was a native of France, he spoke to me in as good French as if he had been brought up at Paris. 'How long, sir,' said I, 'did you stay in France?' He replied he had never been there, but that he had a great inclination to undertake the journey.

"I did all in my power to strengthen that resolution, and to convince him that France was the nursery of the learned, and its king a patron of the sciences, who defrayed the expense of my travels for collecting notices of antiquities, drawings of monuments, correcting maps, and making a collection of ancient coins, manuscripts, &c., all of which he seemed to approve civilly. Our conversation being ended, the dervishes

brought us to their house, at the foot of the mountain, where, having drank coffee, I took my leave, but with a promise, however, that I would shortly come and see them again.

“On the 10th, the dervish whom I took for an Usbec came to pay me a visit. I shewed him all the manuscripts I had bought, and he assured me they were very valuable, and written by great authors. He was a man every way extraordinary in learning; and in external appearance he seemed to be about thirty years old, but from his discourse I was persuaded he had lived a century.

“He told me he was one of seven friends, who travelled to perfect their studies, and, every twenty years, met in a place previously appointed. I perceived that Bronosa was the place of their present meeting, and that four of them had arrived. Religion and natural philosophy took up our thoughts by turns; and at last we fell upon chemistry, alchemy, and the Cabala. I told him all these, and especially the philosophers’ stone, were regarded by most men of sense as mere fictions.

“‘That,’ replied he, ‘should not surprise you; the sage hears the ignorant without being shocked, but does not for that reason sink his understanding to the same level. When I speak of a sage, I mean one who sees all things die and revive without concern: he has more riches in his power than the greatest king, but lives temperately, above the power of events.’

“Here I stopped him:—’With all these fine maxims, the sage dies as well as other people.’ ‘Alas!’ said he, ‘I perceive you are unacquainted with sublime science. Such a one as I describe dies indeed, for death is inevitable, but he does not die before the utmost limits of his mortal existence. Hereditary disease and weakness reduce the life of man, but the sage, by the use of the true medicine, can ward off whatever may hinder or impair the animal functions for a thousand years.’

“Surprised at all I heard, ‘And would you persuade me,’ said I, ‘that all who possessed the philosophers’ stone have lived a thousand years?’ He replied gravely:—’Without doubt every one might; it depends entirely on themselves.’ At last I took the liberty of naming the celebrated Flamel, who, it was said, possessed the philosophers’ stone, yet was certainly dead. He smiled at my simplicity, and asked with an air

of mirth:—’Do you really believe this? No, no, my friend, Flamel is still living; neither he nor his wife are dead. It is not above three years since I left both the one and the other in the Indies; he is one of my best friends.’ Whereupon he told me the history of Flamel, as he heard it from himself, the same as I had read in his book, until at last when Charles VI., who was then upon the throne, sent M. Cramoisi, a magistrate, and his master of requests, to enquire from Flamel the origin of his riches, when the latter at once saw the danger he was in. Having sent her into Switzerland to await his coming, he spread a report of his wife’s death, had her funeral celebrated, and in a few years ordered his own coffin to be interred. Since that time they have both lived a philosophic life, sometimes in one country, sometimes in another. This is the true history, and not that which is believed at Paris, where there are very few who ever had the least glimpse of true wisdom.’”

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According to the “Treasure of Philosophy,” alchemy as a science consists in the knowledge of the four elements of philosophers, which are not to be identified with the vulgar so-called elements, and which are convertible one into another. The true *prima materia* is mercury, prepared and congealed in the bowels of the earth by the mediation of the heat of sulphur. This is the sperm and semen of all metals, which, like other created things, are capable of a growth and multiplication that may be continued even to infinity. The first step in transmutation is the reduction of the metals worked upon into their first mercurial matter, and this reduction is the subject of the whole treatise.

It does not appear that the alchemical works attributed to Nicholas Flamel have added anything to our knowledge of chemistry. On the other hand, it is perfectly clear from his history that the physical object of Alchemy was the end which he kept in view, and that also which he is supposed to have attained.

Peter Bono

This adept, born in Lombardy, was an inhabitant of Pola, a seaport of Istria, where he affirms that he made the much desired transmuting metal of the sages, in the year 1330. He wrote and published a complete treatise on the art under the title *Margarita Pretiosa*. Lacinius, a monk of Calabria, has printed a faithful abridgment of it, which appeared at Venice in 1546. An *Introductio in Artem Divinam Alchimiæ*, 1602, and *De Secreto Omnium Secretorum*, Venet. 1546, are ascribed to this adept.

The first of these works is an exceedingly comprehensive, conscientious treatise on the history, the theory, and the practice of alchemy, written after the manner of the scholastics, and naturally containing much irrelevant matter, but for all this very useful and even interesting. The difficulties of the art are manfully faced, the sophistications, deceptions, and contradictions of its professors are reproved, and the author attempts to show that alchemy is in reality a short art and a slight practice, though full of truth and nobility. His other opinions are also of a revolutionary character.

Johannes De Rupecissa

This writer is considered one of the most remarkable of the Hermetic philosophers. He abounds with prophetic passages, and denounces the fate of nations, but in his alchemical explanation of things physical is obscure even for an adept. Nothing is known of his life,[18] beyond the nobility of his origin and his imprisonment in 1357, by Pope Innocent VI., whom he had reprehended. The illustrious Montfauçon was one of his descendants, and he poses as an initiate of the secret chemistry in the following works:—”The Book of Light,” “The Five Essences,” *Cœlum Philosophorum*, and his most celebrated treatise *De Confectione Lapidis*. There he declares that the matter of the philosophical stone is a viscous water which is to be found everywhere, but if the stone itself should be openly named, the whole world would be revolutionised. The divine science possessed by the wise is somewhat poetically celebrated as an incomparable treasure. Its initiates are enriched with an infinite wealth beyond all the kings of the earth; they are just before God and men, and in enjoyment of the special favour of Heaven.

Basil Valentine

One of the most illustrious of the adept philosophers is unquestionably Basilius Valentinus, born at Mayence, and made prior of St Peter's at Erfurt in 1414. His name was supposed to be fictitious and adopted for the purpose of concealing some accomplished artist, but the history of the city of Erfurt, published by J. M. Gudemus assures us of the existence and name of the philosopher, on the authority of the public records, and shows us that in 1413 he was an inmate of the monastic house already mentioned, and that he distinguished himself by a profound knowledge of nature.[19] As the work of Gudemus was printed in 1675, the veracity of the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Occultes*, written in the interests of religion and for the blackening of the secret sciences, may be judged by the following passage:—"His life is so mixed up with fables that some have disbelieved in his existence. He is represented flourishing in the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries; it is even added, *without the smallest proof*, that he was a benedictine at Erfurt."

According to Olaus Borrichius, he enclosed his writings in one of the pillars of the abbey church; they remained for many years in this hiding-place, but were at length discovered by the fortunate violence of a thunderbolt. He was the first who introduced antimony into medicine, and it is said that he originally tried the effects of antimonial medicines upon the monks of his convent, upon whom they acted with such undue violence "that he was induced to distinguish the mineral from which these medicines had been extracted by the name of *antimoine*—hostile to monks." But Thomson, who relates this anecdote in his "History of Chemistry," shows the improbability of it, for the works of Basil Valentine, and in particular his *Currus Triumphalis Antimonii*, were written in the German language. Now the German name for antimony is *speissglas* and not antimoine, which is French.

Basil Valentine denounces the physicians of his time with the fury of Paracelsus. The most ancient systems of chemical philosophy are preserved in his experiments. He exalts antimony as an excellent medicine for those who are acquainted with alchemical secrets. To others it is a poison of the most powerful nature.

No further particulars of the life of Basil Valentine have descended to posterity. Numerous works have been printed in his name, and the authenticity of several is questionable. He wrote in high Dutch, and comparatively few of his treatises have been translated into other languages. The best are as follows:—1. *De Microcosmo deque Magno Mundi Mysterio et Medecina Hominis*, Marpurg, 1609, 8vo; 2. *Azoth, sive Aurelia Philosophorum*, Francfurt, 1613, 4to; 3. *Practica, unà cum duodecim Clavibus et Appendice*, Francfurt, 1611, 4to; 4. *Apocalypsis Chymica*, Erfurt, 1624, 8vo; 5. *Manifestatio Artificiorum*, Erfurt, 1624, 8vo; 6. *Currus Triumphalis Antimonii*, Lipsiæ, 1624, 8vo; 7. *Tractatus Chimico-Philosophicus de Rebus Naturalibus et Prœternaturalibus metallorum et mineralium*, Francfurt, 1676, 8vo; 8. *Haliographia, de præparatione, usu, ac virtutibus omnium Salium Mineralium, Animalium, ac Vegetabilium, ex manuscriptis Basilii Valentini collecta ab Ant. Salmincio*, Bologna, 1644, 8vo.

Every letter and syllable of the “Triumphal Chariot of Antimony” is declared to have its special significance. “Even to the pointes and prickes” it bristles with divine meanings and mysteries. The metrical treatise on the first matter of the philosophers declares that this stone is composed of white and red, that it is a stone, and yet scarcely a stone; one nature operates therein. Those who desire to attain it, Basil elsewhere informs us, must labour in much prayer, confess their sins, and do good. Many are called, but few chosen to this supreme knowledge. The study of the works of the philosophers and practical experiment are both recommended. There is much in the writings of Basil, in his suggestive if impenetrable allegories, in his curious Kabbalistical symbols, and in his earnest spirituality, to suggest a psychic interpretation of his aims and his principles. This is particularly noticeable in the “Triumphal Chariot of Antimony,” and yet it is clear from this remarkable work, which is the masterpiece of its author, that Basil Valentine was one of the most illustrious physical chemists of his age. He was the first to describe the extraction of antimony from the

sulphuret, though it does not appear that he was the inventor of this process. Previous to his investigations the properties of antimony were almost unknown. He was also acquainted with the method of obtaining chlorohydric acid from sea-salt and sulphuric acid, with the method of obtaining brandy by the distillation of beer and wine, and the rectification of the result by means of carbonate of potassium, and with many other operations which eminently assisted the progress of chemistry.

Isaac Of Holland

Contemporary with Basilius Valentinus were Isaac the Hollander and his son, who are supposed to have worked with success. They were the first alchemists of Holland, and their operations were highly esteemed by Paracelsus, Boyle, and Kunckel. In practical chemistry they followed the traditions of Geber, and their alchemical experiments are the most plain and explicit in the whole range of Hermetic literature. They worked principally in metals, describing minutely the particulars of every process. Their lives are almost unknown. “Buried in the obscurity necessary to adepts, they were occupied in the practice of the Hermetic science, and their study or laboratory was the daily scene of their industrious existence.”[20]

They are placed in the fifteenth century by conjecture, from the fact that they do not cite any philosophers subsequent to that period. They speak of Geber, Dastin, Morien, and Arnold, but not of more modern authorities, while, on the other hand, their references to aquafortis and aqua-regiæ, which were discovered in the fourteenth century, prevent us from assigning their labours to an anterior epoch.

The two Isaacs were particularly skilful in the manufacture of enamels and of artificial gem-stones. They taught that the Grand Magisterium could convert a million times its own weight into gold, and declared that any person taking weekly a small portion of the philosophical stone will be ever preserved in perfect health, and his life will be prolonged to the very last hour which God has assigned to him.

The *Opera Mineralia Joannis Isaaci Hollandi, sive de Lapide Philosophico* is a long and elaborate treatise on the one method of exalting the dead and impure metals into true *Sol* and *Luna*. The first matter is said to be Saturn, or lead, and the vessels in which it is to be calcined and otherwise adapted to the purposes of aurific art, are plainly figured in illustrations introduced into the text.

Bernard Trévisan

Bernard Compte de la Marche Trévisane is accredited by the popular legends of France with the powers of a sorcerer in possession of a devil's bird or familiar spirit; nevertheless, he is called "the good," and enjoyed a particular reputation for benevolence.

Descendant of a distinguished Paduan family, Bernard Trévisan began to study the time-honoured science of alchemy about the time that Basil in Germany, and the two Isaacs in Holland were prosecuting their labours with supposed success. His father was a physician of Padua, where he himself was born in the year 1406. The account of his alchemical errors must rank among the most curious anecdotes in the annals of occult chemistry.

At the age of fourteen years, under the auspices of a grandfather, and with the full consent of his family, he devoted his attention to alchemy, which henceforth was the absorbing occupation of his life. Seeking initiation into the first principles of the art, he began by the study of Geber and Rhasis, believing they would supply him with a method of multiplying his patrimony a hundred fold. The experiments which he undertook during his costly tuition by these oracular masters resulted in the futile dissipation of eight hundred, or, according to another account, of three thousand crowns. He was surrounded by pretended philosophers, who, finding him wealthy and eager in the penetration of tantalising mysteries, proffered the secrets which they neither possessed nor understood, obtaining a fraudulent subsistence at the expense of the boy alchemist.

Disappointed, but not discouraged, he dismissed these impostors at length, and devoted his concentrated attention to the works of Rupecissa and Archelaus Sacrobosco, whom he literally followed for a time in all his practical operations. Hoping to profit by the help of a prudent companion, he associated himself with a good monk with whom he

experimented in concert for the space of three years. They rectified spirits of wine more than thirty times “till they could not find glasses strong enough to hold it.” These operations cost nearly three hundred crowns.

For fifteen years he continued his preliminary experiences, and at the end of that time he had purchased a perfect knowledge of all the highways and byways of alchemical rogueries, and was intimately acquainted with an enormous variety of substances, mineral, metallic, and otherwise, which did not apparently enter into the composition of the stone philosophical. He calculates the cost of these experiences to have been roughly six thousand crowns. He had laboured in vain to congeal, dissolve, and sublime common salt, sal ammoniac, every variety of alum, and copperas. He even proceeded upon ordure, both of man and beasts, by distillation, circulation, and sublimation. These experiments, based on the literal interpretation of the allegories of the *turba philosophorum*, again resulted in failure, and at last discouraged beyond words at the loss of his time and his fortune, he betook himself to prayer, hoping to discover the aim of the alchemists by the grace and favour of God. In conjunction with a magistrate of his country, he subsequently endeavoured to compose the philosophical stone with sea salt as the chief ingredient. He rectified it fifteen times during the space of a year and a half without finding any alteration in its nature, whereupon he abandoned the process for another proposed by the magistrate, namely, the dissolution of silver and mercury by means of aquafortis. These dissolutions, undertaken separately, were left to themselves for a year, and then combined and concentrated over hot ashes to reduce their original volume to two-thirds. The residuum of this operation, placed in a narrow crucible, was exposed to the action of the solar rays, and afterwards to the air, in the hopes that it would crystallize. Twenty-two phials were filled with the mixture, and five years were devoted to the whole operation, but at the end of that period no crystallization had taken place, and thus was this operation abandoned, like the rest, as a failure.

Bernard Trévisan was now forty-six years old, and at the end of his experimental resources he determined to travel in search of true alchemists. In this manner he met with a monk of Citeaux, Maître Geofroi de Lemorier, who was in possession of a hitherto unheard of process. They purchased two thousand hens’ eggs, hardened them in

boiling water, and removed the shells, which they calcined in a fire. They separated the whites from the yolks, which they putrified in horse manure. The result was distilled thirty several times for the extraction of a white and red water. These operations were continually repeated with many variations, and vainly occupied eight years more of the toil-worn seeker's life.

Disappointed, disheartened, but still pertinaciously adhering to his search after the Grand Secret, Trévisan now set to work with a protonotary of Bruges, whom he describes as a great theologian, and who pretended to extract the stone from sulphate of iron (copperas) by distillation with vinegar. They began by calcining the sulphate for three months, when it was soaked in the vinegar, which had been eight times distilled. The mixture was placed in an alembic, and distilled fifteen times daily for a year, at the end of which the seeker was rewarded by a quartan fever which consumed him for fourteen months, and which almost cost him his life.

He was scarcely restored to health when he heard from a clerk that Maître Henry, the confessor of the German Emperor, Frederick III., was in possession of the philosophical stone. He immediately set out for Germany, accompanied by some baffled sons of Hermes like himself. They contrived, *par grands moyens et grands amis*, to be introduced to the confessor, and began to work in conjunction with him. Bernard contributed ten marks of silver, and the others thirty-two, for the indispensable expenses of the process, which consisted in the combination of mercury, silver, oil of olives, and sulphur. The whole was dissolved over a moderate fire, and continually stirred. In two months it was placed in a glass phial, which they covered with clay, and afterwards with hot ashes. Lead, dissolved in a crucible, was added after three weeks, and the product of this fusion was subjected to refinement. At the end of these operations the imperial confessor expected that the silver which had entered into the combination would be augmented at least by a third, but, on the contrary, it was reduced to a fourth.

Bernard Trévisan in utter despair determined to abandon all further experiments. The resolution was applauded by his family, but in two months the Circean power of the secret chemistry had asserted its former dominion over the whole being of its martyr, who, in a fever of eagerness, recommenced his travels, and visited Spain, Italy, England,

Scotland, Holland, Germany, and France. Then, anxious to drink at the oriental fountains of alchemy, he spent several years in Egypt, Persia, and Palestine, after which he passed into southern Greece, visiting remote convents and experimenting in conjunction with monks of reputation in the science. In every country he found there were alchemists at work, but of those who were successful he could hear no account. The true philosophers declined to make themselves known, while impostors, in search of the credulous, presented themselves on all sides. Bernard expended in these travels, and in false operations connected with them, about thirteen thousand crowns, and was forced to sell an estate which yielded eight thousand German florins per annum. He was now sixty-two years of age, and as he had been deaf to the remonstrances of his family, he saw himself despised and on the threshold of want and misery. He endeavoured to conceal his poverty, and fixed on the Isle of Rhodes, wherein to live entirely unknown. Now, at Rhodes he became acquainted with *un grand clerc et religieux*, who was addicted to philosophy, and commonly reported to be enjoying the philosophical stone. He managed to borrow eight thousand florins, and laboured with this monk in the dissolution of gold, silver, and corrosive sublimate; he accomplished so much in the space of three years that he expended the funds he had raised, and was again at the end of his resources. Thus, effectually prevented from continuing the practice, he returned to the study of the philosophers, and after eight years, at the age of seventy-three, he professes to have discovered their secret. By comparing the adepts and examining in what things they agree, and in what they differ, he judged that the truth must lie in those maxims wherein they were practically unanimous. He informs us that it was two years before he put his discovery to the test; it was crowned with success, and notwithstanding the infirmities of old age, he lived for some time in the enjoyment of his tardy reward.

The chief work of Trévisan is *La Philosophie Naturelle des Métaux*. He insists on the necessity of strong and discreet meditation in all students of Hermetic philosophy. Their operations must wait on nature, and not nature on their arbitrary processes. Mercury is said to be the water of metals, “in which, by a mutual alteration, it assumes in a convertible manner their mutations.” Gold is simply quicksilver coagulated by the power of sulphur. The secret of dissolution is the whole mystery of the art, and it is to be accomplished not by means of

fire, as some have supposed, but, with the help of mercury, in an abstruse manner, which is not really indicated by the adept. The work of nature is assisted by alchemy, which mingles ripe gold with quicksilver, the gold comprising in itself a well-digested sulphur, by which it matures the mercury to the “anatide proportion” of gold, subtilising the elements and wonderfully abbreviating the natural process for producing the precious metal of the mines.

John Fontaine

The life of this artist is buried in the obscurity of his closet or laboratory, where he divided his time between attention to his furnaces and the composition of curious verses. He was alive at Valenciennes in the year 1413. His Hermetic poem, *Aux Amoureux de Science*, has been printed several times. The author announces that he is an adept, and describes in an allegorical manner, after the fashion of the “Romance of the Rose,” and in the same quaint and beautiful tongue, the different processes which enter into the art of transmutation. His little work may be profitably studied by the neophytes of practical alchemy, though its benefits are of a negative kind, but its paradise of dainty devices and its old world nature pictures are better suited to the poet and the poetic interpretation of symbols.

Thomas Norton

The scientific methods of Ripley were followed by this alchemist, who was born in the city of Bristol. He wrote anonymously, but the initial syllables in the six first lines, and the first line in the seventh chapter of his “Ordinall of Alchemy,” compose the following couplet:—

“Thomas Norton of Briseto,

A parfet master you may him trow.”

At the age of twenty-eight, and in the brief space of forty days, he is recorded to have mastered “the perfection of chymistry,” obtaining his knowledge from a contemporary adept, who appears to have been Ripley himself. He describes his initiator as a person of noble mind, worthy of all praise, loving justice, detesting fraud, reserved when surrounded by a talkative company, quite unassuming, and if ever the conversation turned upon the Great Art, preserving complete silence. For a long time Norton sought him in vain; the adept proved him by various trials, but when he was satisfied of his disposition, manners, and habits, as well as of his strength of mind, his love yielded to the fidelity and perseverance of his postulant, and in answer to one of his letters he addressed him as follows:—

“My trusty and well-beloved Brother,—I shall not any longer delay; the time is come; you shall receive this grace. Your honest desire and approved virtue, your love of truth, wisdom, and long perseverance, shall accomplish your sorrowful desires.

“It is necessary that, as soon as convenient, we speak together face to face, lest I should by writing betray my trust. I will make you my heir and brother in this art, as I am setting out to travel in foreign countries. Give thanks to God, Who, next to His spiritual servants, honours the sons of this sacred science.”

Norton lost no time in undertaking a journey to his instructor, and rode upwards of a hundred miles on horseback to reach the abode of the adept. During the forty days already mentioned he received the advice and directions of his friend. He was already to a great extent prepared for initiation by a long course of natural philosophy, as well as by the study of the occult and curious sciences. The “disclosure of the bonds of nature” took place, and he became convinced of the truth and certainty of the art by the rationality of its theorems. He felt confident of success in the practice, but the adept, on account of his youth, refused to instruct him in the process from the white to the red powder, lest the divine gift should be misused in a moment of passion. In due time, and after further proofs of his capacity and integrity, he would communicate the work of the medicinal stone. This, the supreme desire of the neophyte, was afterwards accomplished.

The chemical operations of Norton were destined, however, to meet with two signal disappointments. He had almost perfected the tincture, when his own servant, who was employed in the care of the furnace, believing that the prize was complete, carried it away. He again undertook the process and succeeded in making the elixir, but he complains that it was stolen by the wife of a merchant, said to be William Canning, Mayor of Bristol, who suddenly started into great wealth, and who built the splendid and lofty steeple of St Mary’s, Radcliffe, besides enlarging Westbury College.

It is doubtful whether Thomas Norton ever enjoyed the fruits of his supposed knowledge. He does not speak of his own transmutations, and if he is called by one of his contemporaries *alchemista suo tempore peritissimus*, by others he is termed *Nugarum opifex in frivola scientia*. The latter declare that he undid himself by his labours, and that all his friends who trusted him with their money were as much ruined as himself. According to Fuller, he lived and died very poor; nevertheless his family appears to have been held in high repute under King Henry VIII. There were nine brothers of the name of Norton. One anonymous writer asserts that they were all of them knights. The tomb of Sampson Norton, master of the king’s ordnance, and buried in Fulham Church, was adorned with Hermetic paintings, according to one account, but Faulkner, in his historical account of Fulham, describes it as a rich

Gothic monument, ornamented with foliage and oak-leaves, and bearing an obliterated inscription.

Thomas Norton died in 1477. His grandson Samuel followed in his steps as an alchemist, and was the author of several Hermetic treatises, which are not very highly esteemed.

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“The Ordinal of Alchemy” testifies that the stone is one. In appearance it is a subtle earth, brown, and opaque; it stands the fire, and is considered to be of no value. There is also another and glorious stone, which is termed the philosophical magnesia. Alchemy is a wonderful science, a secret philosophy, a singular grace and free gift of the Almighty, which was never discovered by independent human labour, but only by revelation or the instruction of one of the adepts.

“It helpeth a man when he hath neede,

It voideth vaine Glory, Hope, and also Dreade:

It voideth Ambitiousnesse, Extorcion, and Excesse,

It fenceth Adversity that shee doe not oppresse.

He that thereof hath his full intent,

Forsaketh Extremities, with Measure is content.”

A certain mineral virtue is said to be the efficient cause in the production of metals in the bowels of the earth; it is in correspondence with the virtues of the celestial spheres. The red stone lengthens life, but it is vain to seek it till after the confection of the white.

Thomas Dalton

The only account of this English adept is preserved by Thomas Norton. He was alive in the year 1450, and is described as a religious man, who enjoyed a good reputation till, upon suspicion that he had a large mass of transmuting powder, he was taken from his abbey in Gloucestershire by Thomas Herbert, one of the squires of King Edward, and being brought into the royal presence he was confronted by Debois, another of the king's squires, to whom Dalton was formerly a chaplain. Debois alleged that Dalton, in less than twelve hours, made him a thousand pounds of good gold, and he attested the fact upon oath. Then Dalton, looking at Debois, said, "Sir, you are forsworn." Debois acknowledged that he had vowed never to reveal the benefit which he had received, but for the king's sake and the good of the commonwealth he ought not to keep his oath. Dalton now addressed the king, and informed him that he had received the powder of projection from a canon of Lichfield, on condition that he forbore to make use of it till after the death of the donor. Since that event he had been in so much danger and disquietude on account of its possession that he had destroyed it in secret. The king dismissed Dalton, giving him four marks for his travelling expenses; but Herbert lay in wait for him brought him from Stepney, and thence conveyed him to the castle of Gloucester, where every means were vainly tried to induce him to make the philosophers' tincture.

After four years' imprisonment, Dalton was brought out to be beheaded in the presence of Herbert. He obeyed with resignation and joy, saying: "Blessed art thou, Lord Jesus! I have been too long from you; the science you gave me I have kept without abusing it; I have found no one apt to be my heir, wherefore, sweet Lord, I will render Thy gift to Thee again."

Then, after some devout prayer, with a smiling countenance he desired the executioner to proceed. Tears gushed from the eyes of

Herbert when he beheld him so willing to die, and saw that no ingenuity could wrest his secret from him. He gave orders for his release. His imprisonment and threatened execution were contrived without the king's knowledge to intimidate him into compliance. The iniquitous devices having failed, Herbert did not dare to take away his life. Dalton rose from the block with a heavy countenance and returned to his abbey, much grieved at the further prolongation of his earthly sojourn. Herbert died shortly after this atrocious act of tyranny, and Debois also came to an untimely end. His father, Sir John Debois, was slain at the battle of Tewksbury, May 4, 1471, and two days after, as recorded in Stow's *Annales*, he himself, James Debois, was taken, with several others of the Lancastrian party, from a church where they had fled for sanctuary, and was beheaded on the spot.[21]

Sir George Ripley

This illustrious alchemical philosopher, whose works paved the royal road to the initiation, in after times, of his still more illustrious pupil, the sublime and mysterious Philalethes, entered, at an early age, among the regular canons of Bridlington, in the diocese of York. The tranquillity of monastic life afforded him a favourable opportunity for the study of the great masters in transcendental chemistry, but he found himself notwithstanding incompetent for their full comprehension, and in considerable consequent disappointment he determined to travel, persuading himself that he should discover in the conversations of philosophers what he could not glean from books.

In Italy, Germany, and France he became acquainted with various men of learning, and was present at a transmutation which was performed in Rome. He proceeded afterwards to the island of Rhodes, where a document is supposed to exist testifying that he gave £100,000 to the Knights of St John of Jerusalem. He was dignified by the Pope, which fact, on his return to Bridlington, excited the jealousy of his brethren, and in consequence of their hostility he entered the Carmelite order at Butolph, in Lincolnshire, and, by an indulgence from Innocent VIII., had permission to live in solitude, exempt from cloistral observances, and in his now uninterrupted leisure he wrote twenty-four books, some scientific, and others on devout subjects. The “Twelve Gates of Alchemy” he composed in 1471, and he declares that any of his experiments recorded from 1450 to 1470 should be entirely discredited, as he wrote them from theory, and found afterwards by practice that they were untrue. Hence it may be concluded that he employed twenty years in mastering the secrets of the science. He died at Butolph in 1490.

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“The Twelve Gates of Alchemy” describe the stone as a triune microcosm, whence Ripley has been cited as an adept of the spiritual

chemistry. He insists upon the necessity of proportion in its composition, and declares that the principle, or *prima materia*, may be found everywhere. It flies with fowls in the air, swims with fishes in the sea, it may be discerned by the reason of angels, and it governs man and woman. An astronomical year is required for the manufacture of the stone.

Picus De Mirandola

John Picus, Earl of Mirandola, was born on the 24th February 1463. He is equally celebrated for his precocity, the extent of his learning, his prodigious memory, and his penetrating intellect. As the pupil of Jochanum, a Jew, he became early initiated in the Kabbalistic interpretation of Scripture, and at the age of twenty-four years he published nine hundred propositions in logic, mathematics, physics, divinity, and Kabbalism, collected from Greek, Latin, Jewish, and Arabian writers. In his treatise *De Auro*, he records his conviction of the success of Hermetic operations, and gives us the following narrations:—

"I come now to declare that which I have beheld of this prodigy, without veil or obscurity. One of my friends, who is still living, has made gold and silver over sixty times in my presence. I have seen it performed in divers manners, but the expense of making the silver with a metallic water exceeded the produce."

In another place he tells us that "a good man who had not a sufficiency to support his family, was reduced to the last extremity of distress; with an agitated mind he went one night to sleep, and in a dream he beheld a blessed angel, who, by means of enigmas, instructed him in the method of making gold, and indicated to him, at the same time, the water he should use to ensure success. At his awaking he proceeded to work with this water, and made gold, truly in small quantity, yet sufficient to support his family. Twice he made gold of iron and four times of orpiment. He convinced me by the evidence of my own eyes that the art of transmutation is no fiction."

Paracelsus

Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim was born in the year 1493, at Maria Einsiedeln, in the canton of Zurich, in Switzerland. He was descended from the ancient and honourable family of Bombast, which had abode during many generations at the castle of Hohenheim near Stuttgart, Würtemberg. His father was a physician of repute, and in possession of a large collection of curious books. His mother had been the matron of a hospital, and Theophrastus, their only child, was born one year after their marriage. He is said to have been emasculated in his infancy, a tradition which may have been invented to account for his beardless and feminine appearance, and for his hatred of women.

Paracelsus received the first rudiments of education from his father, and, as he advanced in his studies and capacity, he was instructed in alchemy, surgery, and medicine. One of the works of Isaac Holland fell into his hands, and from that moment he was inflamed with the ambition of curing diseases by medicine superior to the *materia* at that time in use. He performed several chemical operations, according to the books of the celebrated Hollander, and adopted from his writings the ancient principles that a salt, mercury, and sulphur form a trinity in every substance. This system he enlarged and explained by his own intellectual illumination. He imbibed much of his father's extensive learning, and then continued his studies under the guidance of monks in the convent of St Andrew of Savon, afterwards at the University of Basel, and finally devoted himself to the occult sciences with the illustrious Johann Trithemius, Abbot of Spanheim, for his teacher and director. In this way he acquired "the Kabbalah of the spiritual, astral, and material worlds." He was afterwards placed under the care of Sigismond Hagger or Fagger, to be improved in medicine, surgery, and chemistry. At twenty years of age he started on his travels through Germany, Hungary, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. In Muscovy he is said to

have been taken prisoner by the Tartars, who brought him before “the great Cham.” His knowledge of medicine and chemistry made him a favourite at the court of this potentate, who sent him in company with his son on an embassy to Constantinople. It was here, according to Helmont, that he was taught the supreme secret of alchemistry by a generous Arabian, who gave him the universal dissolvent, the Azoth of western adepts, the alcahest or sophic fire. Thus initiated, he is said to have proceeded to India. On his return to Europe he passed along the Danube into Italy, where he served as an army surgeon, performing many wonderful cures.

At the age of thirty-two he re-entered Germany, and was soon after invited to take a professorship of physic, medicine, and surgery at the University of Basel, then illuminated by the presence of Erasmus and Oporinus. There, in his lectures, he professed “internal medicine,” denounced the antiquated systems of Galen and other authorities, and began his instruction by burning the works of these masters in a brass pan with sulphur and nitre. He created innumerable enemies by his arrogance and his innovations, but the value of his mineral medicines was proved by the cures which he performed. These cures only increased the hatred of his persecutors, and Paracelsus with characteristic defiance invited the faculty to a lecture, in which he promised to teach the greatest secret in medicine. He began by uncovering a dish which contained excrement. The doctors, indignant at the insult, departed precipitately, Paracelsus shouting after them:—”If you will not hear the mysteries of putrefactive fermentation, you are unworthy of the name of physicians.” Subsequently, he came into conflict with the municipal authorities, and was forced to flee from Basel. He resumed his strolling life, lodging at public inns, drinking to excess, but still performing admirable cures. Oporinus testifies that even during the period of his professorship he never seemed sober.

In 1528, Paracelsus proceeded to Colmar. In 1530 he was staying at Nuremberg, where the faculty denounced him as an impostor, but he transfixed his opponents by curing in a few days some desperate cases of elephantiasis. “Testimonials to this effect,” says Hartmann, his latest biographer, “may still be found in the archives of the city of Nuremberg.” He continued his wanderings and his intemperate manner of life, dying on the 24th of September 1541.

The actual manner of his death has been variously recounted. The original “Lives of Alchemysticall Philosophers” says that it occurred on a bench of the kitchen fire of the inn at Strasburg. Dr Hartmann, on the other hand, tells us that he “went to Maehren, Kaernthen, Krain, and Hongary, and finally landed in Salzburg, to which place he was invited by the Prince Palatine, Duke Ernst of Bavaria, who was a great lover of the secret arts. In that place, Paracelsus obtained at last the fruits of his long labours and of a wide-spread fame. But he was not destined to enjoy a long time the rest he so richly deserved…. He died, after a short sickness (at the age of forty-eight years and three days), in a small room of the ‘White Horse’ Inn, near the quay, and his body was buried in the graveyard of St Sebastian.” His death is supposed to have been hastened by a scuffle with assassins in the pay of the orthodox medical faculty.

The last commentator on Paracelsus, Dr Franz Hartmann, has devoted a chapter to the alchemical and astrological teachings of the seer of Hohenheim. The first art, according to Paracelsus, separates the pure from the impure, and develops species out of primordial matter. It perfects what Nature has left imperfect, and, therefore, its principles are of universal application, and are not restricted to the metallic and mineral kingdoms. Gold can be made by physical chemistry, but the process is poor and unproductive in comparison with the gold which can be produced by an exercise of the occult powers which exist in the soul of man. Actual and material gold can be psycho-chemically manufactured. By this amazing theory, Paracelsus created a new school of alchemy, which abandoned experimental research, and sought within themselves the secret, subject, and end of alchemystical philosophy.

Denis Zachaire

It appears that the true name of this persevering and indefatigable seeker after the end and truth of alchemy has not in reality come down to us, that which is placed at the head of his *Opusculum Chimicum* being simply pseudonymous. It is to this little work that we are indebted for one of the most singular histories in the annals of the Hermetic art.

Denis Zachaire was born of a noble family, in an unmentioned part of Guienne, during the year 1510. He was sent, as a youth, to Bordeaux, under the care of a tutor, to prosecute the study of philosophy and *belles lettres*. His preceptor, however, had a passion for alchemy, and inoculated his pupil with the fatal fever of the sages. They speedily abandoned the common academical courses for the thorny pathways of the *magnum opus*, and Denis, in particular, devoted himself to the assiduous compilation of a vast volume of Hermetic receipts, indicating a thousand processes, with a thousand various materials, for the successful manufacture of gold. From Bordeaux he proceeded to Toulouse, still in the society of his tutor, and for the ostensible study of law, but in reality for the experimental practice of alchemy. Two hundred crowns with which they were supplied for their maintenance during the next two years were speedily expended in the purchase of furnaces, instruments, and drugs, for the literal execution of the processes contained in the books of the adepts.

“Before the end of the year,” as he himself informs us, “my two hundred crowns were gone in smoke, and my tutor died of a fever he took in summer from his close attention to the furnace, which he erected in his chamber, and stayed there continually in extreme heat. His death afflicted me much, and still more as my parents refused to supply me with money, except what was just necessary for my support. I was therefore unable to proceed in my grand work.

“To overcome these difficulties I went home in 1535, being of age, to put myself out of guardianship; and I disposed of some of my property for four hundred crowns. This sum was necessary to execute a process which was given me in Toulouse, by an Italian, who said he saw it proved. I kept him living with me, to see the end of his process.

“We dissolved gold and silver in various sorts of strong waters, but it was all in vain; we did not recover from the solution one half of the gold and silver which we had put into it. My four hundred crowns were reduced to two hundred and thirty, of which I gave twenty to the Italian, to proceed to Milan, where, he said, the author of the process lived, and whence he would return with his explanations. I remained at Toulouse all the winter, awaiting him, and I might have tarried there still, as I never have heard of him since.

“In the ensuing summer the city being visited by the plague, I went to Cahors, and there continued for six months. I did not lose sight of my work, and became acquainted with an old man who was called the philosopher, a name given in the country to any one of superior information. I communicated to him my practices and asked his advice. He mentioned ten or twelve processes which he thought better than others. I returned to Toulouse when the plague ceased, and renewed my labours accordingly. The only consequence was that my money was all spent, except one hundred and seventy crowns. To continue my operations with more certainty, I made acquaintance with an abbé, who dwelt in the neighbourhood of this city. He was taken with a passion for the same pursuit as myself, and he informed me that one of his friends, who lived with Cardinal Armanac, had sent him a process from Rome which he believed genuine, but it would cost two hundred crowns. I agreed to furnish one half of this sum, and he gave the rest, so we began to work together. Our process required a large supply of spirits of wine. I purchased a cask of excellent wine, from which I drew the spirit and rectified it many times. We took two pounds weight of it and half a pound weight of gold, which we had calcined for a month. These were included in a pelican and placed in a furnace. This work lasted a year, but, not to remain idle, we made some other experiments to amuse ourselves, and from which we expected to draw sufficient profit to pay the cost of our great work.

“The year 1537 passed over without any change appearing in the subject of our labours. We might have remained through our whole lives in the same state, for we should have known that the perfect metals are unaltered by vegetable or animal substances. We took out our powder and made projection upon hot quicksilver, but it was in vain! Judge then of our grief, especially as the abbé had notified to all his monks that they would have to melt the lead cistern of their house in order that he might convert it into gold as soon as our operations were finished.

“My bad success could not make me desist. I again raised four hundred crowns on my property; the abbé did the same, and I set out for Paris, a city containing more alchemists than any other in the world. I resolved to remain there as long as the eight hundred crowns lasted, or until I succeeded in my object. This journey drew on me the displeasure of my relations, and the censure of my friends, who imagined I was a studious lawyer. However, I made them believe that the design of my sojourn in Paris was the purchase of a situation in the law courts.

“After travelling for fifteen days I arrived at Paris in January 1539. I remained a month almost unknown, but no sooner had I visited the furnace makers and conversed with some amateurs than I became acquainted with more than a hundred artists, who were all at work in different ways. Some laboured to extract the mercury of metals and afterwards to fix it. A variety of systems were held by others, and scarcely a day passed in which some of them did not visit me, even on Sundays and the most sacred festivals of the Church, to hear what I had done.

“In these conversations one said:—’If I had the means to begin again, I should produce something good.’ Another—’Would that my vessel had been strong enough to resist the force of what it contained.’ Another—’If I had possessed a round copper vessel well closed, I would have fixed mercury with silver.’ There was not one without a reasonable excuse for his failure, but I was deaf to all their discourses, recollecting my experience as the dupe of similar expectations.

“I was tempted, nevertheless, by a Greek who had a process with cinnabar, which failed. At the same time I became acquainted with a strange gentleman, newly arrived, who often, in my presence, sold the fruit of his operations to the goldsmiths. I was a long time frequenting

his company, but he did not consent to inform me of his secret. At last I prevailed over him, but it was only a refinement of metals more ingenious than the rest. I failed not to write to the abbé, at Toulouse, enclosing a copy of the process of the stranger, and imagining that I had attained some useful knowledge, he advised me to remain another year at Paris, since I had made so good a beginning.

“After all, as to the philosophers’ stone, I succeeded no better than before. I had been three years at Paris, and my money was nearly expended, when I had a letter from the abbé, informing me that he had something to communicate, and that I should join him as soon as possible.

“On my arrival at Toulouse, I found that he had a letter from King Henry of Navarre, who was a lover of philosophy, and who requested that I should proceed to Pau, in Berne, to teach him the secret I had received from the stranger at Paris. He would recompense me with three or four thousand crowns. The mention of this sum exhilarated the abbé, and he never let me rest till I set out to wait on the prince. I arrived at Pau in May 1542. I found the prince a very curious personage. By his command I went to work, and succeeded according to the process I knew. When it was finished I obtained the expected recompense, but although the king wished to serve me further, he was dissuaded by the lords of his court, even by those who had engaged me to come to him. He dismissed me with great acknowledgments, desiring me to see if there was anything in his estates which would gratify me, such as confiscations or the like, and that he would give them to me with pleasure. These promises, which meant nothing, did not lead me to entertain the hopes of a courtier, and I returned to the abbé at Toulouse.

“On my road I heard of a religious man, who was very skilful in natural philosophy. I went to visit him; he lamented my misfortunes, and said, with a friendly zeal, that he advised me to amuse myself no longer with these various particular operations, which were all false and sophistical, but that I should rather peruse *the best books of the ancient philosophers*, as well to know *the true matter* as the *right order that should be pursued* in the practice of this science.

“I felt the truth of this safe counsel, but before I put it in execution, I went to see my friend at Toulouse, to give him an account of the eight

hundred crowns that we had put in common, and to divide with him the recompense I had received from the King of Navarre. If he proved not content with all I told him, he was still less so at the resolution I had taken to discontinue my operations. Of our eight hundred crowns, we had but eighty-six left. I departed from him, and returned home, intending to go to Paris, and there remain until I was fixed in my theory of reading the works of the adepts. I reached Paris in 1546, and remained there a year, assiduously studying the *Turba Philosophorum*, the good Trévisan, the "Remonstrance of Nature," and some other of the best books. But as I had no *first principles*, I knew not on what to determine.

"At length I went out of my solitude, not to see my old acquaintances, the searchers after particular tinctures and minor works, but to frequent those who proceeded in the great process by the books of the genuine adepts. I was, nevertheless, disappointed herein, by the confusion and disagreement of their theories, by the variety of their works, and of their different operations. Excited by a sort of inspiration, I gave myself up to the study of Raymond Lully and Arnold de Villa Nova. My reading and meditation continued another year. I then *formed my plan*, and only waited to sell the remainder of my land to enable me to go home, and put my resolution into practice. I commenced at Christmas, 1549, and after some preparations, having procured everything that was necessary, I began my process, not without inquietude and difficulty. A friend said to me:—"What are you going to do? have you not lost enough by this delusion?" Another assured me that if I continued to purchase so much coal, I should be suspected of counterfeiting coin, of which he had already heard a rumour. Another said I ought to follow my business of a lawyer. But I was chiefly tormented by my relations, who reproached me bitterly with my conduct, and threatened to bring the officers of justice into my house to break my furnaces in pieces.

"I leave you to judge my trouble and grief at this opposition. I found no consolation but in my work, which prospered from day to day, and to which I was very attentive. The interruption of all commerce, which was occasioned by the plague, gave me the opportunity of great solitude, in which I could examine with undisturbed satisfaction the success of the three colours which mark the true work. I thus arrived at the perfection of the tincture, and made an essay of its virtue on common quicksilver, on Easter Monday, 1550. In less than an hour it was converted into pure

gold. You may guess how joyful I was, but I took care not to boast. I thanked God for the favour he shewed me, and prayed that I should be permitted to use it but for His glory.

"The next day I set out to find the abbé, according to the promise we gave each other, to communicate our discoveries. On my way, I called at the house of the religious man who had assisted me by his good advice. I had the grief to find that both he and the abbé had been dead about six months. I did not go back to my house, but sought another place, to await the arrival of one of my relations whom I had left at my dwelling. I sent him a procuration to sell all that I possessed, both house and furniture, to pay my debts, and to distribute the remainder among those of my relations who were in want. He soon after rejoined me, and we set out for Lausanne, in Switzerland, resolved to pass our days without ostentation in some of the celebrated cities of Germany."

In his unknown retreat[22] the adept recorded his adventures and experiences when in search of the philosophical stone, *ut divertarem bonos piosque vivos, à sophisticationibus, ad viam rectam perfectionis in hoc opere divino*. His little work is entitled simply *Opusculum Chemicum*; it opens with the romantic narrative which I have cited almost *in extenso*. It calls Hermes *magnus propheta noster*, insists that the art is the gift of God alone on the authority of all the initiates, and quotes so largely from previous writers that it can scarcely be considered an original work on the Hermetic philosophy.

The life of Bernard Trévisan has abundantly testified to the physical nature of his object, which is amply confirmed by this treatise. The methods of projection upon metals, the composition of precious stones, and the application of the tincture as a medicine for the human body, are successively considered. One grain of the *divinum opus*, dissolved in white wine, transmutes that liquor into a rich citron colour, and has innumerable hygienic uses.

Berigard Of Pisa

The following account of a transmutation performed by himself, is recorded by the celebrated Italian philosopher, Claude Berigard, and will be found on the twenty-fifth page of his *Circulus Pisanus*, published at Florence in 1641.

“I did not think that it was possible to convert quicksilver into gold, but an acquaintance thought proper to remove my doubt. He gave me about a drachm of a powder nearly of the colour of the wild poppy, and having a smell like calcined sea-salt. To avoid all imposition, I purchased a crucible, charcoal, and quicksilver, in which I was certain that there was no gold mixed. Ten drachms of quicksilver which I heated on the fire were on projection transmuted into nearly the same weight of good gold, which stood all tests. Had I not performed this operation in the most careful manner, taking every precaution against the possibility of doubt, I should not have believed it, but I am satisfied of the fact.”

Charnock

Thomas Charnock was born in the Isle of Thanet, in the year 1524. He calls himself an unlettered scholar, and student in astronomy and philosophy. He practised surgery, and, though he knew only the rudiments of Latin, it appears that he was famous in the neighbourhood of Salisbury, where he had established himself, for his accomplishments in the liberal sciences. He had two masters in alchemy, the first being Sir James S——, a priest, dwelling in the cloisters, near Salisbury, who informed Charnock that he did not derive his knowledge from any living adept, but that by meditation upon the words of the philosophers, he had mastered the principal secrets of alchemy as he lay in his bed, and had accordingly succeeded in making the silver powder.

The other master who instructed Charnock was a blind man, led by a boy, whom the neophyte accidentally discovered at an inn among other travellers, by a few words of the occult chemistry, which he perceived in his conversation. As soon as the company had retired, Charnock questioned the speaker, and requested instruction in natural philosophy. To this the adept objected that he was unacquainted with his interrogator, saying he would render up his knowledge to God who gave it, if he did not meet with a certain Master Charnock, the fame of whose learning and charity had reached him.

At these words Charnock made himself known, and the old man discoursed with him for an hour, during which time he found him expert in many mysteries of the sacred science. He promised Charnock that if he made a vow not to reveal the secret for gold, preferment, or through affection for great men, but only at death to one who was truly devoted to the search into nature, he would make him the heir of his knowledge. Accordingly, on the following Sunday they received the Eucharist together, and then, withdrawing into the middle of a large field, the boy was sent away out of hearing, and, in a few words, the blind man uttered “the mystery of mineral prudence.” Their conversations were continued

for nine days. The secrets of alchemy were disclosed, and the adept also related his own private history, acquainting Charnock that his name was William Bird, that he had been a prior of Bath, and had defrayed the expense of repairing the abbey church from treasure which he had acquired by means of the red and white elixirs. At the suppression of the abbey, he concealed the inestimable powder in the wall, and returning in ten days it was gone. He found a few rags in the place where he had left it. This misfortune almost deprived him of his senses; he wandered about, and lost his sight. He was therefore unable to repeat his process, and continued to travel over the country, led by a boy. He had received his Hermetic knowledge from a servant of Ripley.

At the time of this communication, Charnock was twenty-eight years old, and two years after his first master fell sick while attending his furnace for the completion of the red stone. He sent for Charnock, made him the heir of his work, and died after giving him instructions how to proceed. Charnock began his operations on the materials left by his leader, and was much perplexed by the difficulty of keeping the fire equal. He often started out of his sleep to examine the fuel; but after all his care, which continued during the space of several months, the frame of wood that covered the furnace took fire during a short period of his absence, and when, smelling the burning, he ran up to his laboratory, he discovered that his work was completely destroyed. This occurred on January 1, 1555. To repair the mischief he was obliged to recommence at the first part of the process, and he hired a servant to assist in taking care of the fire. In the course of two months certain signs filled him with hopes of success, when his dependence on his servant proved the ruin of his work. He discovered that this unfaithful assistant would let the fire nearly out, and then, to conceal his neglect, would rekindle it with grease till it was so hot as to scorch the matter beyond recovery.

In the third attempt, Charnock resolved to proceed without help. His fire cost him three pounds a week, and he was obliged to sell some rings and jewels to maintain it. He made good progress in the course of eight months, and expected to be rewarded in a little time for all his labours; but at this critical period he was impressed to serve as a soldier at the siege of Calais. Furious with disappointment, he took a hatchet, smashed his glasses, furnace, and apparatus, and threw them out of the house.

He wrote his “Breviary of Philosophy” in 1557, and the “Enigma of Alchemy” in 1572, with a memorandum, dated 1574, when he was fifty years old. Therein he declares his attainment of the gold-producing powder when his hairs were white. The “Breviary” claims to describe all the vessels and instruments which are required in the science; a potter, a joiner, and a glassmaker must lend their several services. The address of one of these artificers, specially recommended by the author, is said to be Chiddinfold in Sussex; he could manufacture egg-shaped glasses which opened and shut “as close as a hair.” The regulation of the philosophical fire is described in this curious poem, but the rest of its information is of a purely autobiographical kind.

Giovanni Braccesco

This alchemist of Brescia flourished in the sixteenth century. He was the author of a commentary on Geber, which is not supposed to cast much light on the obscurities of the Arabian philosopher. The most curious of his original treatises is *Legno della Vita, vel quale si dichiara la medecina per la quale i nostri primi padri vivevano nove cento anni*, Rome, 1542, 8vo.—"The Wood of Life, wherein is revealed the medicine by means of which our Primeval Ancestors lived for Nine Hundred Years." This work, together with *La Esposizione di Geber Filosophe*, Venice, 1544, 8vo, was translated into Latin, and may be found in the collections of Gratarole and Mangetus. They were also published separately under the title *De Alchimia dialogi duo*, Lugd., 1548, 4to. The Wood of Life is one of the innumerable names given by the alchemists to the matured and perfected stone, the composition whereof is the accomplishment of the *magnum opus*. It is more generally denominated the Universal Balsam or Panacea, which cures all diseases and insures to its most blessed possessor an unalterable youth. The name Wood of Life is bestowed by the Jews on the two sticks which confine the scroll of the Law. They are convinced that a simple contact with these sacred rods strengthens the eyesight and restores health. They also hold that there is no better means of facilitating the *accouchement* of females than to cause them to behold these vitalising sticks, which, however, they are in no wise permitted to touch.[23]

The work of Braccesco is written in the form of a dialogue, and is explanatory of the Hermetic principles of Raymond Lully, one of the interlocutors, who instructs an enthusiastic disciple in the arcane principles of the divine art, the disciple in question being in search of a safeguard against the numerous infirmities and weaknesses of the "humid radical." Such a medicine is declared by the master to be extracted from a single substance, which is the sophic *aqua metallorum*. The dialogue is of interest, as it shows the connection in the mind of the

writer between the development of metallic perfection and the physical regeneration of humanity.

Leonardi Fioravanti

Doctor, surgeon, and alchemist of the sixteenth century, this Italian was a voluminous author, who is best known by his “Summary of the Arcana of Medicine, Surgery, and Alchemy,” published in octavo at Venice in 1571, and which has been reprinted several times. It contains an application of Hermetic methods and principles to the science of medicine, but the author’s account of the *petra philosophorum* shows the designation to be of a purely arbitrary kind, for it is a mixture of mercury, nitre, and other substances, intended to act on the stomach, and has no connection with the transmuting *lapis* of the alchemical sages.

John Dee

The life of this pseudo-adept, and of Edward Kelly, his companion in alchemy, is involved in a cloud of necromancy and magico-Hermetical marvels, so that the fabulous and historical elements are not to be easily separated.

The true name of Edward Kelly is supposed to have been Talbot. He is said to have been born at Worcester in 1555, and to have followed the profession of a lawyer in London. His talents in penmanship appear to have been utilised in the falsification of deeds. He was prosecuted at Lancaster, according to a narrative of his enemies, for an offence of this nature, and was condemned to lose his ears. By some he is said to have suffered this punishment,[24] by others to have evaded it, seeking safety in Wales, where he lodged at an obscure inn, and concealed his identity by adopting a new name. During this sojourn an old manuscript was shown him by the innkeeper, which was indecipherable by himself or his neighbours. The so-called Edward Kelly, being initiated into the mysteries of ancient writing, discovered it to be a treatise on transmutation, and his curiosity was highly excited. He inquired as to its history, and was told that it had been discovered in the tomb of a bishop who had been buried in a neighbouring church, and whose tomb had been sacrilegiously uptorn by some wretched heretical fanatics at that epoch of furious religiomania and rampant Elizabethan persecution. The object of this desecration was the discovery of concealed treasures in the resting-place of the prelate, to whom immense riches were attributed by popular tradition. The impiety was, however, rewarded by nothing but the manuscript in question, and two small ivory bottles, respectively containing a ponderous red and white powder. These pearls beyond price were rejected by the pigs of apostasy; one of them was shattered on the spot, and its ruddy, celestine contents for the most part lost. The remnant, together with the remaining bottle and the unintelligible manuscript, were speedily disposed of to the innkeeper in exchange for a skinful of

wine. The unbroken bottle was transferred by the new owner as a plaything to his children, but the providence which in the main overwatches the accomplishment of the sublime act preserved its contents intact. When Edward Kelly, with an assumed antiquarian indifference about objects which were more curious than valuable, offered a pound sterling for all the articles, a bargain was promptly effected. The lawyer was by no means an alchemist, but he believed himself possessed of a Hermetic treasure; he determined, at all risks, to return to London, and consult with his friend Dr Dee, who abode in a cottage at Mortlake, and who, in matters of magical devilment, and in the tortuosities of the occult, was considered a man of men.

Whether he had been accused of forgery, whether he had lost his ears, or not, the discovery of Edward Kelly caused the necromantic doctor to be blind to his faults or his crimes; he at once set to work in his company, in the year 1579, and in the month of December a stupendous success was the crown of their labour in common. The richness of Kelly's tincture proved to be one upon two hundred and seventy-two thousand two hundred and thirty; but they lost much gold in experiments before they knew the extent of its power. In Dr Dee's "Diary in Germany" he mentions the book of St Dunstan, which is probably the manuscript of Kelly, and also the powder "found at the digging in England," which indicates some foundation for the narrative just given. The place where the treasure was obtained is reported to have been the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, founded by St Dunstan. The last abbot was hanged by Henry VIII. for his adherence to the Papal cause.

Kelly appears to have taken up his quarters at Islington. In June 1583 an attachment was issued against him for coining, of which his companion declares him guiltless. In the following September, Dr Dee, his wife and children, and Edward Kelly, with his wife, accompanied by a certain Lord Albert Alasco, of Siradia, in Poland, departed from London for Cracow. As soon as they had arrived in the north of Germany, Dr Dee received a letter from one of his friends in England, informing him that his library at Mortlake had been seized and partially destroyed, on the vulgar report of his unlawful studies, and that his rents and property were sequestered. Despite the possession of the Donum Dei, all parties appear to have been in considerable penury in consequence.

In 1585 we find them at Prague, then the metropolis of alchemy, and the headquarters of adepts and adeptship. Edward Kelly and his companions presently abounded in money, and the owner of the Hermaic Benediction made no secret of his prize or his powers, indulged in all kinds of extravagance, performed continual projections for himself and his friends, as well as for many persons of distinction who sought his acquaintance. Much of the result was distributed. The transmutations of Kelly at this period are attested by several writers, including Gassendus. The most authenticated and remarkable, according to Figuier, is that which took place in the house of the imperial physician, Thaddeus de Hazek, when, by the mediation of a single drop of a red oil, Kelly transmuted a pound of mercury into excellent gold, the superabundant virtue of the agent leaving in addition at the bottom of the crucible a small ruby. Dr Nicholas Barnaud, the assistant of Hazek, and an alchemical writer, whose works are as rare as they are reputable, was a witness of this wonder, and subsequently himself manufactured the precious metal, the *désir désiré*, with the assistance of Edward Kelly.

The report spread, and the adept was invited by the Emperor Maximilian II. to the Court of Germany, where his transmutations raised him into highest favour; he was knighted, and created Marshal of Bohemia. Now perfectly intoxicated, he posed as a veritable adept, who was able to compose the inestimable projecting powder. This gave a handle to the enemies whom his exaltation had made him; they persuaded the Emperor to practically imprison this living philosophical treasure, and to extract his alchemical secret. His misfortunes now began. Absolute inability to obey the imperial mandate and compose a considerable quantity of the stone philosophical, was interpreted as a contumacious refusal; he was cast into a dungeon, but on engaging to comply with the demand if he had the liberty to seek assistance, he was speedily set free, whereupon he rejoined Dr Dee, and they again set to work in concert. The Book of St Dunstan indicated the use but not the preparation of the powder, and their experiments, vigilantly overwatched to prevent the escape of Kelly, proved entirely futile. In the desperation which succeeded their failure, the outrageous disposition of Kelly broke out, and he murdered one of his guards. He was again imprisoned, his companion, for the most part, remaining unmolested, and employing his opportunities, it is said, to interest Queen Elizabeth in the fate of the Emperor’s prisoner. She claimed the alchemist as her subject, but his

recent crime had rendered him obnoxious to the laws of the empire, and he was still detained in his dungeon.

In 1589, Dr Dee set out himself for England. He halted at Bremen, and was there visited by Henry Khunrath, one of the greatest adepts of the age. The Landgrave of Hesse sent him a complimentary letter, and was presented in return with twelve Hungarian horses. Dr Dee arrived in England after an absence of six years; he was received by the Queen, who subsequently visited him at his house, presented him with two hundred angels to keep his Christmas, and gave him a license in alchemy. Sir Thomas Jones offered him his Castle of Emlin, in Wales, for a dwelling; he was made Chancellor of St Paul's, and in 1595, Warden of Manchester College. He repaired thither with his wife and children, and was installed in February 1596. He does not appear to have accomplished any transmutation after his return to England. In 1607 we again find him at Mortlake, living on the revenue which he derived from Manchester, but subject to much persecution by the Fellows of that College. He died in 1608, at the age of eighty years.

The Hermetic abilities of Kelly were always believed in by the Emperor; he continued to detain him, hoping to extract his secret. Some friends of the unfortunate alchemist endeavoured, in the year 1597, to effect his escape by means of a rope, but he fell from the window of his prison, and died of the injuries which he received.

During his confinement he composed a treatise on the philosophical stone, and the Diary of Dr Dee was published from a genuine Ashmolean manuscript in 1604. The son of John Dee became physician to the Czar at Moscow, and in his *Fasciculus Chemicus*, he states that, in early youth, he witnessed transmutation repeatedly for the space of seven years.

The metrical account of Sir Edward Kelly's work in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* informs all who are broiling in the kitchen of Geber to burn their books "and come and learn of me," for they can no more compound the *Elixir Vitæ* and the precious stone than they can manufacture apples. The progenitor of magnesia, wife to the gold of the philosophers, is not a costly thing. The philosophical gold is not common but Hermetic sulphur, and magnesia is essential mercury.

The *Testamentum Johannis Dee Philosophi Summi ad Johannem Gwynn, transmissum 1568*, is lucidly worded as follows in its reference to the *magnum opus*:—

"Cut that in Three which Nature hath made one,

Then strengthen yt, even by it self alone;

Wherewith then cutte the powdered sonne in twayne,

By length of tyme, and heale the wounde againe.

The self same sonne troys yet more, ye must wounde,

Still with new knives, of the same kinde, and grounde;

Our monas trewe thus use by Nature's Law,

Both binde and lewse, only with rype and rawe,

And aye thank God who only is our Guyde,

All is ynough, no more then at this tyde."

Henry Khunrath

This German alchemist, who is claimed as a hierophant of the psychic side of the *magnum opus*, and who was undoubtedly aware of the larger issues of Hermetic theorems, must be classed as a follower of Paracelsus. He was a native of Saxony, born about the year 1560. He perambulated a large portion of Germany, and at the age of twenty-eight received the degree of medical doctor at the University of Basle. He practised medicine at Hamburg and afterwards at Dresden, where he died in obscurity and poverty, on the 9th of September 1601, aged about forty-five years. The *Amphitheatrum Sapientiæ Æternæ solius veræ, Christiano Kabbalisticum divino magicum*, &c., published in folio in 1609, is the most curious and remarkable of his works, some of which still remain in manuscript.[25] It was left unfinished by its author, appearing four years after his decease, with a preface and conclusion by his friend Erasmus Wohlfahrt.

The prologue directs the aspirant to the supreme temple of everlasting wisdom to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, to know also himself, and the mysteries of the macrocosmos. The whole treatise is purely mystical and magical. The seven steps leading to the portals of universal knowledge are described in an esoteric commentary on some portions of the Wisdom of Solomon. The *lapis philosophorum* is declared to be identical with the Ruach Elohim who brooded over the face of the waters during the first period of creation. The Ruach Elohim is called *vapor virtutis Dei*, and the internal form of all things. The perfect stone is attained through Christ, and, conversely, the possession of that treasure gives the knowledge of Christ. The *Amphitheatrum Sapientiæ Æternæ* seems to be the voice of the ancient chaos, but its curious folding plates are exceedingly suggestive.

Michael Maier

This celebrated German alchemist, one of the central figures of the Rosicrucian controversy in Germany, and the greatest adept of his age, was born at Ruidsburg, in Holstein, towards the year 1568. In his youth he applied himself closely to the study of medicine, and establishing himself at Rostock, he practised that art with so much success that he became physician to the Emperor Rudolph II., by whom he was ennobled for his services. Some adepts, notwithstanding, succeeded in enticing him from the practical path which he had followed so long into the thorny tortuosities of alchemical labyrinths. *Il se passionna pour le grand œuvre* and scoured all Germany to hold conferences with those whom he imagined to be in possession of transcendent secrets. The *Biographie Universelle* declares that he sacrificed his health, his fortune, and his time to these "ruinous absurdities." According to Buhle,[26] he travelled extensively; and on one occasion paid a visit to England, where he made the acquaintance of the Kentish mystic, Robert Fludd.

He appears as an alchemical writer a little before the publication of the Rosicrucian manifestoes. In the controversy which followed their appearance, and which convulsed mystic Germany, he took an early and enthusiastic share, defending the mysterious society in several books and pamphlets. He is supposed to have travelled in search of genuine members of the "College of Teutonic Philosophers R.C.," and, failing to meet with them, is said to have established a brotherhood of his own on the plan of the *Fama Fraternitatis*. These statements rest on inadequate authority, and there is better ground for believing that he was initiated, towards the close of his life, into the genuine order. A posthumous tract of Michael Maier, entitled "Ulysses," was published in 1624 by one of his personal friends, who added to the same volume the substance of two pamphlets which had already appeared in German, but which, by reason of their importance, were now translated into Latin for the benefit of the

literati of Europe. The first was entitled *Colloquium Rhodostauroticum trium personarum, per Famam et Confessionem quodamodo revelatam de Fraternitate Roseæ Crucis*. The second was an *Echo Colloquii*, by Benedict Hilarion, writing in the name of the Rosicrucian Fraternity. It appears from these pamphlets that Maier was admitted into the mystical order, but when or where is uncertain. He became the most voluminous alchemical writer of his period, publishing continually till his death in the year 1622.

Many of his works are Hermetic elaborations of classical mythology, and are adorned with most curious plates. They are all hopelessly obscure, if his Rosicrucian apologies be excepted; the latter are not deficient in ingenuity, but they are exceedingly laboured, and, of course, completely unsatisfactory. He does not appear to have been included among the adepts, and he is now almost forgotten. His chemical knowledge is buried in a multitude of symbols and insoluble enigmas, and believers in spiritual chemistry will not derive much comfort or profit from his writings.

Jacob Böhme

After the publication of the psycho-chemical philosophy of the illuminated shoemaker of Görlitz, the adepts are believed to have despaired of any longer retaining their secrets, and in their own writings they began to speak more freely. In this way the mystery of the *vas philosophorum* is said to have become less impenetrable than previously, when it was considered a divine secret in the keeping of God and his elect.

Jacob Böhme, who may perhaps be considered as the central figure of Christian mysticism, was born in the year 1575, at Old Seidenberg, a village near Görlitz, in what was then called German Prussia. His parents were poor but honest and sober peasants, and were unable to procure him more than the usual religious schooling and the most simple elements of common education. In his spare time he tended cattle with other boys of the village. “He was a quiet, introspective lad,” says one of his latest biographers, “whose face bore somewhat of the dreamy expression which is frequent in poetic natures.” Even at this early age he was rich in inward visions. On one occasion he retired into a cave, in the rock called Land’s Crown, and discovered a large wooden vessel full of money, from which he precipitately retired without touching it, as though it were something diabolical. He told his companions, but there was no such cavern to be found at the place in question, though they often visited the spot in search of the concealed treasure.

On leaving school, Jacob was apprenticed to a shoemaker, and while he was one day serving in the shop during the absence of his master, an old man, of remarkable and benevolent mien, entered and asked for some shoes, for which the lad, fearing to conclude a bargain without his employer, demanded an extravagant price to deter the stranger from buying. The latter, however, paid the sum asked, and then calling him by his name, beckoned him into the street, when taking him by the hand, with sparkling eyes and earnest, angelical countenance, he said:—

“Jacob, thou art as yet but little; nevertheless, the time will come when thou shalt be great, and the world shall marvel at thee. Therefore, be pious, fear God, and reverence the Word. Read the Holy Scriptures diligently; in these thou shalt have comfort and instruction through the misery, poverty, and persecution which are in store for thee. Be courageous and persevere; God loves thee, and is gracious unto thee.”

The stranger then disappeared, or departed, leaving Jacob more serious and devotional than ever. The words of instruction and inspired admonition which he was frequently prompted to give to his fellow apprentices brought him into disputes with his master, and eventually led to his dismissal. He became a journeyman shoemaker, but returned to Görlitz in 1594, where he married the daughter of a tradesman, by whom he had four children.

In 1598 he imagined himself to be surrounded with the divine light for several consecutive days; he beheld the virtue and nature of the vegetable world, gazing into the very heart of creation, and learning the secrets of the physical cosmos by means of the self-interpreting “signatures” which seemed to be impressed on all around him. A similar experience recurred in 1600, when he passed into the hypnotic state by accidentally fixing his eye on a burnished pewter dish. These visions did not interfere with his capacity for work, or with his attention to his domestic affairs. Ten years passed away, and his psychic perceptions became suddenly clearer. “What he had previously seen only chaotically, fragmentarily, and in isolated glimpses, he now beheld as a coherent whole and in more definite outlines.” He wrote what he experienced under a fervour of inspiration, and in this way his first book was produced—”Aurora, the Day Spring, or Dawning of the Day in the East, or Morning Redness in the Rising of the Sun.” It was not originally intended for publication, but manuscript copies were circulated by one of his friends, and he suffered much consequent persecution from the ecclesiastical authorities of Görlitz. He was forbidden to write any more books, and was commanded to stick to his trade. For five years he meekly obeyed the tyrannous mandate, and afterwards contented himself with writing simply for his intimate friends. From 1619 to 1624 he produced a number of voluminous treatises, of which the book of the “True Principles,” the “Mysterium Magnum,” and the “Signatura Rerum” are perhaps the most characteristic and important. The

publication, apparently surreptitious, of his “Way to Christ” again brought him into conflict with the orthodoxy of Görlitz, and led to his temporary exile. He was invited to the electoral court at Dresden, where a conference of eminent theologians examined him, and was so greatly impressed by the man that they declared themselves incompetent to judge him.

In 1624 he was attacked by a fever at the house of a friend in Silesia, was carried at his own request to his native town, and there on the 22nd November he expired in a semi-ecstatic condition.

While serving his apprenticeship at Görlitz, Jacob Böhme acquired some knowledge of chemistry, and he subsequently made use of Hermetic terminology in a transfigured and spiritual sense. His example was followed by his disciples, including the illustrious Saint Martin, Dionysius Andreas Freher, and William Law. The second-named writer has treated of the analogy in the process of the philosophic work to the Redemption of man through Christ Jesus, as unfolded by Jacob Böhme.

A treatise on metallurgy is ascribed to the theosophist himself, and there are several alchemical references in his numerous private epistles. The Holy Ghost is stated to be the key to alchemy; there is no need of hard labour and seeking (presumably among physical substances). “Seek only Christ, *and you will find all things*.” He describes the philosophers’ stone as dark, disesteemed, and grey in colour. It contains the highest tincture. Like Henry Khunrath before him, he deprecates any expenditure beyond that of the time and cost of the operator’s maintenance. “It doth not cost any money, but what is spent upon the time and the maintenance, else it might be prepared with four shillings. The work is easy, the act simple. A boy of sixteen years might make it, but the wisdom therein is great, and it is greatest mystery.”

The seal of God is elsewhere declared to be set on the secret of alchemy, “to conceal the true ground of the same upon pain of eternal punishments, unless a man know for certain that it shall not be misused. There is also no power to attain it, no skill or art availeth; unless one give the tincture into the hands of another, he cannot prepare it, except he be certainly in the new birth.”

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The following lines, copied from a manuscript inserted in a volume of his works, are included in the original edition of the “Lives of Alchemysticall Philosophers”:—

“Whate’er the Eastern Magi sought,

Or Orpheus sung, or Hermes taught,

Whate’er Confucius could inspire,

Or Zoroaster’s mystic fire;

The symbols that Pythagoras drew,

The wisdom God-like Plato knew;

What Socrates debating proved,

Or Epictetus lived and loved;

The sacred fire of saint and sage

Through every clime, in every age,

In Bohmen’s wondrous page we view

Discovered and revealed anew.

‘Aurora’ dawned the coming day:

Succeeding books meridian light display.

Ten thousand depths his works explore,

Ten thousand truths unknown before.

Through all his books profound we trace

The abyss of nature, GOD, and grace;

The seals are broke, the mystery’s past,

And all is now revealed at last.

The trumpet sounds, the Spirit’s given,

And Bohmen is the voice from Heaven.”

J. B. Van Helmont

In the year 1557, at Bois le Duc, in Brabant, John Baptist van Helmont was born of a noble family. He studied at Louvain, and became eminent in mathematics, algebra, the doctrines of Aristotle and Galen, and the medicine of Vopiscus and Plempius. At seventeen he lectured on physics as prælector, and took his degree of medical doctor in 1599. He read Hippocrates and the Greek and Arabian authors before he was twenty-two years old. He then passed ten years in the unsuccessful practice of physic, until he met a Paracelsian chemist, who discovered various chemical medicines to him. He retired thereupon to the castle of Vilvord, near Brussels, and laboured with unremitting diligence in the chemico-experimental analysis of bodies of every class. He passed his life in retirement, and was almost unknown to his neighbours, whom he, nevertheless, attended in illness, without accepting a fee. He declined an invitation and flattering offers from the Emperor and the Elector Palatine, and after writing several tracts, which even at this day are held in considerable estimation, he died in the sixty-seventh year of his age.

This author, so illustrious throughout Europe for his scientific knowledge, and no less celebrated for his noble rank than by the probity of his character, testifies in three different places that he has beheld, and himself performed, transmutation. In his treatise, *De Vita Eterna*, he declares himself as follows:—”I have seen and I have touched the philosophers’ stone more than once; the colour of it was like saffron in powder, but heavy and shining like pounded glass. I had once given me the fourth part of a grain—I call a grain that which takes six hundred to make an ounce. I made projection therewith, wrapped in paper, upon eight ounces of quicksilver, heated in a crucible, and immediately all the quicksilver, having made a little noise, stopped and congealed into a yellow mass. Having melted it in a strong fire, I found within eleven grains of eight ounces of most pure gold, so that a grain of this powder

would have transmuted into very good gold, nineteen thousand one hundred and fifty-six grains of quicksilver.”

Had Helmont possessed the art of making the transmuting powder, his testimony might be open to suspicion. He says, on another occasion, that an adept, after a few days of acquaintance, presented him with half a grain of the powder of projection, with which he transmuted nine ounces of quicksilver into pure gold. He tells us further, that he many times performed a similar operation in the presence of a large company, and always with success. On these grounds he believed in the certainty and in the prodigious resources of the art, citing his acquaintance with an artist who had so much of the red stone as would make gold to the weight of two hundred thousand pounds.

Though ignorant of the nature of this powder of projection, Helmont professed the knowledge of the alcahest, and the methods of preparing medicines of transcendent efficacy by its means.

Butler

In the reign of James the First the attention of the curious was attracted by a report of several transmutations performed in London by an artist of the above name. He was an Irish gentleman, who had recently returned from his travels. It was said that he was not himself acquainted with the secret of the stone, so far as regards its manufacture. To account for possessing it, the following story was related:—The ship in which he took passage during one of his voyages was captured by an African pirate, and on arriving in port he was sold as a slave to an Arabian, who was an alchemical philosopher. Butler, appearing to his master skilful and ingenious, was employed in most difficult operations in the laboratory. Having a perfect knowledge of the importance of the process, as soon as it was finished he bargained with an Irish merchant for his ransom, and made his escape, taking with him a large portion of the red powder.

The performers of public transmutations generally found it necessary to conceal their real knowledge by similar inventions. A physician, who was a countryman of Butler, however formed a plan for discovering his secret. He presented himself as a servant in search of a place, and was hired in that capacity by Butler. He found the philosopher so circumspect that he sought in vain for some circumstance to justify the public report of his treasures, until at last Butler sent him into the city to purchase a large quantity of lead and quicksilver.

The disguised doctor now hoped to make a discovery. He executed his commission with dispatch, and prepared a little hole in the wall of his master’s room, through which, from the adjoining apartment he could see what was going on. He soon perceived Butler taking something out of a box, which he put on the melted lead, and deposited the box in a concealed place under the floor of his room. At this moment the table and chair on which the doctor was elevated to the spy-hole, gave way, and he fell with a loud noise to the ground. Butler rushed out of his room

to learn the cause of this disturbance, and perceiving the spy-hole, he with difficulty refrained from running his servant through the body with his sword.

Finding there was no hope of obtaining anything from Butler, the doctor expected to surprise his treasures by reporting to the officers of justice that he was a coiner of false money. A vigilant search was made according to his directions, but nothing was found, for Butler had already removed whatever could betray him—his furnace, crucibles, and eighty marks of gold were all he appeared to possess. He was therefore liberated from the prison in which he had been confined during the investigation.

Butler was afterwards entombed in the Castle of Vilvord, in Flanders, where he is said to have performed wonderful cures by means of Hermetic medicine. A monk of Brittany, who was one of his fellow-prisoners, having a desperate erysipelas in his arm, was restored to health in an hour by drinking almond milk in which Butler had merely dipped the stone. The next day at the rumour of this circumstance, the celebrated Helmont, who abode in the neighbourhood, went with several noblemen to the prison, where Butler cured, in their presence, an aged woman of a megrim by dipping the stone into oil of olives and then anointing her head. An abbess, whose arm was swelled, and whose fingers had been stiff for eighteen years, was also cured by a few applications of the same stone to her tongue.

These cases are attested by the illustrious van Helmont in his works.

Jean D’espagnet

This Hermetic philosopher is known to us by two treatises—*Enchiridion Physicæ Restitutæ* and *Arcanum Philosophiæ Hermeticæ*, which, however, has also been claimed as the production of an unknown individual who called himself the *Chevalier Impérial*.[27] ”The Secret of Hermetical Philosophy” comprises the practical part of the *magnum opus* and the Enchiridion, the physical theory on which the possibility of transmutation is founded. D’Espagnet is also the author of the preface to the *Tableau de l’Inconstance des Démons*, by Pierre Delancre.

“The Arcanum of Hermetic Philosophy” is better known under the title of the “Canons of Espagnet,” and, as I have shown in the Introduction, it is claimed as a treatise on mystical alchemy. The author, however, very plainly states that “the science of producing Nature’s grand Secret is a perfect knowledge of Nature universally and of art, concerning the realm of metals; the practice whereof is conversant in finding the principles of metals by analysis.” Moreover, the authors whom Espagnet recommends as a guide to the student include those who, like Trévisan, are known to have spent their existence in practical alchemy. The Sethon-Sendivogius treatises are also respectfully cited. At the same time, it may be freely granted that much of the matter in the canons, though treating of a physical object, may be extended to the psychic side of the Hermetic art.

Alexander Sethon

None of the adepts suffered from imprudent exposure of their power more than the subject of this article. He was a native of Scotland, and is supposed to have inhabited a mansion at a village in the vicinity of Edinburgh, and close to the sea-shore.[28] In the summer of 1601 a Dutch vessel was wrecked upon the coast, and some of the crew were saved through the instrumentality of Sethon, who received them into his house, treated them with great humanity, and provided them with the means to return to Holland. One year later he visited James Haussen, the pilot of the ship, one of the rescued persons, at Erkusen, in that country. The sailor received him with joy, and detained him for several weeks in his house, during which period he beheld with astonishment several transmutations performed by his guest, who confessed that he was an alchemical adept. He was bound in gratitude and friendship to the most inviolable secrecy, but he could not refrain from confiding the wonder which he had witnessed to Venderlinden, the physician of Enkhuysen, who was a man of integrity and prudence, and to whom he presented a piece of gold, which had been transmuted in his presence from lead on the 13th March 1602. This curiosity came into the hands of the doctor's grandson, who showed it to the celebrated George Morhoff, by whom it was mentioned, with its history, to Langlet du Fresnoy, in an epistle on the transmutation of metals.

From Enkhuysen, Sethon proceeded to Amsterdam and Rotterdam, subsequently embarking for Italy, where, after a short stay, he passed into Switzerland, and so entered Germany, accompanied by Wolfgang Dienheim, an adversary of Hermetic philosophy, whom by ocular demonstration he convinced of his error, in presence of several distinguished persons of Basle.

To this adversary we are indebted for a description of Sethon, whom he declared eminently spiritual in appearance, short in stature, but very stout, having a high colour, and a beard of the French style. He calls him

Alexander Sethonius, and states that he was a native of Molier, “in an island of the ocean.”

The lead required for the transmutation was brought by Jacob Zwinger from his own house, a crucible was borrowed from a goldsmith, and common sulphur was purchased on the road to the house where the operation was to be performed. During the whole course of the experiment, Sethon touched nothing, simply supplying the small packet which contained the powder of projection, and which transformed the base metal into gold of the purest quality, equivalent in weight to the original lead.

The experiment was repeated on another occasion with the same brilliant success, and, in addition to the testimony of Dienheim, we have also that of Zwinger, a name highly respected by the Germans in the history of medicine.[29]

Alexander Sethon departed from Basle, and went under an assumed name to Strasbourg, whence he proceeded to Cologne, and abode with an amateur alchemist named Anton Bordemann, by whom he was brought into acquaintance with the other souffleurs of that city. He began a kind of alchemical crusade among them, imprudently exposing his knowledge to credulous and sceptical alike, and producing on one occasion six ounces of the precious metal by means of a single grain of his great philosophical tincture.[30]

Leaving Cologne altogether petrified by his marvellous operations, the illustrious hierophant of the art Hermetic betook himself to Hamburg, where his further amazing projections are described by George Morhoff. At Munich, the next stage in his alchemical pilgrimage, he performed no transmutations, suddenly disappearing with the daughter of one of its citizens, whom he appears to have legally married, and to whom he was henceforth most devotedly attached.

The renown of Sethon about this time attracted the attention of Christian II., the young Elector of Saxony. He sent for the alchemist, but the latter, absorbed by his passion, had merged the Hermetic propagandist in the lover, and sent William Hamilton, his apparent domestic, but in reality a confidant and friend, to convince the Elector of the verity of alchemical operations by ocular evidence. A projection was

performed by Hamilton with perfect success in the presence of the whole court, and the gold then manufactured resisted every test.[31]

The Elector, previously a sceptic, was now more desirous than ever to behold the adept. Sethon reluctantly consented, and at this juncture seems to have been deserted by Hamilton. He was received with distinction and favour, and presented a small quantity of the powder to Christian II., who soon endeavoured to possess himself of the whole secret of the philosopher. Sethon refused to gratify him, and was deaf to persuasions and menaces; but the Elector, convinced that he was in possession of a living treasure, determined to overcome his reluctance, whatever the means employed. He imprisoned him in a tower, which was guarded by forty soldiers, who had strict orders to keep a constant watch on him. The unfortunate adept was subjected to every torment which covetousness and cruelty could suggest. He was pierced with pointed iron, scorched with molten lead, burnt by fire, beaten with rods, racked from head to foot, yet his constancy never forsook him. At length he outwearied his torturers, and was left in solitary confinement.

At this time Michael Sendivogius, a Moravian gentleman, generally resident at Cracovia, in Poland, chanced to be tarrying at Dresden. He was a skilful chemist, who, like others of his period, was in search of the philosophical stone, and who naturally took interest in the case of Alexander Sethon. Having some influence at the court of the Elector, he obtained permission to see him; and after several interviews, at which the adept was exceedingly reserved on all subjects connected with the divine science, he proposed to contrive his escape. The tortured alchemist gladly consented to his plans, and promised to assist him in his Hermetic pursuits. As soon as the resolution was formed, Sendivogius departed to Cracovia, sold his house in order to raise money, and returning to Dresden, established himself in the vicinity of the prison, gaining the favour of its warders by his prodigality and indirect bribes. At length the day came for the execution of his plan; he regaled the guards better than usual, and when they were all drunk, he carried Sethon, who was unable to walk, on his back to a post-chaise, in which they proceeded without discovery. They called at the house of Sethon for his wife, who was in possession of a quantity of the transmuting powder, and then made all haste to reach Cracovia. There Sendivogius required from the alchemist the fulfilment of his promise, but was blankly refused by the adept, who

referred him to God, saying that the revelation of so awful a mystery would be a heinous iniquity.

“You see what I have endured,” he continued, “my nerves are shrunk, my limbs dislocated; I am emaciated to the last extremity, and my body is almost corrupted; even to avoid all this I did not disclose the secrets of philosophy.”

Sendivogius was not, however, destined to be deprived of all recompense for his pains and self-sacrifice. Alexander Sethon did not long enjoy the liberty which his friend had obtained for him, and on his death, which occurred two years after his escape, he presented his preserver with the remains of his transmuting powder.

Michael Sendivogius

Sendivogius, whose true name was Sensophax, was born at Moravia in 1566, and was therefore about thirty-eight years of age on the death of his taciturn master. He is said by some of his biographers to have been the natural son of a Polish nobleman, named Jacob Sendimir. His life has been written at some length by his advocate, an anonymous German, who, however, produced a romance rather than a history, among other fictions representing his hero to have been sent by the Emperor Rodolph II. to the east, where he received from a Greek patriarch the revelation of the grand mystery. As a matter of fact, Sendivogius had made no progress in alchemy before his acquaintance with Sethon.

Having almost exhausted his fortune to obtain the liberation of that adept, and having a taste for extravagant living, he was dissatisfied with the mere possession of a portion of the transmuting powder, and was more eager than ever to penetrate the mysteries of the Hermetic art. He married the widow of Sethon, but she was wholly unacquainted with the process, and her only possession was the manuscript of that celebrated treatise, “The New Light of Alchemy,” with the dialogue of Mercury and the alchemist, which Sendivogius appropriated and eventually published as his own composition. From this work the uninitiated inquirer believed himself to have discovered a method of augmenting the powder, but he only succeeded in diminishing it.

Foiled in this attempt, he was still anxious at any rate to appear as an adept, and acquired an immense reputation by incessant projections, which, assisted by his sumptuous living, made him pass for a great hierophant. At Prague he presented himself to the Emperor Rodolph II., and, in presence of several nobles, the king himself made gold by projection, and overjoyed at the success of the operation he appointed Sendivogius as one of his counsellors of state. A marble tablet with the inscription—

Faciat hoc quispiam alius

Quod fecit Sendivogius Polonus,

was set up in the chamber where the transmutation had been performed, and the occasion was celebrated in verse by the court poet, Mardochie de Delle.

This achievement Sendivogius followed by printing at Prague the treatise written by Sethon under the name of Cosmopolita. It passes for the work of its editor, as he included his name anagrammatically on the title-page, in the motto—*Divi Leschi genus amo*, and gave no information concerning the real author. Some time after he issued a tract on sulphur, which was probably his own composition. The motto on the title-page—*Angelus doce mihi jus*—is another anagram of his name. There are discrepancies between this tract and the twelve treatises which comprise the work of Sethon. This Sendivogius perceived, and in the second edition of the latter work he made alterations in its text.

From the Court of Rodolph II. the alchemist proceeded to that of Poland. As he passed on his way through Moravia, a lord of the country, who had heard of his transmutations at Prague, and suspected that he had abundance of the transmuting powder, laid an ambush for him on the road, seized him, and secretly imprisoned him, with the threat that he should never be liberated until he communicated the secret of his treasure. Sendivogius, dreading the fate of Sethon, cut through the iron bar that crossed the window of his dungeon, and making a rope of his clothes, he escaped almost naked from the power of the little tyrant, whom he summoned to the emperor’s court, where he was condemned to be fined, a village on his estate was confiscated and transferred to Sendivogius, who afterwards gave it as dower with his daughter at her marriage.

Sendivogius made several transmutations at Varsovia, but his powder was visibly diminishing. Duke Frederick of Würtemberg invited him to visit him, and two projections took place in the presence of this noble, who, to place him on the footing of a prince of the blood, gave him the territory of Nedlingen.

He was destined, however, to meet with a severe reverse at Würtemberg through the machinations of an envious alchemist already attached to the Court, and who persuaded him that the Duke Frederic had

formed plans which menaced the freedom of his guest and the safety of his transmuting treasure. Sendivogius, once more vividly reminded of the fate of his master, precipitately fled, only to be pursued by his treacherous brother in science, who overtook him with twelve armed men, well mounted, arrested him in the name of the prince, robbed him of the philosophical treasure, and caused him to be cast into prison. Then this infamous souffleur, whose star had been overwhelmed by the sun of Sendivogius, proceeded to perform transmutations, more than regaining his lost reputation; but the report of this discreditable transaction spread, public opinion decided that the duke was a party to it, and the wife of the victim applying to the King of Poland, soon obtained the liberty of alchemist.

Once more Sendivogius appealed for redress to the Emperor Rodolph, who demanded the person of the souffleur from the Duke of Würtemberg. The possessions of Sendivogius were at once restored, with the exception of the powder, all knowledge of which was denied. The souffleur was hanged by the duke, but from this time the pupil of Sethon perceived his sign descending. He had but an infinitesimal quantity of the powder in his possession, which, ever in search of notoriety, he dissolved in spirits of wine, carefully rectified, and began to astonish the physicians of Cracovia, whither he had again repaired, by the marvellous cures which he performed with this for a medicine. Desnoyers, secretary to the Queen of Poland, and one of the alchemist's biographers, was in possession of a crown piece which Sendivogius dipped red-hot into the same spirit, in the presence of Sigismund III., King of Poland, and which was partially transformed into gold.[32] The elixir relieved the same king from the effects of a serious accident.

When every particle of his powder was expended, Sendivogius appears to have degenerated into a mere charlatan, obtaining large sums on the pretence of manufacturing the powder of projection. On one occasion he so far descended as to silver a piece of gold, and pretending that he possessed the elixir, he caused the silver to disappear by a chemical process, which he imposed on the ignorant as a projection of the tincture and a conversion of silver into gold.

His confidential servant, Bodowski, explains this deception as a finesse to conceal his real character, having learned from experience the necessity of defending himself from the violence of covetous men. He

sometimes feigned poverty, or lay in bed as one attacked with the gout or other sickness. By these means he diverted the general suspicion that he possessed the philosophers' stone, preferring to pass for an impostor than for one in the enjoyment of illimitable wealth. He frequently travelled in a servant's livery, concealing most of his red powder in the footstep of his chariot, and causing one of his servants to sit inside. He kept some of the powder in a small gold box, and with a single grain of it would convert so much mercury into gold as would sell for five hundred ducats.[33]

He was at his castle of Groverna, on the frontiers of Poland and Silesia, when he was visited by two strangers, one of whom was old while the other was young. They presented him with a letter bearing twelve seals, and addressed to Sendivogius. He declared that he was not the person whom they sought, but was at length persuaded to open the document, and learned that they were a deputation from the Rosicrucian Society, who wished to initiate him. He pretended not to understand them when they spoke of the stone of the philosophers, but they drew him into conversation on several abstruse subjects, he, however, declining to the last the initiation which was offered him.

Michael Sendivogius died at Parma in 1646, aged eighty-four years, having been counsellor of state to four emperors successively. His only daughter had married an army captain against her father's wish. He left her nothing but a "Treatise on the Salt of the Philosophers," which has never been printed, and, therefore, must not be confused with a spurious work which has been ascribed to him under a similar title.

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The Sethon-Sendivogius treatises are generally known under the collective title, "A New Light of Alchemy." They were written to counteract the many adulterated and false receipts composed through the fraud and covetousness of impostors. The procedure they indicate is declared to be the result of manual experience. "Many men, both of high and low condition, in these last years past, have to my knowledge seen Diana unveiled. The extraction of the soul out of gold or silver, by what vulgar way of alchymy soever, is but a mere fancy. On the contrary, he which, in a philosophical way, can, without any fraud and colourable deceit, make it that it shall really tinge the basest metal, whether with

gain or without gain, with the colour of gold or silver (abiding all requisite tryals whatever), hath the gates of Nature opened to him for the enquiring into further and higher secrets, and with the blessing of God to obtain them.”

It is thus in the writings of the alchemists that we are continually glimpsing or hearing of altitudes beyond transmutation, of regions of achievement which nothing in the pages of the adepts prove them to have actually explored, but which in possession of a comprehensive theory of organic and inorganic development they beheld as a Promised Land.

The “New Light of Alchemy” insists on the existence of a sperm in everything, and that all Nature originated at the beginning from one only seed. It treats of the generation of metals and the manner of their differentiation, of the extraction of their seed, and of the manufacture of the stone or tincture.

Gustenhover

A respectable goldsmith, named Gustenhover, resided at Strasburg in 1603. In a time of great peril he gave shelter to a certain M. Hirschborgen, who is described as good and religious. On leaving his house after a considerable stay, this person presented his humane host with some powder of projection, and then, departing on his journey, was heard of no more.

Gustenhover imprudently made transmutations before numerous people, and the fact was reported to the Emperor Rodolph II., himself an amateur in alchemy. He wrote to the magistrates of Strasburg, directing that the goldsmith should be forthwith sent to him. The order was zealously obeyed, the man arrested, and guarded with vigilance from all possibility of escape. When he discovered that the intention of his imprisonment was to send him to the Emperor at Prague, he divined the whole of the business, and invited the magistrates to meet together, desiring them to bring a crucet and charcoal, and without his approaching to melt some lead. Musket balls were used for the purpose, and when the metal was molten, he handed them a small portion of red powder, which they cast into the crucet, and the result of their calcination was a considerable quantity of pure gold.

When he was brought into the presence of the gold-seeking Emperor, Gustenhover was forced to admit that he had not himself prepared the miraculous powder, and that he was in total ignorance about its nature and composition. The monarch regarded this merely as one of the subterfuges which were common in his experience of jealous adepts. The goldsmith reiterated his protestations in vain; the whole of his powder was speedily exhausted, yet he found himself still set to the now impossible task of making gold. He sought a refuge from the fury of the avaricious wretch, who has been denominated the German Hermes by an alchemical blasphemy accursed by all sons of the doctrine; but he was pursued, dragged back, and immured in the White Tower, where the

imperial dragon, blindly and obstinately convinced that the alchemist was concealing his secret, detained him for the rest of his life.

The adept who presented the goldsmith with the auriferous gift of misery, the so-called Hirschborgen, is supposed to be identical with Alexander Sethon, at that period errant, under various disguises, in Germany.

Busardier

Few particulars are recorded of this adept. He dwelt at Prague with a lord of the Court, and, falling sick, he perceived that his immediate death was inevitable. In this extremity he wrote a letter to his chosen friend Richtausen, at Vienna, begging him to come and abide with him during his last moments. On the receipt of this letter, Richtausen set out, travelling with all expedition, but, on arriving at Prague, he had the mortification to find that the adept was no more. He inquired diligently if he had left anything behind him, and he was informed by the steward of the nobleman with whom he had lodged that a powder alone had been left, which the nobleman seemed anxious to preserve, but which the steward did not know how to use. Upon this information, Richtausen adroitly got possession of the powder, and then departed. The nobleman, hearing of the transaction, threatened to hang his steward if he did not recover the powder, and the latter, judging that no one but Richtausen could have taken it, pursued him, well-armed. He overtook him on the road and presented a pistol to his head, saying he would shoot him if he did not return the powder. Richtausen, seeing there was no other way to preserve his life, acknowledged his possession of the treasure, and pretended to surrender it, but, by an ingenious contrivance, he abstracted a considerable quantity.

He was now the owner of a substance the value of which was fully known to him. He presented himself to the Emperor Ferdinand III., who was an alchemist, and who, aided by his mine-master, Count Russe, took every precaution in making projection with some of the powder given him by Richtausen. He converted three pounds of mercury into gold with one grain. The force of this tincture was one upon 19,470. The emperor is said to have caused a medal to be struck, bearing the effigy of Apollo with the caduceus of Mercury, and the motto—*Divina metamorphosis exhibita Praguæ, Jan. 15, anno 1648, in præsentia Sac. Cæs. Majest. Ferdinandi Tertii*. The reverse bore another inscription—*Raris hæc ut*

hominibus est ars; ita raro in lucem prodit, laudetur Deus in æternum, qui partem suæ infinitæ potentiæ novis suis abjectissimis creaturis communicat.

Richtausen was ennobled by the title of Baron Chaos.

Among many transformations performed by the same powder was one by the Elector of Mayence in 1651. He made projection with all the precautions possible to a learned and skilful philosopher. The powder, enclosed in gum tragacanth to retain it effectually, was put into the wax of a taper, which was lighted, the wax being then placed at the bottom of a crucet. These preparations were undertaken by the Elector himself. He poured four ounces of quicksilver on the wax, and put the whole into a fire covered with charcoal, above, below, and around. Then they began blowing to the utmost, and in about half an hour, on removing the coals, they saw that the melted gold was over red, the proper colour being green. The baron said that the matter was yet too high, and it was necessary to put some silver into it. The Elector took some coins out of his pocket, put them into the melting-pot, combined the liquefied silver with the matter in the crucet, and having poured out the whole when in perfect fusion into a lingot, he found, after cooling, that it was very fine gold, but rather hard, which was attributed to the lingot. On again melting, it became exceedingly soft, and the master of the mint declared to his highness that it was more than twenty-four carats, and that he had never seen so fine a quality of the precious metal.

Anonymous Adept

Athanasius Kircher, the illustrious German Jesuit, records, in his *Mundus Subterraneus*, that one of his friends, whose veracity he could not doubt, made him the following relation:—

“From my youth I made a peculiar study of alchemy, without ever attaining the object of that science. In my course of experiments I received a visit from a man who was entirely unknown to me. He asked very politely what was the object of my labours, and said, without giving me time to reply, ‘I see very well by these glasses and this furnace that you are engaged in a search after something very great in chemistry, but, believe me, you never will in that way attain to the object of your desire.’

“I said to him—’Sir, if you have better instructions, I flatter myself that you will give them.’

“‘Willingly,’ replied this generous unknown.

“Immediately I took a pen and wrote down the process he dictated.

“‘To show you the result,’ said the stranger, ‘let us both work together according to what you have written.’

“We proceeded, and our operation being finished, I drew from the chemical vessel a brilliant oil; it congealed into a mass, which I broke into a powder. I took part of this powder and projected it on three hundred pounds of quicksilver; it was in a little time converted into pure gold, much more perfect than that of the mines; it endured all the proofs of the goldsmiths.

“A prodigy so extraordinary struck me with surprise and astonishment. I became almost stupid, and, as another Crœsus, fancied I possessed all the riches in the universe. My gratitude to my benefactor was more than I could express. He told me that he was on his travels and wanted nothing whatever; ‘but it gratifies me,’ said he, ‘to counsel those who are unable to complete the Hermetic work.’ I pressed him to remain

with me, but he retired to his inn. Next day I called there, but what was my surprise at not finding him in it, or at any place in the town! I had many questions to ask him which left me in doubt. I returned to work according to the receipt, but failed in the result. I repeated the process with more care; it was all in vain! Yet I persevered until I had expended all the transmuted gold and the greater part of my own property.”

“We see,” remarks Kircher, very gravely, “by this true history, how the devil seeks to deceive men who are led by a lust of riches. This alchemist was convinced he had an infernal visitor, and he destroyed his books, furnace, and apparatus, by the timely advice of his confessor.”

Albert Belin

Of this Benedictine, who was born at Besançon in 1610, the amateurs of alchemy and the occult sciences have much prized the following opuscula:—”A Treatise on Talismans or Astral figures, demonstrating the exclusively natural origin of their no less admirable virtues, with the manner of their composition and their practical utility;” “Justification of the Sympathetic Powder,” published together at Paris, 1671, 12mo; and, in particular, “The Adventures of an Unknown Philosopher in the search after and on the discovery of the Philosophical Stone.” This is divided into four books, and the manner of accomplishing the *magnum opus* is indicated with perspicacity in the fourth. It was published in duodecimo at Paris in 1664, and has since been reprinted. In the dedicatory epistle the authorship is disclaimed by Belin, who remarks that, in accordance with his profession, he should be occupied with the great work of divine grace rather than with the natural *magnum opus*. The adventures are the production of a young man with whom he was once well acquainted, and who was then lately deceased. In the fourth book, the narrator of the story relates how, with a copy of Raymond Lully in his hand, he went by himself into a wood, and there he was interrupted in his studies by a wonderful lady, in a wonderful silverine dress, embroidered with flowers of gold. She proves to be Wisdom, and is greeted by the student as his adorable mistress. In her infinite grace and condescension, the divine incarnation of philosophy instructs her ravished listener, during three several discourses, in the nature, effects, and excellences of the rich and fruitful stone, of the matter whereof it is composed, and of its development into absolute perfection.

The story is suggestive and curious, but in literary and romantic merit it will bear no comparison with the “Chemical Nuptials of Christian Rosencreutz.”

Eirenæus Philalethes

In “The Real History of the Rosicrucians,” having no space for an adequate discussion of the question, I followed the more general opinion of Hermetic writers by identifying the author of the *Introitas Apertus* with the author of the *Lumen de Lumine*, Thomas Vaughan, and concluded that he wrote indifferently under the pseudonyms of Eugenius Philalethes and Eirenæus Philalethes.

Certain misleading references in great but fallible bibliographies, and one piece of inextricable confusion in the text of the *Introitus Apertus*, made this view appear to be fairly reasonable. However, in the course of a somewhat detailed notice, a writer in the *Saturday Review* has taken me to task, by no means discourteously, be it said, for inaccuracy in my account of Vaughan.

On the authority of Ashmole and Wood, he states that this personage was the brother of the Silurist poet, Henry Vaughan, that he was born at Llansaintfraid, in Brecknockshire, during the year 1621, that he graduated at Jesus College, Oxford, took orders, and returned to hold the living of his native parish. Under the Commonwealth he was ejected as a Royalist, and then betook himself to chemical experiments, one of which cost him his life on the 27th of February 1665.

Now, it is clear that these facts do not correspond with the life, such as we know it, of the author of the *Introitus Apertus*, and the identification of the two Philalethes, a habit which is apparently unknown to the Saturday Reviewer, must be therefore abandoned. Why this identification has hitherto taken place, and why, with some misgivings, it was continued in my work on the Rosicrucians, may be very easily explained.

The grounds of the confusion are these:—First, the similarity of the assumed name, half of which was common to them both, while the other half appears to have been interchangeable in the minds of historians and

bibliographers alike, including the compilers of the Catalogue in the Library of the British Museum, which attributes the *Introitus Apertus* indiscriminately to both Philalethes. Second, the fact that almost every edition and translation of this treatise contains the following passage in the initial paragraph of the preface:—

"I being an adept, anonymous, and lover of learning, decreed to write this little Treatise of physical secrets in the year 1645, in the twenty-third year of my age, to pay my duty to the sons of art, and lend my hand to bring them out of the labyrinth of error, to show the adepts that I am a brother equal to them. I presage that many will be enlightened by these my labours. They are no fables, but real experiments, which I have seen, made, and know, as any adept will understand. I have often in writing laid aside my pen, because I was willing to have concealed the truth under the mask of envy; but God compelled me to write, Whom I could not resist: He alone knows the heart—to Him only be glory for ever. I undoubtedly believe that many will become blessed in this last age of the world with this arcanum. May the will of God be done! I confess myself unworthy of effecting such things—I adore the holy will of God, to Whom all things are subjected! He created and preserves them to this end."

A simple arithmetical operation will show that the author was consequently born in the year 1621, when also Eugenius Philalethes, otherwise Thomas Vaughan, first saw the light. This would remain unchallenged, but for the fact that the original edition[34] of the *Introitus* is asserted to read *trigesimo anno*, in the thirty-third year, instead of *vigesimo anno*. There is no copy of this original edition in the British Museum, and my knowledge of it is derived from the reprint in Langlet du Fresnoy's *Histoire de la Philosophie Hermétique*. Eirenæus, in accordance with the later impressions, is venerated by the faithful of Hermes as the adept who accomplished the grand and sublime act at the age of twenty-two.

These grounds, which in themselves are considerable, may be supplemented by the fact that there is much similarity in the style and methods of the two writers.

Eugenius Philalethes wrote *Anthroposophia Theomagica*; *Anima Magica Abscondita*, published together in 1650; *Magia Adamica*, 1650;

“The Man-Mouse” (a satire on Henry More, the Platonist); “The Second Wash, or The Moore (*i.e.*, Henry More) Scoured once more,” 1651; *Lumen de Lumine*, 1651; “The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity R.C.,” 1652; *Aula Lucis*, 1652; “Euphrates, or The Waters of the East,” 1655. “A Brief Natural History,” published in 1669, also bears his name, and in 1679 his poetical remains were published by Henry, his brother, along with some effusions of his own, entitled *Thalia Rediviva*.

Some idea of the confusion which exists in the minds of biographers and bibliographers alike on this point may be gathered from the fact that some authorities represent Thomas Vaughan as dying in 1656, while Chalmers’ Biographical Dictionary attributes all the works of Eugenius Philalethes to Henry the Silurist, whom he terms a Rosicrucian fanatic.

If much be confusion which concerns Thomas Vaughan, all is chaos in respect of Eirenæus Philalethes. He would appear to have emigrated to America at a comparatively early period. The Amsterdam original edition of his *Experimenta de Præparatione Mercurii Sophici*, which was issued by Daniel Elzevir in 1668, describes that work as *ex manuscripto philosophi Americani, alias Æyrenœi Philalethes, natu Angli, habitatione Cosmopolitæ*. In this way, those who have refrained from identifying him with Thomas Vaughan, carefully confuse him with George Starkey, also an Anglo-American, who claimed a familiar acquaintance with Philalethes, and who, owing his initiation to him, may be considered his philosophical son, but not his *alter ego*. Starkey returned to London, and wrote several chemical books, some of which detail the transmutations performed by Philalethes in the apothecary’s trans-atlantic laboratory. He died of the plague in London in 1665, while Eirenæus continued publishing for many years after that date, and lived for some time on intimate terms with the illustrious Robert Boyle, who, however, has given us no biographical particulars concerning him.

Not the least curious fact in the history of this mysterious adept is the apparently complete disappearance of numbers of his printed works, which an authentic list extends to some forty volumes, some of which seem perfectly unknown and unheard of by bibliographers and collectors alike. Langlet du Fresnoy enumerates several manuscript treatises, but gives no clue to their whereabouts.

It is from the books of Philalethes himself that we must be contented to glean the scanty facts of his life. The thirteenth chapter of the *Introitus Apertus ad Occlusum Regis Palatium* contains the following remarkable account of its author:—

"All alchemical books abound with obscure enigmas and sophistical operations. I have not written in this style, having resigned my will to the Divine pleasure. I do not fear that the art will be disesteemed because I write plainly, for true wisdom will defend its own honour. I wish gold and silver were as mean in esteem as earth, that we need not so strictly conceal ourselves. For we are like Cain, driven from the pleasant society we formerly had without fear; now we are tossed up and down as if beset with furies; nor can we suppose ourselves safe in any one place long. We weep and sigh, complaining to the Lord, 'Behold, whosoever shall find me will slay me!' We travel through many nations like vagabonds, and dare not take upon us the care of a family, neither do we possess any certain habitation. Although we possess all things we can use but a few; what, therefore, do we enjoy except the speculations of our minds? Many strangers to this art imagine that if they enjoyed it they would do great good; so I believed formerly, but the danger I have experienced has taught me otherwise. Whoever encounters the eminent peril of his life will act with more caution thenceforward. I found the world in a most wicked state, scarce a man but is guided by some selfish and unworthy motive, however honest or upright he is judged in public. An adept cannot effect the works of mercy to an uncommon extent without in some degree confiding to the secrecy of others, and this is at the hazard of imprisonment and death. I lately had a proof of it; for, being in a foreign place, I administered the medicine to some distressed poor persons who were dying, and they having miraculously recovered, there was immediately a rumour spread abroad of the elixir of life, insomuch that I was forced to fly by night with exceeding great trouble, having changed my clothes, shaved my head, put on other hair, and altered my name, else I would have fallen into the hands of wicked men that lay in wait for me, merely on suspicion, excited by the thirst of gold. I could mention other dangers which would seem ridiculous to those who did not stand in a similar situation. They think they would manage their affairs better, but they do not consider that all those intelligent people, whose society is chiefly desirable, are extremely discerning, and a slight conjecture is enough to produce a conspiracy; for the iniquity of men is

so great that I have known a person to have been strangled with a halter on suspicion; although he did not possess the art, it was sufficient that a desperate man had report of it. This age abounds with ignorant alchemists; however ignorant of science, they know sufficient to discover an adept, or to suspect him. An appearance of secresy will cause them to search and examine every circumstance of your life. If you cure the sick, or sell a large quantity of gold, the news is circulated all through the neighbourhood. The goldsmith knows that the metal is too fine, and it is contrary to law for any one to alloy it who is not a regular metallurgist. I once sold pure silver worth £600 in a foreign country. The goldsmith, notwithstanding I was dressed as a merchant, told me 'this silver was made by art.' I asked the reason he said so. He replied, 'I know the silver that comes from Spain, England, &c. This is purer than any of them.' Hearing this I withdrew. There is no better silver in trade than the Spanish, but if I had attempted to reduce my silver from its superior purity, and was discovered, I would be hanged for felony. I never called again for either the silver or the price of it. The transmission of gold and silver from one country to another is regulated by strict laws, and this is enough to condemn the adept who appears to have a quantity of it. Thus, being taught by these difficulties, I have determined to lie hid, and will communicate the art to thee who dreamest of performing public good, that we may see what you will undertake when you obtain it.

"The searcher of all hearts knows that I write the truth; nor is there any cause to accuse me of envy. I write with an unterrified quill in an unheard of style, to the honour of God, to the profit of my neighbours, with contempt of the world and its riches; because Elias the artist is already born, and now glorious things are declared of the city of God. I dare affirm that I do possess more riches than the whole known world is worth, but I cannot make use of it because of the snares of knaves. I disdain, loathe, and detest the idolizing of silver and gold, by which the pomps and vanities of the world are celebrated. Ah, filthy evil! Ah, vain nothingness? Believe ye that I conceal the art out of envy? No, verily I protest to you, I grieve from the very bottom of my soul that we are driven like vagabonds from the face of the Lord throughout the earth. But what need many words? The thing we have seen, taught, and made, which we have, possess, and know, that we do declare; being moved with compassion for the studious, and with indignation of gold, silver, and precious stones, not as they are creatures of God, far be it from us, for in

that respect we honour them, and think them worthy of esteem, but the people of God adore them as well as the world. Therefore let them be ground to powder like the golden calf! I do hope and expect that within a few years money will be as dross; and that prop of the anti-Christian beast will be dashed to pieces. The people are mad, the nations rave, an unprofitable wight is set up in the place of God. At our long expected and approaching redemption, the New Jerusalem shall abound with gold in the streets, the gates thereof shall be made with entire stones, most precious ones, and the tree of life in the midst of Paradise shall give leaves for the *healing* of the nations. I know these my writings will be to men as pure gold; and through them gold and silver will become vile as dirt. Believe me, the time is at the door, I see it in spirit, when we, adeptists, shall return from the four corners of the earth, nor shall we fear any snares that are laid against our lives, but we shall give thanks to the Lord our God. I would to God that every ingenious man in the whole earth understood this science; then it would only be valued for its wisdom, and virtue only would be had in honour. I know many adepts who have vowed a most secret silence. I am of another judgment because of the hope I have in my God; therefore I consulted not with my brethren, or with flesh and blood, in these my writings: God grant that it be to the glory of His name!"

We are told in the preface to "Ripley Revived" the authors to whom he was at any rate chiefly indebted. "For my own part, I have cause to honour Bernard Trévisan, who is very ingenious, especially in the letter to Thomas of Boulogne, where I seriously confess I received the main light in the hidden secret. I do not remember that ever I learned anything from Raymond Lully. Some who are not adepts give more instruction to a beginner than one whom perfect knowledge makes cautious. I learned the secret of the *magnet* from one, the *chalybs* from another, the use of *Diana's Doves* from a third, the *air* or *cameleon* from another, the gross preparation of the dissolvent in another, the number of *eagles* in another; but for *operations* on the *true matter* and signs of the *true mercury*, I know of none like Ripley, though Flamel be eminent. I know what I say, having learned by experience what is truth and what is error.

"I have read misleading, sophistical writers, and made many toilsome, laborious experiments, though but young; and having at length, through the undeserved mercy of God, arrived at my haven of rest, I shall

stretch out my hand to such as are behind. I have wrote several treatises, one in English, very plain but not perfected—unfortunately, it slipped out of my hand. I shall be sorry if it comes abroad into the world—two in Latin, *Brevis Manuductio ad Rubinem Cœlestem*, and *Fons Chymicæ Philosophiæ*—these, for special reasons, I resolve to suppress. Two others I lately wrote, which, perhaps, you may enjoy, namely, *Ars Metallorum Metamorphoses*, and *Introitus Apertus ad Occlusum Regis Palatium*. I wrote two poems in English, which are lost; also, in English, an Enchiridion of experiments, a diurnal of meditations, with many receipts declaring the whole secret, and an Enigma annexed. These also fell into the hands of one who, I conceive, will never restore them."

The delinquent in question was undoubtedly George Starkey, who published the "Marrow of Alchemy" under the name of Eirenæus Philoponos Philalethes; this metrical account of the Hermetic theory and practice is apparently the vanished verse of the adept, but it contains in addition an account of the editor's own initiation, which is certainly worth transcribing.

"I have now to assert, from my own experience, facts of transmutation of which I was an eye-witness. I was well acquainted with an artist with whom I have often conversed on the subject, and I saw in his possession the white and the red elixir in very large quantity. He gave me upwards of two ounces of the white medicine, of sufficient virtue to convert 120,000 times its weight into the purest virgin silver. With this treasure I went to work ignorantly upon multiplication, and was caught in the trap of my own covetousness, for I expended or wasted all this tincture. However, I made projection of part of it, which is sufficient for my present purpose, enabling me to assert the possibility of the art from ocular demonstration. I have tinged many times hundreds of ounces into the best silver. Of a pound of mercury I have made within less than a scruple of a pound of silver; of lead, little more waste; but 'tis wondrous to see tin—although a dross was burnt from it, yet its weight increased in the fire. I essayed the medicine on copper, iron, even on brass and pewter, on spelter, solder, tinglass, mercury, and on regulus of antimony; and I can say with truth it conquers all metallic things, and brings them all to perfection. I found there was nothing akin to it but it would tinge into pure silver. Even perfect gold was penetrated and changed into a white glass, that would transmute, but in small quantity, inferior metals

into silver; but when this silver was assayed it was found to abide *aquafortis*, cupel of antimony, and weighed as gold, so that it was *white gold*. This was because the white tincture had fermented with red earth, and both virtues coming into projection, produced silver-coloured gold, or silver equalling gold in perfection, but wanting its hue. I did not know the value of this silver till my medicine was nearly gone, and sold eighty ounces of it at the common price, though it was as valuable as gold. I projected the medicine on pure silver, and had a chrystalline metal, like burnished steel or mirror, but there was no increase of virtue in this; it tinged only so much as it would if it had not been projected on silver.

“The artist who gave me this is still living; I prize him as my own life; I wish his happiness, for he has been a sure friend. He is at present on his travels, visiting artists and collecting antiquities as a citizen of the world. He is an Englishman of an ancient, honourable family, who now live in the place wherein he was born. He is scarcely thirty-three years of age, and is rarely learned. You cannot know more of him from me, nor can you be acquainted with him; his acquaintance with me is as unexpected as his love was cordial. I had often seen by experiment that he was master of the white and red before he would vouchsafe to trust me with a small bit of the stone, nor would I press him, trusting for his courtesy soon or late, which I shortly received, by what I have said of the white medicine, and also a portion of his mercury.

“He told me this mercury was a matchless treasure, if God would open my eyes to the use of it, else I might grope in blindness. With this dissolvent, which is the hidden secret of all masters, he exceedingly multiplied his red stone. I saw him put a piece of the red, by weight, into that same mercury, which then digested, dissolved it, and made it change colour, and in three days it passed through the process of black, white, and red.

“I thought that if the red and white could be multiplied that one lineal progress led to either, and on this false ground I destroyed ten parts in twelve of my medicine. This loss did not suffice me, for I mixed the remaining two parts with ten times their weight of Luna, and fell to work again, hoping to make up for my first error. I then began to think upon the maxims of the old books, revolved in my mind the agreement of my

work with the laws of Nature, and at length I concluded that each thing is to be disposed according to its condition.

“When I found that my vain attempts only threw away the tincture, I stopped my hand, resolving to keep the few grains left for some urgent necessity, which for its preservation I mixed with ten parts of Luna.

“I tried some of the mercury before mentioned on gold, my desire being to see the work carried forward and brought to Luna, if not to Sol. This, then, I projected on mercury. After having alloyed it with silver it tinged fifty parts, and I strove to imbibe it, but in vain, because I had let it cool. I foolishly supposed to obtain the oil by imbibition. However, Nature carried on the work into blackness, the colours, and whiteness, which yet was far short of what I looked for.

“In these trials I wasted nearly all my mercury likewise; but I had for my consolation the witnessing of transmutations, and those extraordinary processes which I beheld with mine own eyes, and blessed God for seeing.

“In some time I met my good friend and told all my mishaps, hoping that he would supply me as before; but he, considering that my failures had made me wise, would not trust me with more, lest I should pluck the Hesperian tree as I chose for my own and other men’s hurt. He said to me, ‘Friend, if God elects you to this art, He will in due time bestow the knowledge of it; but if in His wisdom He judge you unfit, or that you would do mischief with it, accursed be that man who would arm a maniac to the harm of his fellow-creatures. While you were ignorant, I gave you a great gift, so that, if Heaven ordained, the gift should destroy itself. I see it is not right you should enjoy it at present; what providence denies I cannot give you, or I should be guilty of your misconduct.’

“I confess this lesson of divinity did not please me; as I hoped so much from him, his answer was a disappointment. He further said that God had granted me knowledge, but withheld the fruit of it for the present.

“Then I gave him to understand how I had discovered the skill of the water, ‘by which, in time, I may obtain what you deny, and which I am resolved to attempt.’

“‘If so, then,’ he replied, ‘attend to what I say, and you may bless God for it. Know that we are severely bound by strong vows never to supply any man by our art who might confound the world, if he held it at will; and all the evil he does is left at the door of that adept who is so imprudent. Consider what a prize you had both of the *stone* and of the *mercury*. Would not any one say that he must be mad that would throw it all away without profit?

“‘Had you been guided by reason you might have enough of what I gave you. Your method was to add to the purest *gold* but a grain of the *stone*; in fusion it would unite to it, and then you might go about the work with your *mercury*, which would speedily mix with that gold and greatly shorten the work, which you might easily govern to the *red*; and as you saw how I wedded new *gold* to *such sulphur* and *mercury*, you saw the weight, time, and heat, what more could you have wished? And seeing you know the art of preparing the *fiery mercury*, you might have as much store as any one.

“‘But you do not perceive by this that God is averse to you, and caused you to waste the treasure I gave you. He sees perhaps that you would break His holy laws and do wrong with it; and though He has imparted so much knowledge, I plainly see that He will keep you some years without the enjoyment of that which no doubt you would misuse. Know, that if you seek this art without a ferment, you must beware of frequent error; you will err and stray from the right path, notwithstanding all your care, and perhaps may not in the course of your life attain this treasure, which is the alone gift of God. If you pursue the straightest course it will take a year to arrive at perfection; but if you take wrong ways, you shall be often left behind, sometimes a year, and must renew your charge and pains, repenting of your loss and error, in much distraction, care, and perils, with an expense you can hardly spare. Attend therefore to my counsel, and I shall disclose the secret conditionally. Swear before the mighty God that you will, for such a time, abstain from the attempt or practice; nor shall you at that time, even if you are at the point of death, disclose some few points that I will reveal to you in secrecy.’

“I swore, and he unlocked his mind to me, and proved that he did not deceive by showing me those lights which I shall honestly recount, as far as my oath will admit.”

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Eirenæus Philalethes has the credit of unexampled perspicuity, and his *Introitus Apertus*, in particular, is an abridgement or digest of the whole *turba philosophorum*. Those who are in search of the physical secret should begin by the careful study of his works; thence they should proceed to a consideration of the authors whom he himself recommends, after which the best Hermetic writers, from the days of Geber downward, should be taken in their chronological order, carefully analysed, and their points of difference and agreement duly noted.

The physical nature of the alchemical arcana in the custody of the true Philalethes are best seen by the narratives and commentaries of his pupil, George Starkey. The mystery which surrounds the adept stimulates unbalanced imaginations, and dilates into Titanic stature the projects which he cherished and the wonders he is supposed to have accomplished. The *Introitus Apertus*, amid much that is mystical and much that suggests an exceedingly romantic interpretation, is a treatise of practical alchemy, and further elaborates the principles, evidently physical, that are expounded in the metrical essays which were preserved and made public by Starkey.

Pierre Jean Fabre

This physician of Montpellier, to whom chemistry is indebted for some steps in its progress, flourished at the beginning of the seventeenth century. He believed in the transmutation of metals, but is not considered as an adept, though he wrote seventeen treatises on this subject, and on the Spagiric Medicine. His most curious work is *Alchimista Christianus*. Toulouse, 1632, 8vo. In *Hercules Piochymicus*, published at the same place two years later, he maintains that the labours of Hercules are allegories, which contain the arcana of Hermetic philosophy.

He defines the philosophical stone as the seed out of which gold and silver are generated. It is three and yet one; it may be found in all compounded substances, and is formed of salt, mercury, and sulphur, which, however, are not to be confounded with the vulgar substances so denominated.

Helvetius

The following singularly impressive and even convincing testimony to the alleged fact of metallic transmutation was published by the eminent Dutch physician, John Frederick Helvetius, at the Hague in 1667, and was dedicated to his friends, Dr Retius of Amsterdam, Dr Hansius of Heidelberg, and Dr Menzelin of Brandeburg.

“On the 27th December 1666, in the afternoon, a stranger, in a plain, rustic dress, came to my house at the Hague. His manner of address was honest, grave, and authoritative; his stature was low, with a long face and hair black, his chin smooth. He seemed like a native of the north of Scotland, and I guessed he was about forty-four years old. After saluting me, he requested me most respectfully to pardon his rude intrusion, but that his love of the pyrotechnic art made him visit me. Having read some of my small treatises, particularly that against the sympathetic powder of Sir Kenelm Digby, and observed therein my doubt of the Hermetic mystery, it caused him to request this interview. He asked me if I still thought there was no medicine in Nature which could cure all diseases, unless the principal parts, as the lungs, liver, &c., were perished, or the time of death were come. To which I replied, I never met with an adept, or saw such a medicine, though I read much of it, and often wished for it. Then I asked if he was a physician. He said he was a founder of brass, yet from his youth learned many rare things in chemistry, particularly of a friend—the manner to extract out of metals many medicinal arcana by the use of fire. After discoursing of experiments in metals, he asked me, Would I know the philosophers’ stone if I saw it? I answered, I would not; though I read much of it in Paracelsus, Helmont, Basil, and others, yet I dare not say I could know the philosophers’ matter. In the interim he drew from his breast pocket a neat ivory box, and out of it took three ponderous lumps of the stone, each about the size of a small walnut. They were transparent and of a pale brimstone colour, whereto some scales of the crucible adhered when this most noble substance was

melted. The value of it I since calculated was twenty tons weight of gold. When I had greedily examined and handled the stone almost a quarter of an hour, and heard from the owner many rare secrets of its admirable effects in human and metallic bodies, also its other wonderful properties, I returned him this treasure of treasures, truly with a most sorrowful mind, like those who conquer themselves, yet, as was just, very thankfully and humbly. I further desired to know why the colour was yellow, and not red, ruby colour, or purple, as the philosophers write. He answered, that was nothing, for the matter was mature and ripe enough. Then I humbly requested him to bestow a little piece of the medicine on me, in perpetual memory of him, though but of the size of a coriander or hemp seed. He presently answered, ‘Oh no, this is not lawful, though thou wouldst give me as many ducats in gold as would fill this room, not for the value of the metal, but for some particular consequences. Nay, if it were possible,’ said he, ‘that fire could be burnt by fire, I would rather at this instant cast all this substance into the fiercest flames.’ He then demanded if I had a more private chamber, as this was seen from the public street. I presently conducted him into the best furnished room backward, not doubting but he would bestow part thereof or some great treasure on me. He entered without wiping his shoes, although they were full of snow and dirt. He asked me for a little piece of gold, and, pulling off his cloak, opened his vest, under which he had five pieces of gold. They were hanging to a green silk ribbon, and were of the size of breakfast plates. This gold so far excelled mine that there was no comparison for flexibility and colour. The inscriptions engraven upon them he granted me to write out; they were pious thanksgivings to God, dated 20th August 1666, with the characters of the Sun, Mercury, the Moon, and the signs of Leo and Libra.

“I was in great admiration, and desired to know where and how he obtained them. He answered, ‘A foreigner, who dwelt some days in my house, said he was a lover of this science, and came to reveal it to me. He taught me various arts—first, of ordinary stones and chrystals, to make rubies, chrysolites, sapphires, &c., much more valuable than those of the mine; and how in a quarter of an hour to make an oxide of iron, one dose of which would infallibly cure the pestilential dysentery, or bloody flux; also how to make a metallic liquor to cure all kinds of dropsies most certainly and in four days; as also a limpid, clear water, sweeter than honey, by which in two hours of itself, in hot sand, it would extract the

tincture of garnets, corals, glasses, and such like.' He said more, which I, Helvetius, did not observe, my mind being occupied to understand how a noble juice could be drawn out of minerals to transmute metals. He told me his said master caused him to bring a glass of rain-water, and to put some silver leaf into it, which was dissolved therein within a quarter of an hour, like ice when heated. 'Presently he drank to me the half, and I pledged him the other half, which had not so much taste as sweet milk, but whereby, methought, I became very light-headed. I thereupon asked if this were a philosophical drink, and wherefore we drank this potion; but he replied, I ought not to be so curious.' By the said master's directions, a piece of a leaden pipe being melted, he took a little sulphureous powder out of his pocket, put a little of it on the point of a knife into the melted lead, and after a great blast of the bellows, in a short time he poured it on the red stones of the kitchen chimney. It proved most excellent pure gold, which the stranger said brought him into such trembling amazement that he could hardly speak; but his master encouraged him saying, 'Cut for thyself the sixteenth part of this as a memorial, and give the rest away among the poor,' which the stranger did, distributing this alms, as he affirmed, if my memory fail not, at the Church of Sparenda. 'At last,' said he, 'the generous foreigner taught me thoroughly this divine art.'

"As soon as his relation was finished, I asked my visitor to show me the effect of transmutation and so confirm my faith; but he declined it for that time in such a discreet manner that I was satisfied, he promising to come again in three weeks, to show me some curious arts in the fire, provided it were then lawful without prohibition. At the three weeks end he came, and invited me abroad for an hour or two. In our walk we discoursed of Nature's secrets, but he was very silent on the subject of the great elixir gravely asserting that it was only to magnify the sweet fame and mercy of the most glorious God; that few men endeavoured to serve Him, and this he expressed as a pastor or minister of a church; but I recalled his attention, entreating him to show me the metallic mystery, desiring also that he would eat, drink, and lodge at my house, which I pressed, but he was of so fixed a determination that all my endeavours were frustrated. I could not forbear to tell him that I had a laboratory ready for an experiment, and that a promised favour was a kind of debt. 'Yes, true,' said he, 'but I promised to teach thee at my return, with this proviso, if it were not forbidden.'

“When I perceived that all this was in vain, I earnestly requested a small crumb of his powder, sufficient to transmute a few grains of lead to gold; and at last, out of his philosophical commiseration, he gave me as much as a turnip seed in size, saying, ‘Receive this small parcel of the greatest treasure of the world, which truly few kings or princes have ever seen or known.’ ‘But,’ I said, ‘this perhaps will not transmute four grains of lead,’ whereupon he bid me deliver it back to him, which, in hopes of a greater parcel, I did; but he, cutting half off with his nail, flung it into the fire, and gave me the rest wrapped neatly up in blue paper, saying, ‘It is yet sufficient for thee.’ I answered him, indeed with a most dejected countenance, ‘Sir, what means this? The other being too little, you give me now less.’ He told me to put into the crucible half an ounce of lead, for there ought to be no more lead put in than the medicine can transmute. I gave him great thanks for my diminished treasure, concentrated truly in the superlative degree, and put it charily up into my little box, saying I meant to try it the next day, nor would I reveal it to any. ‘Not so, not so,’ said he, ‘for we ought to divulge all things to the children of art which may tend alone to the honour of God, that so they may live in the theosophical truth.’ I now made a confession to him, that while the mass of his medicine was in my hands, I endeavoured to scrape away a little of it with my nail, and could not forbear; but scratched off so very little, that, it being picked from my nail, wrapped in a paper, and projected on melted lead, I found no transmutation, but almost the whole mass of lead sublimed, while the remainder was a glassy earth. At this unexpected account he immediately said, ‘You are more dexterous to commit theft than to apply the medicine, for if you had only wrapped up the stolen prey in yellow wax, to preserve it from the fumes of the lead, it would have sunk to the bottom, and transmuted it to gold; but having cast it into the fumes, the violence of the vapour, partly by its sympathetic alliance, carried the medicine quite away.’ I brought him the crucible, and he perceived a most beautiful saffron-like tincture sticking to the sides. He promised to come next morning at nine o’clock, to show me that this tincture would transmute the lead into gold. Having taken his leave, I impatiently awaited his return, but the next day he came not, nor ever since. He sent an excuse at half-past nine that morning, and promised to come at three in the afternoon, but I never heard of him since. I soon began to doubt the whole matter. Late that night my wife, who was a most curious student and inquirer after the art, came soliciting

me to make an experiment of that little grain of the stone, to be assured of the truth. ‘Unless this be done,’ said she, ‘I shall have no rest or sleep this night.’ She being so earnest, I commanded a fire to be made, saying to myself, ‘I fear, I fear indeed, this man hath deluded me.’ My wife wrapped the said matter in wax, and I cut half an ounce of lead, and put it into a crucible in the fire. Being melted, my wife put in the medicine, made into a small pill with the wax, which presently made a hissing noise, and in a quarter of an hour the mass of lead was totally transmuted into the best and finest gold, which amazed us exceedingly. We could not sufficiently gaze upon this admirable and miraculous work of nature, for the melted lead, after projection, showed on the fire the rarest and most beautiful colours imaginable, settling in green, and when poured forth into an ingot, it had the lively fresh colour of blood. When cold it shined as the purest and most splendid gold. Truly all those who were standing about me were exceedingly startled, and I ran with this aurified lead, being yet hot, to the goldsmith, who wondered at the fineness, and after a short trial by the test, said it was the most excellent gold in the world.

“The next day a rumour of this prodigy went about the Hague and spread abroad, so that many illustrious and learned persons gave me their friendly visits for its sake. Amongst the rest, the general Assay-master, examiner of coins of this province of Holland, Mr Porelius, who with others earnestly besought me to pass some part of the gold through all their customary trials, which I did, to gratify my own curiosity. We went to Mr Brectel, a silversmith, who first mixed four parts of silver with one part of the gold, then he filed it, put *aquafortis* to it, dissolved the silver, and let the gold precipitate to the bottom; the solution being poured off and the calx of gold washed with water, then reduced and melted, it appeared excellent gold, and instead of a loss in weight, we found the gold was increased, and had transmuted a scruple of the silver into gold by its abounding tincture.

“Doubting whether the silver was now sufficiently separated from the gold, we mingled it with seven parts of antimony, which we melted and poured out into a cone, and blew off the regulus on a test, where we missed eight grains of our gold; but after we blew away the red of the antimony, or superfluous *scoria*, we found nine grains of gold for our eight grains missing, yet it was pale and silver-like, but recovered its full colour afterwards, so that in the best proof of fire we lost nothing at all of

this gold, but gained, as aforesaid. These tests I repeated four times and found it still alike, and the silver remaining out of the *aquafortis* was of the very best flexible silver that could be, so that in the total the said medicine or elixir had transmuted six drams and two scruples of the lead and silver into most pure gold.”

Guiseppe Francesco Borri

"The Rape of the Lock" and the graceful romance of "Undine" have familiarised every one with the doctrine of elementary spirits; but the chief philosophical, or pseudo-philosophical, account of these unseen but not extra-mundane intelligences has been the little book of the Comte de Gabalis, a series of conversations on the secret sciences. It is generally unknown that this work is little more than an unacknowledged translation of "The Key to the Cabinet of the Chevalier Borri, wherein may be found various epistles—curious, scientific, and chemical—with politic instructions, matters which deserve well of the curious, and a variety of magnificent secrets."[35] Borri, who appears to have been a microcosmic precursor of Cagliostro, was born at Milan in 1627. Some proceedings of an equivocal nature caused him, in his earlier years, to seek sanctuary in a church, but subsequently, like Joseph Balsamo, he underwent a complete transformation, announced that he was inspired of Heaven, that he was elected by the omnipotent God to accomplish the reformation of mankind, and to establish the *Regnum Dei*. There should be henceforth but a single religion, with the Pope as its head, and a vast army, with Borri as general, for the extermination of all anti-catholics. He exhibited a miraculous sword which St Michael had deigned to present him, declared that he had beheld in the empyrean a luminous palm-branch reserved for his own celestial triumph, announced that the Holy Virgin was divine by nature, that she conceived by inspiration, that she was equal with her Son, and was present in the Eucharist with him, that the Holy Spirit had taken flesh in her person, that the second and third persons of the Trinity are inferior to the Divine Father, that the fall of Lucifer involved that of a vast number of angels, who now inhabit the regions of the air, that it was by the intervention of these rebellious spirits that God created the world and gave life to all beasts, but that men were in possession of a Divine soul which God made in spite of himself.

Finally, with a contradiction more French than Italian, he gave out that he was himself the Holy Spirit incarnate.

Needless to say, this novel gospel, according to mystical imposture, brought him into conflict with hierarchic authority. He was arrested, and, on the 3d of January 1661, he was condemned as a heretic, and as guilty of various misdeeds. He managed to escape, took flight northward, and by the expectation of the stone philosophical contrived to cheat Christina, Queen of Sweden, out of a large sum of money. He perambulated various parts of Germany, making many supposed projections, visited the Low Countries, and in 1665 entered as a professional alchemist into the service of the King of Denmark. He announced that he was the master of a demon, who responded to his magical evocations, and dictated the operations required for the successful transmutation of metals. The name of this spook was Homunculus, which, according to Paracelsus, signifies a minute human being generated unnaturally without the assistance of the female organism, from the sperm of a man or a boy.

The monarch, determined to monopolise the talents of his adept, decided that the laboratory of Borri should be transferred to his own palace. The alchemist, with an eye to his freedom, objected that the power of his imp would be destroyed on the first attempt to divide him from a certain vast iron furnace, which was the sulphureous abode of Homunculus; but his royal patron was a man of resources, and the furnace was also transported. Five years passed away, and Frederick III. having died, his successor determined on a closer investigation of the transmutatory secrets of Borri, who took flight at the rumour, but was arrested on the frontiers of Hungary, and imprisoned at Vienna, where he was claimed by the Papal Nuncio as a fugitive condemned for his heresies. He was sent to Rome, and entombed in the Castle of St Angelo. There he was permitted to continue his alchemical processes, which were pursued unsuccessfully till his death in the year 1695.

“The Key to the Cabinet of the Chevalier Borri” has never been actually translated; the adaptation by the Abbé de Villars is, of course, of European celebrity. As to the chemical secrets contained in the original letters, it may be safely concluded that they are few and unimportant.

John Heydon

This mountebank royalist mystic has no claim to be included among alchemical philosophers, and is only noticed here to advise students that everything relating to alchemy in the whole of his so-called works was impudently stolen from Philalethes. He practised wholesale piracy on his contemporaries and on ancient authors with equal effrontery. The account of his voyage to the land of the Rosicrucians is a mangled version of Bacon's "Atlantis;" his apologues, epilogues, enigmas, &c., are also stolen goods; in short, whatever is of value in his books is matter borrowed from the highways and byways of occultism, and heaped indiscriminately together. Everything emanating from his own weakly intelligence is utterly contemptible; he was grossly superstitious and pitiably credulous, as may be seen by his medical recipes. He claimed a familiar acquaintance with the most arcane Rosicrucian mysteries, and pretended that he had visited the temples, holy houses, castles, and invisible mountains of the Fraternity. Of all the alchemical liars and of all mystical charlatans who have flourished in England since the first days of Anglo-occultism, John Heydon is chief.

Lascaris

German writers have principally occupied themselves with the transmutations of this singular personage, who so successfully shrouded himself in mystery, that his name, his age, his birthplace, and everything which concerns his private life are completely unknown.

He called himself Lascaris, but also adopted other appellations. He claimed an Oriental origin, and as he spoke Greek fluently, he has passed for a descendant of the royal house of Lascaris. He represented himself as the archimandrite of a convent in the Island of Mytilena, and bore letters from the Greek patriarch of Constantinople. His mission in the West was the solicitation of alms for the ransom of Christian prisoners in the East. He appeared for the first time in Germany at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a man seemingly some forty or fifty years old, of attractive mien, agreeable in manner, and fluent in his conversation. Finding himself indisposed at Berlin, he sent for a certain apothecary, who for some reason was unable to attend, and on several occasions was represented by a pupil at the bedside of the stranger. With this youth Lascaris fell into conversation, and a sort of friendship sprung up between them. The apothecary's pupil had studied Basil Valentine, and had attempted experiments on the principles of this adept. Lascaris recovered, and at the moment of departing from Berlin he took the youth aside, and presented him with a quantity of the transmuting powder, commanding him to be silent as to whence he had derived it, and while forbidding him to make use of it till some time after his departure, assured him that when Berlin unbelievers beheld its amazing effects, no one would be able to tax the alchemists with madness.

The name of this young man was John Frederick Bötticher. Intoxicated at the possession of such an unexpected treasure, he determined to devote himself entirely to alchemy. The apothecary, his master, vainly endeavoured to dissuade him from a pursuit which he

considered chimerical, for he astonished both him and his friends by changing silver into gold in their presence.

The experiment was repeated with mercury for the benefit of a friend of Bötticher, the tale spread, and the apothecary's pupil became the lion of Berlin, more especially as he spread the report that he was able to compose himself the philosophical tincture.

He was summoned before the King, Frederick William I., who wished to witness his performances, but he fled to an uncle at Wittenburg. He was claimed from the authorities of that town as a Prussian subject, but he was now a prize of value, and the Elector of Saxony opposed a counter claim for the possession of his person, and to him Bötticher decided to proceed. He was warmly welcomed, and when his transmutations had been witnessed, the title of baron was conferred on him. He took up his residence at Dresden, living in a style of great magnificence and prodigality, till every particle of his powder was expended, when his extravagance involved him in debt. His servants, whom he was unable to repay, spread the report that it was his intention to take flight, and the purblind Elector, refusing to perceive in this sudden failure of resources a proof that Bötticher was unable to compose or increase the philosophers' stone, surrounded his house with guards, and detained him practically as a prisoner.

At this juncture, Lascaris, who was still wandering in Germany, took pity on the misfortunes of his young neophyte, and endeavoured to extricate him from his embarrassing position by means of a young doctor named Pasch, who was a personal friend of the ennobled apothecary's boy. Their manœuvres resulted in the imprisonment of Pasch at the fortress of Sonneinstein, while Bötticher was closely confined in another castle at Kœnigstein.

Two years and a half passed away. At the end of that time Pasch succeeded in escaping at the expense of his limbs, and died after a few months, bitterly complaining of the treachery of the adept Lascaris, who had deserted him completely in his danger.

Bötticher remained in confinement with every opportunity to manufacture the philosophical stone, which, however he failed to accomplish; but what with his apothecary's training and his prison experiments, he had become skilled in several departments of chemistry.

He discovered the process for the production of red porcelain, and afterwards that of white, very superior in quality to the substances already known by that name. These inventions proved as valuable to the tyrannical Elector as the accomplishment of the *magnum opus*. Bötticher was restored to his favour, and again enjoyed his baronial title, but in his liberty he surrendered himself to an immoderately luxurious life, and died in 1719 at the age of thirty-seven years.

Bötticher was by no means the only apothecary's boy who was enriched with the powder of Lascaris, and despatched to preach the gospel of alchemy with practical demonstrations. Godwin, Hermann, Braun, and Martin of Fitzlar are mentioned among these half-initiated labourers, who shone till their stock-in-trade was exhausted, and then disappeared in succession.

In the meantime, Lascaris himself was not idle. On the 16th February 1609 he is believed to have changed mercury into gold and gold into silver, a double transmutation, considered by alchemical connoisseurs to be the evidence of an unparalleled adeptship. Liebkneck, counsellor of Wertherbourg, was a witness of this transmutation.

In the same year a goldsmith of Leipsic was visited by a mysterious stranger, who is unanimously identified with Lascaris, and who showed him a lingot, which he declared was manufactured by art, and which proved in assaying to be gold of twenty-two carats. It was purified by the goldsmith with antimony, and part of it was presented to him by the unknown as a memorial of the alleged transmutation.

Shortly after, a lieutenant-colonel in the Polish army, whose name was Schmolz de Dierbach, and who had inherited from his father a belief in alchemical science, was conversing on the subject at a café, when he was accosted by a stranger, who presented him with some powder of projection. It was of a red colour, and a microscopic examination revealed its crystalline nature. It increased the weight of the metals which it was supposed to transmute to an extent which chemical authorities declare to be physically impossible. The recipient made use of it generously, distributing to his friends and acquaintance the gold it produced in projection. The unknown donor is identified in the imagination of German historians with the mysterious Lascaris, who is supposed, in the same anonymous and unaccountable manner, to have

enriched the Baron de Creux with a box of the precious powder, and to have gratified the amateur Hermetic ambition of the Landgrave of Hesse Darmstadt through the commonplace medium of the post. In a word, every anonymous adept who appeared at this period in or about Germany is supposed to be Lascaris.

The last of his debtors or victims was the son of a Neapolitan mason, Domenico Manuel, who claims to have been mysteriously initiated into the transmutatory art in the year 1695. He was put in possession of a small quantity both of the white and red tinctures. Being insufficient to really enrich himself, he determined to trade upon the wonders they produced, and obtained large sums from wealthy amateurs for the privilege of beholding the consummation of the great work. He perambulated Spain, Belgium, and Austria, obtaining large sums, under the pretence of preparing the tincture, not only from private individuals, but from the Emperor Leopold and the Palatine Elector. In different places he assumed names that were different. Now he was Count Gaëtano, now Count de Ruggiero; at other times he called himself Field Marshal to the Duke of Bavaria, Commandant of Munich, a Prussian major-general, and by other titles. In 1705 he appeared at Berlin, where he imposed on the King himself for a brief period, after which, unable to ratify his transmutatory engagements, he was convicted of treason and hanged. This occurred on the 29th of August 1709.

Delisle

This artist, whose Christian name is unmentioned by his biographers, is included by Figuier among the emissaries or disciples of Lascaris, and much information concerning him will be found in the *Histoire de la Philosophic Hermétique* by his contemporary, Langlet du Fresnoy. He was a rustic of low birth in Provence, and he became acquainted with alchemical experiments by entering the service of a gentleman who was believed to be in possession of the stone. This gentleman is supposed to have received the prize from Lascaris. His operations, however, fell under suspicion, and he was forced to quit France. He retired into Switzerland, accompanied by Delisle, who is said to have assassinated him in the mountains, and to have thus got possession of a considerable quantity of the transmuting powder. However this may be, the servant, re-entered France in disguise, and about the year 1708 attracted general attention by changing lead and iron into silver and gold. He perambulated Languedoc, the Dauphiné, and Provence. At Sisteron he connected himself with the wife of a certain Alnys, who eventually shared his fortunes for the space of three years. His renown was increased by the apparent simplicity of his operations. He spread powder and oil over iron, thrust it into the fire, and brought it out a bar of gold. He distributed nails, knives, and rings partially transmuted, and was particularly successful in his experiments with common steel.

Cerisy, prior of New Castel, was employed by the Bishop of Senez to collect evidence concerning the truth of these marvels. An old gentleman offered Delisle a retreat at his castle of La Palud, where the alchemist, surrounded by admirers, received the daily visits of the curious. In Lenglet's "History of Hermetic Philosophy," there is a letter from the Bishop of Senez to the Minister of State and Comptroller-General of the Treasury at Paris, in which the prelate, who at first was incredulous, professes his inability to resist the evidence of actual transformation performed before himself and several vigilant witnesses, who took every

precaution against deception. There is also the Report of M. de Saint-Maurice, President of the Mint at Lyons, who testifies to the following facts. That he was accompanied by Delisle into the grounds of the Chateau de Saint Auban in May 1710, where he uncovered a basket that was sunk in the ground. In the middle of this basket there was an iron wire, at the end of which he perceived a piece of linen with some object tied up in it. He took possession of this parcel, carried it into the dining-room of the Chateau, and by the direction of Delisle he exposed its contents—a blackish earth about half a pound in weight—to the rays of the sun. After a quarter of an hour the earth was distilled in a retort of a portable furnace, and when a yellow liquor was perceived to flow into the receiver, Delisle recommended that the recipient should be removed before a viscous oil then rising should flow into it. Two drops of this yellow liquor, projected on hot quicksilver, produced in fusion three ounces of gold, which were presented to the Master of the Mint. Afterwards three ounces of pistol bullets were melted and purified with alum and saltpetre. Delisle handed Saint-Maurice a small paper, desiring him to throw in a pinch of the powder and two drops of the oil used in the first experiment. This done, the matter was covered with saltpetre, kept fifteen minutes in fusion, and then poured out on a piece of iron armour, which reappeared pure gold, bearing all assays. The conversion to silver was made in the same manner with white powder, and the certificate which testifies to these occurrences was officially signed on the 14th December 1760.

A part of the gold manufactured in this manner by Delisle was subjected to refinement at Paris, where three medals were struck from it; one of them was deposited in the king's cabinet. It bore the inscription *Aurum Arte Factum*.

With all his alchemical skill, Delisle was unable to read or write, and in disposition he was untractable, rude, and fanatical. He was invited to Court, but he pretended that the climate he lived in was necessary to the success of his experiments, inasmuch as his preparations were vegetable. The Bishop of Senez, suspecting him of unwillingness rather than inability, obtained a *lettre de cachet*, after two years of continual subterfuge on the part of the alchemist, who was thereupon arrested and taken on the road to Paris. During the journey, his guards, after endeavouring to extort his supposed riches, wounded him severely on the

head, in which state, on his arrival at the Bastille, he was forced to begin his alchemical operations, but after a short time he persistently refused to proceed, tore continually the bandages from his wound in the frenzy of his desperation, and in the year following his imprisonment he poisoned himself.

His illegitimate son, Alnys, by some means inherited a portion of the powder from his mother. He wandered through Italy and Germany performing transmutations. On one occasion he made projection before the Duke of Richlieu, then French ambassador at Vienna, and who assured the Abbé Langlet that he not only saw the operation performed, but performed it himself, twice on gold and forty times on silver.

Alnys made a considerable collection of gold coins, ancient and modern, while on a journey through Austria and Bohemia. On his return to Aix he presented himself to the President of Provence, who desired him to call the next day. Alnys, suspecting an intention to arrest him, fled in the interim. He was afterwards imprisoned at Marseilles, whence he contrived to escape to Brussels. It was here, in 1731, that he gave some philosophic mercury to M. Percell, the brother of Langlet de Fresnoy, which mercury the recipient fermented imperfectly, but succeeded so far as to convert an ounce of silver into gold. The death of a certain M. Grefier shortly after some operations on corrosive sublimate, by which Alnys proposed to instruct him in alchemy, made it necessary for him to depart, and he was heard of no more.

John Hermann Obereit

This writer, as much mystic as alchemist, was born at Arbon at Switzerland in 1725, and died in 1798. He inherited from his father a taste for transcendental chemistry, and the opinion that metals could be developed to their full perfection, but that the chief instrument was the grace of God, working in the soul of the alchemist. He laboured unceasingly at the physical processes, hoping thereby to restore the fallen fortunes of his family, but his laboratory was closed by the authorities as endangering the public safety. He contrived to make evident the harmless nature of his employment, and was received into the house of a brother of the physiognomist Lavater. He celebrated, he informs us, a mystical marriage with a seraphic and illuminated shepherdess named Theantis, the ceremony taking place in a castle on the extreme summit of a cloud-encompassed mountain. His bride after thirty-six days of transcendental union, which was neither platonic nor epicurean, but of a perfectly indescribable character, departed this life, and the bereaved husband, during the whole night of her decease, bewailed her in a mystical canticle. *La Connexion Originaire des Esprits et des Corps, d'apres les principes de Newton*, Augsbourg, 1776, and *Les Promenades de Gamaliel, juif Philosophe*, were bequeathed by Obereit to a neglectful posterity.

Travels, Adventures, And Imprisonments Of Joseph Balsamo

The notorious Count Cagliostro appears from an impartial review of his history and phenomenal exploits, to have been one of those characters not uncommonly met with in the chequered annals of occultism. Even as the modern “mediums,” who outrage the confidence of their believers by leavening the supernatural bread, whereof the ghastly patent is their prerogative and birthright, with the unrighteous mammon of material conjuring, and even as those conjurors who are sometimes supposed to still further perplex their audience by supplementary compacts with “spooks,” this high priest of transcendental trickery would seem to have possessed, perhaps unconsciously, a certain share of occult gifts, which assisted no little his unparalleled rogueries. Mystical knowledge beyond that of the age in which he lived was undoubtedly his, and though it was still superficial, he had a genius for making the most of it.

Joseph Balsamo, whatever has been advanced to the contrary by himself[36] or his admirers, was the son of Peter Balsamo and Felicia Bracconieri, both of humble extraction. He was born at Palermo, in Sicily, on the 8th of June 1743. His parents are authentically described as honest tradespeople and good Catholics, who were careful in the education of their offspring, and solicitous for their spiritual welfare. Their shop drew much custom in the populous neighbourhood which divided the handsome *Rue del Cæsaro*. While his children were still young, Peter Balsamo died, and, left under the inadequate control of a widowed mother, Joseph betrayed, even in his earliest years, a selfish and indolent disposition, greatly neglecting the scanty educational advantages which were afforded him. According to other accounts, he

was taken under the protection of his maternal uncle, who endeavoured to instruct him in the principles of religion, and to give him an education suitable to his age and prospects; but, even from his infancy, he showed himself uniformly averse to a virtuous course of life. His uncle was a worthy *bourgeois* of Palermo, who foresaw, by the vivacity and penetration of his nephew, that he might easily become proficient in letters and the sciences.[37] By him he was desired to embrace an ecclesiastical career, as the royal road to distinction in those days. Accordingly, at the age of thirteen he was placed in the Seminary of St Roch di Palermo, where he proved his independence and aversion to discipline by continually running away. Recaptured in vagabond company, he was committed, with no very favourable character, to a certain father-general of the Bon Fratelli, who was passing through Palermo. The father-general took charge of him and straightway carried him to a Benedictine convent on the outskirts of Cartagirone. There the walls were high, and the caged dove was in the keeping of an inflexible *frère tourier*. He assumed perforce the habit of a novice, and the father-general discovering his aptitude for natural history and, more especially, his herbalistic tastes, placed him under the tuition of the conventual apothecary, from whom, as he afterwards acknowledged, he learned the first principles of chemistry and medicine. Figuier states that in a short time he was able to manipulate the drugs with astonishing sagacity; but even then it was remarked that he seemed eager to discover those secrets which would further the interests of charlatanry.[38] In strict accordance with his natural perversity, he did not fail to give various instances of his innate viciousness, and drew down upon himself the continual chastisements of his superiors. One day the involuntary novice, whose irregularities were to some extent excusable on the ground of the constraint that was put on him, but who often outstripped all bounds, was set to read during dinner in the refectory a certain portion of an exceedingly edifying martyrology, and yielding, says one writer with pious indignation, to an inspiration of Belial, he substituted for the sacred text a blasphemous version suggested by his own dissolute imagination, perverting the sense and the incidents, and pushed his audacity so far as to substitute for the saintly names those of the most notorious courtesans of the period. A severe penance was imposed on the insolent offender; but one night he found means to evade the vigilance of his guardians, escaped from the convent, crossed the intervening country, and after

some days of joyous gipsying and vagabond wanderings, he arrived at Palermo. Some knowledge of the principles of chemistry and medicine was about the total of the advantages he had derived from the discipline of conventual life. His uncle began to despair of him, but advice and remonstrances were alike lost upon the young reprobate, who derided them all, and employing a certain portion of his time in the cultivation of a natural taste for drawing, he otherwise abandoned himself to unbridled excesses. He associated with rascals and ne'er-do-wells; his drunkenness, gambling, and general libertinage, led him into perpetual brawling; and he was frequently in the hands of the police, whom he is said to have taken special pleasure in resisting, frequently delivering by force the prisoners whom they had arrested. He has been also accused of forging tickets of admission to the theatres, and selling them with characteristic effrontery. One of his uncles coaxed him back for a time into his house, and was rewarded by the robbery of a considerable quantity of money and some valuable effects. He became an intermediary in the amorous intercourse of a female cousin with one of his friends. He carried *billets-doux* to and fro between them, and made the entire transaction personally profitable by extorting money from his friend, persuading him that the fair cousin had a partiality for presents, including both money and jewellery, and, of course, appropriating the funds which were entrusted to him. Graver crimes were soon laid to his charge. There was a certain dissolute Marquis Maurigi in Palermo who coveted an inheritance which had been willed to a pious establishment, and knowing Balsamo, to him were his projects confided, and an expedient was presently forthcoming. Joseph had a relative who was a notary, and by frequenting his office he found means to forge a will, bearing every mark of authenticity, in favour of the Marquis, who made good his claim to the estate, and no doubt liberally recompensed the skill and pains of his confederate. The falsification was discovered many years after, but the guilty parties were both of them far away. It was also rumoured that Balsamo was a party to the assassination of a wealthy canon, but the matter is exceedingly doubtful. He was many times arrested on various charges, but eluded justice, either by the absence of direct proof against him, or by the credit of his relations, and the exertions of reputable persons of Palermo, who took interest in his family. It will scarcely be credited that at this period Balsamo was only fourteen years of age. Naturally endowed with artistic aptitudes, he soon began to give lessons in drawing, and seems to have

been many times on a fair way to reformation. His skill in arms is also acknowledged, but, conscious of his superiority, his street brawls frequently ended in duels; his impetuosity even prompted him to take up the gauntlet for his companions, and he scorned danger.

The most notorious of his youthful exploits, and that which caused him to commence his life-long wanderings, was the adventure of the concealed treasure, which has been variously related.

An avaricious goldsmith, named Marano, resided at Palermo. He was a weak, superstitious man—a believer in magic, says M. Louis Figuier—and he was much attracted by the mystery which, even at this period, is declared by Figuier to have surrounded the life and escapades of Balsamo, who already posed as an initiate of the occult sciences. Joseph was now seventeen years of age, of handsome mien and haughty carriage, speaking little, but holding his hearers spell-bound by the magnetic fascination of his glance. He had been seen evoking spirits; he was believed to converse with angels, and to obtain by their agency an insight into the most interesting secrets. He had, in fact, radically changed; the common rogue was developing into the transcendental impostor. Marano lent an attentive ear to the stories concerning him, and burned with anxiety to behold “the friend of the celestial spirits.” The first interview took place in the lodging of Balsamo; the goldsmith fell on his knees before him, and Balsamo, after receiving his homage, raised him condescendingly from the ground, and demanded in a solemn manner why he had come to him.

“Thanks to your daily communion with spirits, you will easily know,” answered Marano, “and you should have no difficulty in assisting me to recover the money which I have wasted among false alchemists, or even to procure me more.”

“I can perform this service for you, provided you believe,” said Balsamo, with composure.

“Provided I believe!” cried the goldsmith; “I believe, indeed.”

An appointment was made for the next day in a meadow beyond the town, and the interview ended without another word.

This version of the story is more romantic than probable, and we owe it to the vivacity of a Frenchman’s imagination, which is never more

brilliant than when employed in the perversion or embellishment of history. According to the more sober *Aventures de Cagliostro*, Marano had for some time been acquainted with the youthful charlatan, who sought him one day at his own residence, and said to him: “You are aware of my communications with the supernal spirits; you are aware of the illimitable potency of the incantations to which I devote myself. Listen! In an olive field, at no great distance from Palermo, there is a buried treasure according to my certain knowledge, and by the help of a ceremonial evocation I can discover the precise spot where the spade of the seeker should be driven in. The operation, however, requires some expensive preliminaries; sixty ounces of gold are absolutely needed. Will you place them at my disposal?”

Marano declaimed against the preposterous extravagance of the demand, maintaining that the herbs and drugs utilised in alchemical experiments were exceedingly moderate in their price.

“‘Tis well,” said Balsamo, coldly. “The matter is soon settled; I shall enjoy the vast treasure alone. A blessing when shared is but half a blessing for those who participate in it.”

On the morrow, however, Marano sought out the enchanter, having been agonised by the gold fever the whole night.

“I am furnished with the sum you require,” he said. “But I pray you to bargain a little with the spirits, and endeavour to beat them down.”

“Do you take them for sordid speculators?” cried the magician, indignant. “The devil is no Jew, though he abode full long in Judea. He is a magnificent seigneur, living generously in every country of the world. Treat him with respect, he returns a hundredfold. I shall find elsewhere the sixty ounces of gold, and can afford to dispense with your assistance.”

“It is here,” said Marano, drawing quickly a leather bag from his pocket, and the arrangements were soon made.

At moonlight they repaired to the olive field, where Balsamo had secretly made preparations for the approaching evocation. The incantatory preliminaries were sufficiently protracted, and Marano panted with terror under the influence of the magical charms, till it seemed to him that the very earth shivered beneath his feet and phantoms

issued from the ground. Marano fell prostrate on his face, an action apparently foreseen, for there and then the wretched goldsmith was belaboured unmercifully with sticks by the infernal spirits, who left him at length for dead, taking flight in the company of the enchanter, and fortified by the possession of the sixty ounces of gold. On the morrow, the goldsmith, fortunately discovered by muleteers, was carried disconsolately home, and forthwith denounced Balsamo to the law. The adventure spread everywhere, but the magician had sailed for Messina.

These are the facts of the case, but the mendacious chronicle of Louis Figuier, alchemical critic and universal manufacturer of light scientific literature, offers us a far more ornate and attractive version. There the adept and his miserable dupe repair to a place appointed at six o'clock in the morning, Balsamo in dignified silence motioning the goldsmith to follow him, and proceeding with a pre-occupied aspect along the road to the chapel of Saint Rosalia for the space of a whole hour. They stopped at length in the middle of a wild meadow, and in front of a grotto, before which Balsamo extended his hand, and solemnly declared that a treasure was buried within it which he himself was forbidden to touch, which was guarded by devils of hell, which devils might, however, be bound for a brief period by the angels who commonly responded to his potent magical call.

"It only remains to be ascertained," he remarked in conclusion, "whether you will scrupulously fulfil the conditions which must be imposed on you. At that price, the treasure may be yours."

The credulous goldsmith impetuously implored him to name them.

"They cannot be learned from my lips," said Balsamo loftily. "On your knees, in the first place!"

He himself had already assumed the posture of adoration. Marano hastened to imitate him, and immediately a clear, harmonious voice in the celestial altitude pronounced the following words—words, says the Frenchman, more delicious in the ears of the covetous miser than all the symphonies of aërial choirs.

"Sixty ounces of pearls, sixty ounces of rubies, sixty ounces of diamonds, in a coffer of enchased gold, weighing one hundred and twenty ounces. The infernal genii who protect this treasure will place it in the hands of the worthy man whom our friend has brought, if he be

fifty years of age, if he be no Christian—if—if—if—" and a series of conditions followed which Marano perfectly united in his own penurious person, even to the last, which was thus formulated:—"And if he deposit at the entrance of the grotto, before setting foot therein, sixty ounces of gold to propitiate the guardians."

"You have heard," said Balsamo, who, already on his feet, began to retrace his steps, completely ignoring the utter stupefaction of his companion.

"Sixty ounces of gold!" ejaculated the miser with a dismal groan, and torn by the internal conflict of avarice and cupidity; but Balsamo heeded the exclamation as little as the groan, and regained the town in silence.

When they were on the point of separating, Marano appeared to have resolved.

"Grant me one instant!" he cried in a piteous voice. "Sixty ounces of gold? Is that the irrevocable condition?"

"Undoubtedly," said Balsamo, carelessly.

"Alas! alas! And at what hour to-morrow?"

"At six o'clock in the morning and, mark, at the same spot."

"I will be there."

This was the parting speech of the goldsmith, and, as it were, the last gasp of his conquered avarice. On the morrow, punctual to the appointed time, they met as before, Balsamo with his habitual coolness, Marano with his gold. They arrived in due course at the grotto, where the angels, consulted as on the previous day, returned the same oracles. Balsamo assumed ignorance of what would take place. With a terrific struggle, Marano deposited his gold and prepared to cross the threshold. He took one step forward, then started back, inquired if there were no danger in penetrating into the depths of the cavern, was assured of safety if the gold had been faithfully weighed, entered with more confidence, and again returned, these manœuvres being repeated several times, under the eyes of the adept, whose expression indicated the most uninterested indifference. At length, Marano took courage and proceeded so far that a return was impossible, for three black, muscular devils started out from the shadows and barred his path, giving vent to the most alarming

growls. They seized him, forced him to whirl round and round for a long time, and then while the unhappy creature vainly invoked the assistance of Balsamo, they proceeded to cudgel him lustily till he dropped overwhelmed to the ground, when a clear voice bade him remain absolutely silent and motionless, for he would be instantaneously despatched if he stirred either hand or foot. The wretched man did not dare to disobey, but after a long swoon the complete stillness encouraged him to raise his head; he dragged himself as best he could to the mouth of the terrible grotto, looked round him, and found that the adept, the demons, and the gold had alike vanished.

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When Balsamo arrived at Messina he was furnished with a very handsome sum to support the expenses of his sojourn therein, for the lion's share of the booty obtained from the goldsmith had, of course, fallen to himself. He lodged in one of the chief inns near the port, and had prepared himself for further adventures, when he suddenly remembered that he had an old and affluent aunt in the town whom he took occasion to visit, but only to discover that she had recently died, leaving the bulk of her fortune to different churches of Messina, and distributing the rest to the poor. Doubtless the dutiful nephew paid to the memory of this ultra-Christian relation a just tribute of regrets, and anxious to inherit at least something from a person so eminent in sanctity, he determined to assume her family name, joined to a title of nobility, and from that time forward he commonly called himself the Count Alessandro Cagliostro. His penetrating and calculating mind, says one of his biographers, understood the prestige which attached to a title at a period when the privileges of birth still exercised an almost undisputed influence.

It was in the town of Messina that Balsamo first met with the mysterious alchemist Altotas, whom in his fabulous autobiography he represented as the oriental tutor of his infancy. As he was promenading one day near the jetty at the extremity of the port, he encountered an individual singularly habited, and possessed of a most remarkable countenance. This person, aged apparently about fifty years, seemed to be an Armenian, though, according to other accounts, he was a Spaniard or Greek. He wore a species of caftan, a silk bonnet, and the extremities of his breeches were concealed in a pair of wide boots. In his left hand he

held a parasol, and in his right the end of a cord, to which was attached a graceful Albanian greyhound.

Whether from curiosity or by presentiment, Cagliostro saluted this grotesque being, who bowed slightly, but with satisfied dignity.

“You do not reside in Messina, signor?” he said in Sicilian, but with a marked foreign accent.

Cagliostro replied that he was tarrying for a few days, and they began to converse on the beauty of the town and on its advantageous situation, a kind of oriental imagery individualising the eloquence of the stranger, whose remarks were, moreover, adroitly adorned with a few appropriate compliments. He eluded inquiries as to his own identity, but offered to unveil the past of the Count Cagliostro, and to reveal what was actually passing in his mind at that moment. When Cagliostro hinted at sorcery, the Armenian smiled somewhat scornfully, and dilated on the ignorance of a nation which confused science with witchcraft, and prepared faggots for discoverers.

His hearer, much interested, ventured to ask the address of the illustrious stranger, who graciously invited him to call. They walked past the cathedral and halted in a small quadrilateral street shaded by sycamores, and having a charming fountain in the centre.

“Signor,” said the stranger, “there is the house I inhabit. I receive no one; but as you are a traveller, as you are young and courteous, as, moreover, you are animated by a noble passion for the sciences, I permit you to visit me. I shall be visible to you to-morrow a little before midnight. You will rap twice on the hammer”—he pointed as he spoke to the door of a low-storied house—”then three times more slowly, and you will be admitted. Adieu! Hasten at once to your inn. A Piedmontese is trying to possess himself of the seven and thirty ounces of gold that are secured in your valise, and which is itself shut up in a press, the key of which is in your pocket at this moment. Your servant, signor!” and he departed rapidly.

Cagliostro, returning in all haste, discovered the thief in the act, and, as a lawful and righteously indignant proprietor, he forthwith delivered him to justice.

On the morrow, at the time appointed, he knocked at the door of the little house inhabited by the Armenian. It was opened at the fifth blow without any visible agency, and closed as soon as the visitor had entered. Cagliostro cautiously advanced along a narrow passage, illuminated by a small iron lamp in a niche of the wall. At the extremity of the passage a spacious door sprang open, giving admittance into a ground-floor parlour which was illuminated by a four-branched candelabra, holding tapers of wax, and was, in fact, a laboratory furnished with all the apparatus in use among practical alchemists. The Armenian, issuing from a neighbouring cabinet, greeted the visitor, inquired after the safety of the gold, had intelligence of the truth of his clairvoyance, and of the deserved fate of the malefactor, but cut short the expressed astonishment and admiration of Cagliostro by declaring that the art of divination was simply the result of scientific combinations and close observations. He ended by asking his hearer if he denied the infallible certitude of judicial astrology, but the self-constituted count denied nothing except the superior power of virtue over self-interest, whereat the Armenian inquired to whom he was indebted for his training.

“I was about to say to the solicitude of my uncles and to the apothecary in the Convent of the Bon Fratelli,” said Cagliostro; “but to what purpose? You undoubtedly know.”

“I know,” replied the strange individual, “that you have trained yourself; that the apothecary, equally with your uncles, has but opened for you the door to knowledge. What are your plans?”

“I intend to enrich myself.”

“That is,” said the other, grandiloquently, “you would make yourself superior to the imbecile mob—a laudable project, my son! Do you propose to travel?”

“Certainly, so far as my thirty-seven ounces of gold will take me.”

“You are very young,” said the Armenian. “How is bread manufactured?”

“With flour.”

“And wine?”

“By means of the grape.”

“But gold?”

“I come to inquire of yourself.”

“We will solve that problem hereafter. Listen to me, young man. I propose to depart for Grand Cairo, in Egypt. Will you accompany me?”

“With all my heart!” exclaimed Cagliostro, overjoyed, and they sat down in large oak chairs, each at one end of the table where the candelabra was placed.

“Egypt,” said the Armenian, “is the birthplace of all human science. Astronomy alone had Chaldea for its fatherland; there the shepherds first studied the courses of the stars. Egypt availed itself of the astro-Chaldean initiations, and soon surpassed the methods and increased the discoveries of the shepherds. Since the reign of the Pharaoh Manes, and of his successors, Busiris, Osymandyas, Uchoreas, and Moeris, Egyptian knowledge has advanced with giant strides. Joseph, the dream-reader, established the basis of chiromancy; the priests of Osiris and Isis invented the Zodiac; the Cosmogonies of Phre and Horus revealed agriculture and other physical sciences; the priestesses of Ansaki unveiled the secrets of philtres; the priests of Serapis taught medicine. I might proceed with the sublime enumeration, but to what end? Will you faithfully follow me to Egypt? I hope to embark to-morrow, and we shall touch at Malta on the way—possibly also at Candia—reaching the port of Phare in eight days.”

“‘Tis settled!” cried the delighted Cagliostro. “I have my thirty-seven ounces of gold for the journey.”

“And I not a single crown.”

“The devil!” ejaculated Cagliostro.

“What matters it? What need to have gold when one knows how to make gold? What need to possess diamonds when one can extract them from carbon more beautifully than from the mines of Golconda? Go to! you are excessively simple.”

“Therefore, by your leave, I intend to become your disciple.”

The Armenian extended his hand, and their departure was fixed for the morrow.

This Altotas, or Althotes, we are assured by Figuier, was no imaginary character. The Roman Inquisition collected many proofs of his existence, without, however, ascertaining where it began or ended, for the mysterious personage vanished like a meteor. According to the Italian biography of Joseph Balsamo, Altotas was in possession of several Arabic manuscripts, and assumed great skill in chemistry. According to Figuier, he was a magician and doctor as well, though others represent him despising and rejecting the abused name of physician. As to his divinatory abilities, he had already given a signal proof of their extent to his pupil, but he showed him that he was acquainted with all his Palermese antecedents.

They embarked on board a Genoese vessel, sailed along the Archipelago, landed at Alexandria, where they tarried for forty days, performing several operations in chemistry, by which they are said to have produced a considerable sum of money, but whether by transmutation or by imposture is not apparently clear. Cagliostro's respect for his master did not prevent him, with true Sicilian subtlety, inquiring as to his own antecedents, till Altotas, weary of resorting to the same stratagems of evasion, declared to him once for all that he was himself in complete ignorance as to his birth and parentage.

"This may surprise you," he said, "but science, which can enlighten us on the part of another, is almost invariably impotent to instruct us concerning ourselves."

He declared himself to be much older than would appear, but that he was in possession of certain secrets for the conservation of strength and health. He had discovered the scientific methods of producing gold and precious stones, spoke ten or twelve languages fluently, and was acquainted with almost the entire circle of human sciences. "Nothing astonishes me," he said, "nothing grieves me, save the evils which I am powerless to prevent, and I trust to reach in peace the term of my protracted existence."

He confessed that his name of Altotas was self-chosen, yet was it truly his. His early years had been passed on the coast of Barbary, near Tunis, where he belonged to a Mussulman privateer, who was a rich and humane man, and who had purchased him from pirates, by whom he had been stolen from his family. At twelve years of age he spoke Arabic like

a native, read the Koran to his master, who was a true believer, studied botany under his direction, and learned the best methods for making sherbet and coffee. A post of honour was in store for him in the household of his master; but destiny decreed that when Altotas was sixteen, the worthy Mussulman should be gathered to his fathers. In his will he gave the young slave his liberty, and bequeathed him a sum which was equivalent to six thousand *livres*, wherewith Altotas quitted Tunis to indulge his passion for travelling.

Cagliostro represented that he had followed his instructor into Africa and the heart of Egypt, that he visited the pyramids, making the acquaintance of the priests of different temples, and penetrating into the arcana of their mysterious sanctuaries. Moreover, he declares himself to have visited, during the space of three years, all the principal kingdoms of Africa and Asia. These statements are identical in their value with the romantic story of his education in the palace of the muphti at Medina. It is altogether doubtful whether he ever visited Arabia, which was in any case the extreme limit of his wanderings, and he is subsequently discovered at Rhodes still in the society of Altotas, and pursuing, in common with that mysterious being, his doubtful chemical operations.

At Malta they had letters of introduction to the Grand Master, Pinto, and tarried for some time to work in his laboratory, for the “supreme chief of Maltese chivalry” was infatuated with alchemical experiments, and, after the fashion of that extravagant period, had a strong bias towards the marvellous. The history of the failure or success of the errant adepts remains in the laboratory of the Grand Master; but from this moment Altotas, the chemist and alchemist—Altotas, the phenomenal, the wise man, the scientist—disappears completely. “Malta was his sepulchre, or haply the place of his apotheosis.” “There,” says the Count, in his Memoir, “it was my misery to lose my best friend, the most wise, the most illuminated of mortals, the venerable Altotas. He clasped my hands shortly before his death. ‘My son,’ he said, in a failing voice, ‘keep ever before thine eyes the fear of the Eternal and the love of thy neighbour. Thou wilt soon learn the truth of all which I have taught thee.’”

With every mark of respect on the part of the Grand Master, and accompanied by the Chevalier d’Aquino, of the illustrious house of Caramania, and himself a Knight of Malta, Cagliostro repaired to Naples,

where he supported himself for some time with money which had been presented to him by Pinto, and perhaps by loans from his possibly opulent companion, who, however, eventually quitted him to proceed into France. In Naples Cagliostro met with a Sicilian prince who was infected by the prevalent gold fever, and was so enraptured with the high-sounding theories of Cagliostro that he invited him to his chateau in the neighbourhood of Palermo, where they might pursue their operations in common. It was imprudent, but the pupil of the great Altotas could not resist the desire to revisit his native land. He tarried a certain period with his companion, but going one day into Messina, he encountered an old acquaintance, a certain dissolute priest, his confederate in the affair of Marano, and who had, in fact, acted as one of the sable fiends whose stout clubs had agonised the unfortunate goldsmith. The adventurer warned Cagliostro not to enter Palermo, where justice was highly offended at his youthful indiscretions. He persuaded him to join fortunes with himself, return to Naples, and there open a gaming-house for the benefit, or rather for the bleeding, of the wealthy foreigners who visited Italy. This method of gold-making was quite after the heart of his hearer, who soon took his leave of the Sicilian prince, but they were regarded with so much suspicion by the Neapolitan Government that they retired into the Papal states. Cagliostro’s companion had, however, received the tonsure, and he trembled for his safety on the consecrated ground which was the stronghold of the Holy Inquisition, so he hastened his departure to less orthodox places, and does not figure further in the chequered history of his brother in chicanery.

Cagliostro remained, and is said to have assumed several different characters, occasionally including the sacerdotal habit. According to some accounts, he made himself remarkable for his extreme piety, visiting all the churches, fulfilling the duties of religion, and frequenting the palaces of cardinals. By means of some letters of recommendation which he had brought with him from Naples, he obtained access to several persons of distinction, among others to the Seneschal de Breteuil, at that time Ambassador from Malta to Rome, and who, hearing of his former connection with the Grand Master, received him with much warmth, and procured him other honourable connections. One illustrious dupe ensured others, and we find him in a short time established in the Holy City, retailing wonderful recipes and specifics for all the diseases which afflict fallen humanity in Rome and the universe. Crowns and

ducats flowed in upon him; he lived in some state and luxury, refraining, however, from scandalous enjoyments.

The Italian biography which represents the opinions, embodies the researches, and champions the cause of the Inquisition, draws, however, a different picture to those of Saint-Felix and Louis Figuier. “He employed himself at this period,” says this doubtful, because indisputably biassed, authority, “in making drawings on paper, the outlines of which were produced by means of a copperplate engraving, and afterwards were filled up with Indian ink. These he sold as designs made by means of the pen alone. Having taken up his abode at the Sign of the Sun, in the neighbourhood of the Rotunda, he quarrelled with one of the waiters and suffered imprisonment for three days.”

Whatever these statements are worth, there is no doubt hanging over the most important incident of his Roman career. It was in that place and at this period that he first beheld the young and beautiful Lorenza Feliciani, and having in two days fallen violently in love with her, he demanded her in marriage from her father, who, fascinated by his birth, his aristocratic name, and opulent appearance, consented, together with the lady. The marriage took place, not without *éclat*, says one section of the witnesses, and the pair resided in the house of the father-in-law. The Italian life, minimising to the uttermost the success of Cagliostro, says that he received as a dower a trifling fortune proportionate to their condition.

According to the testimony of all the biographers, inquisitorial or otherwise, Lorenza was not only young and beautiful, but “rich in every quality of the heart, being tender, devoted, honest, and modest;” but her husband conceived the diabolical design of advancing his fortunes at the expense of her honour, and in private conversation took occasion to rally her notions of virtue, which he sought to undermine. The first lesson which the young bride received from her husband, according to her own confession, was intended to instruct her in the means of attracting and gratifying the passions of the opposite sex. The most wanton coquetry and the most lascivious arts were the principles with which he endeavoured to inspire her. The mother of Lorenza, scandalised at his conduct, had such frequent altercations with her son-in-law, that he resolved to remove from her house, and in other quarters found it a simpler task to corrupt the mind and morals of his wife. Then, according

to the Italian author, he presented her to two persons well qualified for the exercise of her talents, having instructed her to entangle them both by her allurements. With one of these she did not succeed, but over the other she acquired a complete victory. Cagliostro himself conducted her to the house destined for the pleasure of the lover, left her alone in his company, and retired to another chamber.

The interview and the offers made to her were such as entirely corresponded to the wishes of the husband, but the wife on this occasion did not exhibit a proper instance of conjugal obedience, and upon imparting the whole affair confidentially to her husband, received the most bitter reproach and the most violent and dreadful menaces. He also repeatedly assured her that adultery was no crime when it was committed by a woman to advance her interests, and not through affection for other men. He even added example to precept, by showing how little he himself respected the ties of conjugal fidelity—that is, apparently, he sold himself to lascivious females of advanced age, and on these occasions aroused his dormant passions by drinking a certain Egyptian wine, composed of aromatics which possessed the necessary qualities for the completion of his intention. His wife, hearkening at length to his instructions, was conducted several times to the place where she had formerly proved so disobedient to his orders. She sometimes received, says the same witness, either clothes or trinkets, and sometimes a little money, as the reward of her condescension. One day her husband wrote a letter, in the name of his wife, in which he begged the loan of a few crowns; these were immediately sent. In return for them an interview was promised during the course of the next day, and the lady was faithful to the appointment.

Such is the version of this disgraceful business given by the enemies of Cagliostro, but all biographers agree that he corrupted the morals of his wife. Indeed, the only question is whether the transaction took place on the sordid scale described by the Italian writer. Other authorities tell us that his success tempted “a beautiful Roman—Lorenza Feliciani—to share his rising fortunes. Unscrupulous, witty, and fascinating, Lorenza was an admirable partner for Cagliostro, who speedily made her an adept in all his pretended mysteries.” Whatever were her natural virtues or failings, it is highly improbable that she sold her uncommon attractions for such paltry and miserable advantages.

The house which was taken by Cagliostro became the resort of sharpers, two of whom, Ottavio Nicestro, who was eventually hanged, and a so-called Marquis d'Agriata, both Sicilians, became intimate associates of their host. With the latter he was frequently closeted for hours together. Their occupation is uncertain; but as Cagliostro's wealth increased at no ordinary rate, and as the Marquis was an unparalleled proficient in the production of counterfeit writing, they are supposed to have succeeded in forging numerous bills of exchange; and it is, at any rate, certain that the letters patent by which the great charlatan was authorised to assume the uniform of a Prussian colonel, which he subsequently did to his definite advantage, were the production of this skilful miscreant. But a quarrel arose between the three confederates; Nicastro betrayed his accomplices, the Marquis fled from Rome, Cagliostro and the unhappy Lorenza incontinently following his example.

Our three fugitives took the road to Venice, reached Bergamo, and there practised several unparticularised rogueries, till their identity was discovered by the Government. The marquis again managed to escape, the others after a short imprisonment were expelled from the town, and being stripped of all their resources, undertook a pilgrimage into Galicia, hoping to cross Spain, through the charity of the clergy and conventual communities. They travelled through the territories of the King of Sardinia, through Genoa, and so arrived at Antibes. From this moment the life of the Count Cagliostro was for several years one of incessant wandering. According to the Italian biographer, as beggary proved unprofitable, Lorenza was again forced by her husband to augment their resources through the sale of her charms. In this way they arrived at Barcelona, where they tarried for six months, the same course of infamous prostitution, followed by Lorenza with the most manifest reluctance, contributing in the main to their support.

From Barcelona they proceeded to Madrid, where also certain noble Spaniards proved sensible to the charms of Lorenza. From Madrid they journeyed to Lisbon, and thence sailed to England, where Cagliostro is said to have adopted the profession of a common quack, to have fallen into prison, to have been bought out by his wife, in whose person he still continued to traffic, bartering her charms to every opulent man who

wished to become a purchaser; but the frequency of her prostitutions has probably been grossly exaggerated.

An English Life of the Count Cagliostro, dedicated, in 1787, to Madame la Comtesse, and written in the interests of the charlatan, gives a singular account of his misfortunes in London, showing that when he arrived there he was in possession of plate, jewels, and specie to the amount of three thousand pounds, that he hired apartments in Whitcomb Street, where he dedicated a large portion of his time to his favourite studies of chemistry and physics, and that all he suffered must be entirely attributed to the profuse generosity and charity of himself and his lady.

In 1772, Cagliostro and his wife crossed over to France, accompanied by one M. Duplaisir, who lodged with them at Paris, and seems to have been intimate with Lorenza. But Cagliostro was insatiable, says St Felix. He sold his honour at a high price, and the fortune of Duplaisir melted in the crucible of another's follies and extravagances. At length, in alarm, the victim took leave of his rapacious guests, not without strongly warning Lorenza to return to her parents, for he had learned to esteem the natural good qualities which she possessed. According to one account, she attempted to follow this advice, but others say that she sought refuge from incessant prostitution with Duplaisir himself. In either case, Cagliostro had recourse to the authority of the king, and obtaining an order for her arrest, she was imprisoned in the penitentiary of Sainte Pélagie, and was detained there several months, during which Cagliostro abandoned himself to a life of congenial dissipation. The sale of a certain wash for beautifying the complexion appears to have procured him a considerable revenue about this period.

The imprisonment of Lorenza did not prevent a reconciliation with her husband immediately after her release, which occurred on December 21, 1772, on which date, having obtained under false pretences some magnificent dresses from the *costumiers*, Cagliostro appeared at the ball of a dancing-master in a peculiarly brilliant costume.

It is from this period that our adventurer's success as an alchemist must be dated. Here he found means to form an acquaintance with two persons of distinction, who carried their love of chemistry to a ridiculous excess. He pretended to have discovered some miraculous secrets in the transcendent science, proclaimed himself publicly a depository of the

Hermetic Mystery, and posing as a supernatural personage in possession of the great arcanum of the philosophers' stone and of the glorious life-elixir. This also was the epoch of mesmerism, of which novel science Cagliostro decided to avail himself. After a time, according to the Italian biography, his two dupes entertained suspicions of his veracity, and being in fear of arrest, he obtained a passport under a fictitious name, fled with great precipitation to Brussels, traversed Germany and Italy, and once more arrived at his native city Palermo.[39]

At Palermo he was speedily arrested by the implacable Marano, but the protection of a noble, to whom he had obtained a powerful recommendation while at Naples, ensured his speedy release, and he embarked with his wife for Malta, where, according to the Italian biographer, he ostensibly supported himself by the sale of his pomade for the improvement of the complexion, but his more certain income appears to have been his wife. Monsieur Saint-Félix, however, declares, and this, on the whole, is most probable, that they were received with the most marked distinction by the Grand Master. In either case, they soon retired to Naples, when Cagliostro professed in public for three months both chemistry and the Kabbalah. At Naples they were joined by a younger brother of Feliciani, a lad named Paolo, who was remarkable for his extraordinary loveliness. Cagliostro, seeing that he might prove useful, persuaded him to share their fortunes. They embarked with a great train for Marseilles, and thence proceeded to Barcelona. The star of the great adventurer was now fairly in the ascendant, and from this time he seems always to have travelled in considerable state. He met, however, with no dupes of importance in the peninsula till he reached its extremity, where he cheated a fanatical alchemist of a hundred thousand crowns, under the pretence of a colossal accomplishment of the *magnum opus*. After this signal success he incontinently departed for England, while Paolo, with whom he had quarrelled, returned to Rome, much to the grief of his sister.

The commencement of the grandeur of Cagliostro is to be dated from his second visit to London. It was then that he was initiated into masonry, and conceived his titanic project of the mysterious Egyptian rite. Saint Félix accredits him even from the moment of his admission into the order with an unavowed object. Cagliostro, he informs us, was resolved one day to seat himself on the throne of the grand master of a rival and

more potent institution, and he appears to have lived henceforth in the light of his high aspiration, and to have eschewed—theoretically at least—all petty rogueries.

He incessantly visited the various London lodges, and a correspondence printed in English at Strasburg during the year 1788, relates that by a pure chance he picked up a curious manuscript at an obscure London bookstall. This manuscript appears to have belonged to a certain George Gaston, who is absolutely unknown. It treated of Egyptian masonry, and abounded in magical and mystical notions which excited the curiosity of its purchaser, nourished both his ambition and his imagination, and in a short time he developed his own system from its suggestive hints. The source of his inspiration, of course, remained concealed. He pretended to have received his masonic tradition by succession from Enoch and Elias. Privately, however, he pursued his former rogueries, and his sojourn in London was not infrequently disturbed by his squabbles with the police. Those who are interested in this part of the Cagliostro controversy will do well to refer to the English biography, dedicated to the countess, and which contains much curious information.

When all his plans were matured he departed for the Hague, and thence proceeded to Venice, where some of his English creditors seem to have disturbed his serenity, and prompted him in consequence to retire through Germany into Holstein, where he is supposed to have visited the renowned Count de St Germain.

According to the *Mémoires Authentiques pour servir à l'Histoire du Comte de Cagliostro*, published in 1785, he demanded an audience with this man of inscrutable mystery, in order that he might prostrate himself before the *dieu des croyants*. With characteristic eccentricity the Count de St Germain appointed two in the morning as the hour for the interview, which moment being arrived, say the "Memoirs," Cagliostro and his wife, clothed in white garments, clasped about the waist with girdles of rose-colour, presented themselves at the castellated temple of mystery, which was the abode of the dubious divinity whom they desired to adore. The drawbridge was lowered, a man six feet in height, clothed in a long grey robe, led them into a dimly-lighted chamber. Therein some folding doors sprang suddenly open, and they beheld a temple illuminated by a thousand wax lights, with the Count de Saint-Germain

enthroned upon the altar; at his feet two acolytes swung golden thuribles, which diffused sweet and unobtrusive perfumes. The divinity bore upon his breast a diamond pentagram of almost intolerable radiance. A majestic statue, white and diaphanous, upheld on the steps of the altar a vase inscribed, “Elixir of Immortality,” while a vast mirror was on the wall, and before it a living being, majestic as the statue, walked to and fro. Above the mirror were these singular words—”Store House of Wandering Souls.” The most solemn silence prevailed in this sacred retreat, but at length a voice, which seemed hardly a voice, pronounced these words—”Who are you? Whence come you? What would you?” Then the Count and Countess Cagliostro prostrated themselves, and the former answered after a long pause, “I come to invoke the God of the faithful, the Son of Nature, the sire of truth. I come to demand of him one of the fourteen thousand seven hundred secrets which are treasured in his breast, I come to proclaim myself his slave, his apostle, his martyr.”

The divinity did not respond, but after a long silence, the same voice asked:—”What does the partner of thy long wanderings intend?”

“To obey and to serve,” answered Lorenza.

Simultaneously with her words, profound darkness succeeded the glare of light, uproar followed on tranquillity, terror on trust, and a sharp and menacing voice cried loudly:—”Woe to those who cannot stand the tests!”

Husband and wife were immediately separated to undergo their respective trials, which they endured with exemplary fortitude, and which are detailed in the text of the memoirs. When the romantic mummery was over, the two postulants were led back into the temple, with the promise of admission to the divine mysteries. There a man mysteriously draped in a long mantle cried out to them:—”Know ye that the arcanum of our great art is the government of mankind, and that the one means to rule them is never to tell them the truth. Do not foolishly regulate your actions according to the rules of common sense; rather outrage reason and courageously maintain every unbelievable absurdity. Remember that reproduction is the palmary active power in nature, politics, and society alike; that it is a mania with mortals to be

immortal, to know the future without understanding the present, and to be spiritual while all that surrounds them is material.”

After this harangue the orator genuflected devoutly before the divinity of the temple and retired. At the same moment a man of gigantic stature led the countess to the feet of the immortal Count de Saint-German, who thus spoke:—

“Elected from my tenderest youth to the things of greatness, I employed myself in ascertaining the nature of veritable glory. Politics appeared to me nothing but the science of deception, tactics the art of assassination, philosophy the ambitious imbecility of complete irrationality; physics fine fancies about Nature and the continual mistakes of persons suddenly transplanted into a country which is utterly unknown to them; theology the science of the misery which results from human pride; history the melancholy spectacle of perpetual perfidy and blundering. Thence I concluded that the statesman was a skilful liar, the hero an illustrious idiot, the philosopher an eccentric creature, the physician a pitiable and blind man, the theologian a fanatical pedagogue, and the historian a word-monger. Then did I hear of the divinity of this temple. I cast my cares upon him, with my incertitudes and aspirations. When he took possession of my soul he caused me to perceive all objects in a new light; I began to read futurity. This universe so limited, so narrow, so desert, was now enlarged. I abode not only with those who are, but with those who were. He united me to the loveliest women of antiquity. I found it eminently delectable to know all without studying anything, to dispose of the treasures of the earth without the solicitation of monarchs, to rule the elements rather than men. Heaven made me liberal; I have sufficient to satisfy my taste; all that surrounds me is rich, loving, predestinated.”

When the service was finished the costume of ordinary life was resumed. A superb repast terminated the ceremony. During the course of the banquet the two guests were informed that the Elixir of Immortality was merely Tokay coloured green or red according to the necessities of the case. Several essential precepts were enjoined upon them, among others that they must detest, avoid, and calumniate men of understanding, but flatter, foster, and blind fools, that they must spread abroad with much mystery the intelligence that the Count de Saint-

Germain was five hundred years old, that they must make gold, but dupes before all.

The truth of this singular episode is not attested by any sober biographer. If it occurred as narrated, it doubtless served to confirm Cagliostro in his ambitious projects. The change which had taken place in the adventurer since his second visit to England is well described by Figuier. “His language, his mien, his manners, all are transformed. His conversation turns only on his travels in Egypt, to Mecca, and in other remote places, on the sciences into which he was initiated at the foot of the Pyramids, on the arcana of Nature which his ingenuity has discovered. At the same time, he talks little, more often enveloping himself in mysterious silence. When interrogated with reiterated entreaties, he deigns at the most to draw his symbol—a serpent with an apple in its mouth and pierced by a dart, meaning that human wisdom should be silent on the mysteries which it has unravelled…. Lorenza was transfigured at the same time with her husband. Her ambitions and deportment became worthy of the new projects of Cagliostro. She aimed, like himself, at the glory of colossal successes.”

The initiates of the Count de Saint-Germain passed into Courland, where they established Masonic lodges, according to the sublime rite of Egyptian Freemasonry. The countess was an excellent preacher to captivate hearts and enchant imaginations, her beauty fascinated a large number of Courlandaise nobility. At Mittau, Cagliostro attracted the attention of persons of high rank, who were led by his reputation to regard him as an extraordinary person. By means of his Freemasonry he began to obtain an ascendency over the minds of the nobles, some of whom, discontented with the reigning duke, are actually said to have offered him the sovereignty of the country, as to a divine man and messenger from above. The Italian biography represents him plotting with this end in view. “He pretends,” say the documents of the Holy Inquisition, “that he had virtue enough to resist the temptation, and that he refused the proffered boon from the respect due to sovereigns. His wife has assured us that his refusal was produced by the reflection that his impostures would soon be discovered.” He collected, however, a prodigious number of presents in gold, silver, and money, and repaired to St Petersburg, provided with regular passports. But the prophet soon found that a sufficiently brilliant reputation had not preceded him, and

he, therefore, simply announced himself as a physician and chemist, by his retired life and air of mystery soon attracting attention.

His assumption of the *rôle* of physician leads to a brief consideration of the miraculous cures which have been attributed to him. They are generally referred to a broad application of the principles and methods of Mesmer, his contemporary. They were performed without passes, iron rods, or any of the cumbrous paraphernalia of his rival in the healing art; he trusted simply to the laying on of hands. Moreover, he did not despoil his patients, but rather dispensed his wealth, which now appeared unlimited, among the poor, who flocked to him in great numbers as his reputation increased. The source of this wealth is not accurately known, but it is supposed to have been derived from the Masonic initiates, whose apostle and propagandist he was.

Many of the miraculous cures which Cagliostro performed in Germany spread widely, and in Russia he was soon surrounded by the curious. Lorenza played her own part admirably; she answered discreetly and naturally, making the most outrageous statements with apparently complete unconsciousness. The physician-chemist, besides his healing powers, had his reputation as an alchemist and adept of the arcane sciences. The supposed restoration in a miraculous manner of the infant child of an illustrious nobleman to health exalted him to the pinnacle of celebrity, and his extravagant pretensions, assisted, as they powerfully were, by the naïve beauty of his wife, were beginning to be taken seriously, but the combined result of an amour between Lorenza and Prince Poternki, Prime Minister and favourite of the Czarina, Catherine, and the discovery that the nobleman’s child had been apparently changed, caused them to depart hastily with immense spoils towards the German frontier.

They tarried at Warsaw for a time, and there the Italian biographer tells us that Cagliostro made use of all his artifices to deceive a prince to whom he was introduced, and who was exceedingly anxious to obtain, with the help of the pretended magician, the permanent command of a devil. Cagliostro puffed him up for a long time with the expectation of gratifying this preposterous ambition, and actually procured presents from him to the amount of several thousand crowns. The prince at length perceiving that there was no hope of retaining one of the infernal spirits in his service, wished to make himself master of the earthly affections of

the countess, but in this too he was disappointed, the lady positively refusing to comply with his desires. Finding himself thus balked in both his attempts, he abandoned every sentiment but revenge, and intimidated our adventurer and his wife so much by his menaces that they were obliged to restore his presents.

The veracity of this account is not, however, beyond suspicion, and other of his biographers represent Cagliostro proceeding directly to Francfurt and thence to Strasbourg, into which, more wealthy and successful than ever, he made a triumphal entry. The distinguished visitor, the Rosicrucian, the alchemist, the physician, the sublime count, had been expected since early morning by the bourgeois of the old town, and the following extraordinary account in the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Occultes* has been given by an anonymous biographer.

“On the 19th of September 1780, in a public-house just outside Strasburg, surrounded by a group of humble tipplers, who stared from the little window at the vast crowd collected below them, there might have been remarked the countenance of a bald and wrinkled man, some eighty years of age, and evidently of southern origin; this was the goldsmith Marano. Successive failures, and debts which he did not see fit to liquidate, had forced him to leave Palermo, and he had established himself in his former trade at Strasbourg. Like the rest of the townsfolk he had come out to behold the phenomenal personage whose arrival was expected, and who made a greater sensation than many a powerful monarch. He had come by way of Germany from Varsovia, where he had amassed immense riches, said popular rumour, by the transmutation of base metals into gold, for he was possessed of the secret of the philosophic stone, and had all the incalculable talents of an alchemist.”

“By my faith,” said a hatter, “I am indeed happy since I am destined to behold this illustrious mortal, if indeed he be a mortal.”

“‘Tis asserted,” added a druggist, “that he is a son of the Princess of Trebizond, and that he has withal the fine eyes of his mother.”

“Also that he is a lineal descendant of Charles Martel,” said a town clerk.

“He dates still further back,” put in a rope-maker, “for he took part in the marriage feast of Cana.”

“Beyond doubt then, he is the wandering Jew!” exclaimed Marano.

“Still better, some credible persons assert that he was born before the deluge.”

“What hardihood! Yet suppose he is the devil.”

These notions here reproduced with fidelity, and which were adorned by the most extravagant commentaries, were actually at that period in general circulation among the crowd. Some regarded the mysterious Count Cagliostro as an inspired saint, a performer of miracles, a phenomenal personage outside the order of Nature. The cures attributed to him were equally innumerable and unexplainable. Others regarded him merely as an adroit charlatan. Cagliostro himself boldly asserted that all his prodigies were performed under the special favour and help of heaven. He added that the Supreme Being had deigned to accord him the beatific vision, that it was his mission to convert unbelievers and reinstate catholicism, but in spite of this exalted vocation he told fortunes, taught the art of winning at lotteries, interpreted dreams, and held séances of transcendental phantasmagoria.

“But,” contended the rope-maker with much animation, “a man who converses with angels is never the devil.”

“Is he in communication with angels?” cried Marano, struck by the circumstances. “In that case I must see him at all costs. How old is he?”

“Bah!” said the druggist, “as if such a being could have an age! He looks about thirty-six.”

“Oh!” muttered the goldsmith. “What if he were my rascal? My rascal should now be thirty-seven.”

As the hoary Sicilian ruminated over his lamentable past, he was roused by a tumult of voices. The supernal being had arrived, and he passed presently in the road, surrounded by a numerous cortege of couriers, lacqueys, valets, &c., all in magnificent liveries. By his side, in the open carriage, sat Lorenza or Seraphina Feliciani, his wife, who seconded with all her ability the intrigues of her husband, whom reasonable people regarded as a wandering member and emissary of the masonic templars, his opulence insured by contributions from the different lodges of the order.

A great shout rose up when Count Cagliostro passed before the inn. Marano had recognised his man, and flying out had contrived to stop the carriage, shouting as he did so—”Joseph Balsamo! It is Joseph! Coquin, where are my sixty ounces of gold?”

Cagliostro scarcely deigned to glance at the furious goldsmith; but in the middle of the profound silence which the incident occasioned among the crowd, a voice, apparently in the clouds, uttered with great distinctness the following words: “Remove this lunatic, who is possessed by infernal spirits!”

Some of the spectators fell on their knees, others seized the unfortunate goldsmith, and the brilliant cortege passed on.

Entering Strasburg in triumph, Cagliostro paused in front of a large hall, where the equerries who had preceded him had already collected a considerable concourse of the sick. The famous empiric entered and cured them all, some simply by touch, others apparently by words or by a gratuity in money, the rest by his universal panacea; but the historian who records these things asserts that the sick persons thus variously treated had been carefully selected, the physician preferring to treat the more serious cases at the homes of the patients.

Cagliostro issued from the hall amidst universal acclamations, and was accompanied by the immense crowd to the doors of the magificent lodging which had been prepared against his arrival. The élite of Strasburg society was invited to a sumptuous repast, which was followed by a séance of transcendental magnetism, when he produced some extraordinary manifestations by the mediation of clairvoyant children of either sex, and whom he denominated his doves or pupils. The unspotted virginity and innocence of these children were an indispensable condition of success. They were chosen by himself, and received a mystical consecration at his hands. Then he pronounced over a crystal vessel, filled with water, the magical formulæ for the evocation of angelic intelligences as they are written in the celestial rituals. Supernal spirits became visible in the depths of the water, and responded to questions occasionally in an intelligible voice, but more often in characters which appeared on the surface of the water, and were visible to the pupils alone, who interpreted them to the public.

Contemporary testimony establishes that these manifestations, as a whole, were genuine, and there is little doubt of the mesmeric abilities of Cagliostro, who had probably become acquainted in the East with the phenomena of virginal lucidity, especially in boys, and had supplemented the oriental methods by the discoveries of Puséygur, which were at that time sufficiently notorious.

For three years Cagliostro remained at Strasburg and was fêted continually. Here he obtained a complete ascendency over the mind of the famous cardinal-archbishop, the Prince de Rohan. His first care, on taking up his abode in the town, was to prove his respect for the clergy by his generosity and zeal. He visited the sick in the hospitals, deferentially participated in the duties of the regular doctors, proposed his new remedies with prudence, did not condemn the old methods, but sought to unite new science with the science which was based on experience. He obtained the reputation of a bold experimenter in chemistry, of a sagacious physician, and a really enlightened innovator. The inhabitants of the crowded quarters regarded him as a man sent from God, operating miraculous cures, and dispensing riches from an inexhaustible source with which he was alone acquainted. Unheard-of cures were cited, and alchemical operations which surpassed even the supposed possibilities of the transmutatory art.

Anything which savoured of the marvellous was an attraction for the cardinal-archbishop, and he longed to see Cagliostro. An anonymous writer states that he sought an interview with him again and again unsuccessfully; for the cardinal-prince of trickery divined even at a distance the character of the prince-cardinal, and enveloped himself in a reserve which, to the imagination of his dupe, was like the loadstone to the magnet. Others represent him, however, courting the favour of the great ecclesiastic’s secretary, and so obtaining an introduction. At the first interview he showed some reserve, but permitted certain dazzling ideas to be glimpsed through the more ordinary tenour of his discourse. After a judicious period he admitted that he possessed a receipt for the manufacture of gold and diamonds. A supposed transmutation completed his conquest of the cardinal, and the Italian historian confesses that he accordingly lavished immense sums upon the virtuous pair, and to complete his folly, agreed to erect a small edifice, in which he was to experience a physical regeneration by means of the supernal and

auriferous elixir of Cagliostro. The sum of twenty thousand francs was actually paid the adept to accomplish this operation.

Doubtless during his sojourn at Strasburg he propagated with zeal the mysteries of his Egyptian Freemasonry, and at length, laden with spoils, he repaired to Bordeaux, where he continued his healing in public, and then proceeded to Lyons, where for the space of three months he occupied himself with the foundation of a mother-lodge, and, according to the Italian biographer, here as elsewhere, in less creditable pursuits. At length he arrived at Paris, where, says the same authority, he soon became the object of general conversation, regard, and esteem. His curative powers were now but little exercised, for Paris abounded with mesmerists and healers, and the prodigies of simple magnetism were stale and unprofitable in consequence. He assumed now the *rôle* of a practical magician, and astonished the city by the evocation of phantoms, which he caused to appear, at the wish of the inquirer, either in a mirror or in a vase of clear water. These phantoms equally represented dead and living beings, and as occasionally collusion appears to have been well-nigh impossible, and as the theory of coincidence is preposterous, there is reason to suppose that he produced results which must sometimes have astonished himself. All Paris at any rate was set wondering at his enchantments and prodigies, and it is seriously stated that Louis XVI. was so infatuated with *le divin Cagliostro*, that he declared anyone who injured him should be considered guilty of treason. At Versailles, and in the presence of several distinguished nobles, he is said to have caused the apparition in mirrors, vases, &c., not merely of the spectra of absent or deceased persons, but animated and moving beings of a phantasmal description, including many dead men and women selected by the astonished spectators.

The mystery which surrounded him abroad was deepened even when he received visitors at home. He had lived in the Rue Saint Claude, an isolated house surrounded by gardens and sheltered from the inconvenient curiosity of neighbours. There he established his laboratory, which no one might enter. He received in a vast and sumptuous apartment on the first floor. Lorenza lived a retired life, only being visible at certain hours before a select company, and in a diaphanous and glamourous costume. The report of her beauty spread through the city; she passed for a paragon of perfection, and duels took place on her

account. Cagliostro was now no longer young, and Lorenza was in the flower of her charms. He is said for the first time to have experienced the pangs of jealousy on account of a certain Chevalier d'Oisemont, with whom she had several assignations. Private vexations did not, however, interfere with professional thaumaturgy, and the evocation of the illustrious dead was a common occurrence at certain magical suppers which became celebrated through all Paris. These were undoubtedly exaggerated by report, but as they all occurred within the doubtful precincts of his own house of mystery, they were in all probability fraudulent, for it must be distinctly remembered that in his normal character he was an unparalleled trickster, that the genuine phenomena which he occasionally produced were simply supplements to charlatanry, and not that his deceptions were aids to normally genuine phenomena.

On one occasion, according to the *Mémoires authentiques pour servir à l'histoire du Comte de Cagliostro*, the distinguished thaumaturgist announced that at a private supper, given to six guests, he would evoke the spirits of any dead persons whom they named to him, and that the phantoms, apparently substantial, should seat themselves at the banquet. The repast took place with the knowledge and, it may be supposed, with the connivance of Lorenza. At midnight the guests were assembled; a round table, laid for twelve, was spread, with unheard-of luxury, in a dining-room, where all was in harmony with the approaching Kabbalistic operation. The six guests, with Cagliostro, took their seats, and thus the ominous number thirteen were designed to be present at table.

The supper was served, the servants were dismissed with threats of immediate death if they dared to open the doors before they were summoned. Each guest demanded the deceased person whom he desired to see. Cagliostro took the names, placed them in the pocket of his gold-embroidered vest, and announced that with no further preparation than a simple invocation on his part the evoked spirits would appear in flesh and blood, for, according to the Egyptian dogma, there were in reality no dead. These guests of the other world, asked for and expected with trembling anxiety, were the Duc de Choiseul, Voltaire, d'Alembert, Diderot, the Abbé de Voisenon, and Montesquieu. Their names were pronounced slowly in a loud voice, and with all the concentrated determination of the adept's will; and after a moment of intolerable

doubt, the evoked guests appeared very unobtrusively, and took their seats with the quiet courtesy which had characterised them in life.

The first question put to them when the awe of their presence had somewhat worn off was as to their situation in the world beyond.

“There is no world beyond,” replied d’Alembert. “Death is simply the cessation of the evils which have tortured us. No pleasure is experienced, but, on the other hand, there is no suffering. I have not met with Mademoiselle Lespinasse, but I have not seen Lorignet. There is marked sincerity, moreover. Some deceased persons who have recently joined us inform me that I am almost forgotten. I am, however, consoled. Men are unworthy of the trouble we take about them. I never loved them, now I despise them.”

“What has become of your learning?” said M. de —— to Diderot.

“I was not learned, as people commonly supposed. My ready wit adapted all that I read, and in writing I borrowed on every side. Thence comes the desultory character of my books, which will be unheard of in half a century. The Encyclopædia, with the merit of which I am honoured, does not belong to me. The duty of an editor is simply to set in order the choice of subjects. The man who showed most talent in the whole of the work was the compiler of its index, yet no one has dreamed of recognising his merits.”

“I praised the enterprise,” said Voltaire, “for it seemed well fitted to further my philosophical opinions. Talking of philosophy, I am none too certain that I was in the right. I have learned strange things since my death, and have conversed with half a dozen Popes. Clement XIV. and Benedict, above all, are men of infinite intelligence and good sense.”

“What most vexes me,” said the Duc de Choiseul, “is the absence of sex where we dwell. Whatever may be said of this fleshly envelope, ‘twas by no means so bad an invention.”

“What is truly a pleasure to me,” said the Abbé Voisenon, “is that amongst us one is perfectly cured of the folly of intelligence. You cannot conceive how I have been bantered about my ridiculous little romances. I had almost confessed that I appreciated these puerilities at their true value, but whether the modesty of an academician is disbelieved in, or

whether such frivolity is out of character with my age and profession, I expiate almost daily the mistakes of my mortal existence.”

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Amid these marvels, Cagliostro proceeded with the dearest of all his projects, namely, the spread of his Egypto-masonic rite,[40] into which ladies were subsequently admitted, a course of magic being opened for the purpose by Madame Cagliostro. The postulants admitted to this course were thirty-six in number, and all males were excluded. Thus Lorenza figured as the Grand Mistress of Egyptian Masonry, as her husband was himself the grand and sublime Copt. The fair neophytes were required to contribute each of them the sum of one hundred louis to abstain from all carnal connection with mankind, and to submit to everything which might be imposed on them. A vast mansion was hired in the Rue Verte, Faubourg Saint Honoré, at that period a lonely part of the city. The building was surrounded with gardens and magnificent trees. The séance for initiation took place shortly before midnight on the 7th of August 1785.

On entering the first apartment, says Figuier, the ladies were obliged to disrobe and assume a white garment, with a girdle of various colours. They were divided into six groups, distinguished by the tint of their cinctures. A large veil was also provided, and they were caused to enter a temple lighted from the roof, and furnished with thirty-six arm-chairs covered with black satin. Lorenza, clothed in white, was seated on a species of throne, supported by two tall figures, so habited that their sex could not be determined. The light was lowered by degrees till surrounding objects could scarcely be distinguished, when the Grand Mistress commanded the ladies to uncover their left legs as far as the thigh, and raising the right arm to rest it on a neighbouring pillar. Two young women then entered sword in hand, and with silk ropes bound all the ladies together by the arms and legs. Then after a period of impressive silence, Lorenza pronounced an oration, which is given at length, but on doubtful authority, by several biographers, and which preached fervidly the emancipation of womankind from the shameful bonds imposed on them by the lords of creation.

These bonds were symbolised by the silken ropes from which the fair initiates were released at the end of the harangue, when they were

conducted into separate apartments, each opening on the Garden, where they made the most unheard-of experiences. Some were pursued by men who unmercifully persecuted them with barbarous solicitations; others encountered less dreadful admirers, who sighed in the most languishing postures at their feet. More than one discovered the counterpart of her own lover, but the oath they had all taken necessitated the most inexorable inhumanity, and all faithfully fulfilled what was required of them. The new spirit infused into regenerated woman triumphed along the whole line of the six and thirty initiates, who with intact and immaculate symbols re-entered triumphant and palpitating the twilight of the vaulted temple to receive the congratulations of the sovereign priestess.

When they had breathed a little after their trials, the vaulted roof opened suddenly, and, on a vast sphere of gold, there descended a man, naked as the unfallen Adam, holding a serpent in his hand, and having a burning star upon his head.

The Grand Mistress announced that this was the genius of Truth, the immortal, the divine Cagliostro, issued without procreation from the bosom of our father Abraham, and the depositary of all that hath been, is, or shall be known on the universal earth. He was there to initiate them into the secrets of which they had been fraudulently deprived. The Grand Copt thereupon commanded them to dispense with the profanity of clothing, for if they would receive truth they must be as naked as itself. The sovereign priestess setting the example unbound her girdle and permitted her drapery to fall to the ground, and the fair initiates following her example exposed themselves in all the nudity of their charms to the magnetic glances of the celestial genius, who then commenced his revelations.

He informed his daughters that the much abused magical art was the secret of doing good to humanity. It was initiation into the mysteries of Nature, and the power to make use of her occult forces. The visions which they had beheld in the Garden where so many had seen and recognised those who were dearest to their hearts, proved the reality of hermetic operations. They had shewn themselves worthy to know the truth; he undertook to instruct them by gradations therein. It was enough at the outset to inform them that the sublime end of that Egyptian Freemasonry which he had brought from the very heart of the Orient was

the happiness of mankind. This happiness was illimitable in its nature, including material enjoyments as much as spiritual peace, and the pleasures of the understanding.

The Marquis de Luchet, to whom we are indebted for this account, concludes the nebulous harangue of Cagliostro by the adept bidding his hearers abjure a deceiving sex, and to let the kiss of friendship symbolise what was passing in their hearts. The sovereign priestess instructed them in the nature of this friendly embrace.

Thereupon the Genius of Truth seated himself again upon the sphere of gold, and was borne away through the roof. At the same time the floor opened, the light blazed up, and a table splendidly adorned and luxuriously spread rose up from the ground. The ladies were joined by their lovers *in propria persona*; the supper was followed by dancing and various diversions till three o'clock in the morning.

About this time the Count Cagliostro was unwillingly compelled to concede to the continual solicitations of the poor and to resume his medical *rôle*. In a short time he was raised to the height of celebrity by a miraculous cure of the Prince de Soubise, the brother of the Cardinal de Rohan, who was suffering from a virulent attack of scarlet fever. From this moment the portrait of the adept was to be seen everywhere in Paris.

In the meantime, the cloud in his domestic felicity, to which a brief reference has been made already, began to spread. A certain adventuress, by name Madame de la Motte, surprised Lorenza one day in a *tête-à-tête* with the Chevalier d'Oisemont. The count at the time was far away from Paris, and the adventuress promised to keep the secret on condition that Lorenza should in turn do all in her power to establish her as an intimate friend in the house, having free entrance therein, and should persuade Cagliostro to place his knowledge and skill at her disposal, if ever she required it. The result of this arrangement was the complicity of Cagliostro in the extraordinary and scandalous affair of the Diamond Necklace. When the plot was exposed, Cagliostro was arrested with the other alleged conspirators, including the principal victim, the Cardinal de Rohan. He was exonerated, not indeed without honour, from the charge of which he was undoubtedly guilty, but his wife had fled to Rome at his arrest, and had rejoined her family. He himself began to tremble at his own notoriety, and grew anxious to leave France. He postponed till a

more favourable period his grand project concerning the metropolitan lodge of the Egyptian rite.[41] A personage, calling himself Thomas Ximenes, and claiming descent from the cardinal of that name, sought to reanimate his former masonic enthusiasm; but the vision of the Bastile seemed to be ever before his eyes, and neither this person, nor the great dignitaries of the Parisian lodges, could prevail with him. In spite of his acquittal he nourished vengeance against the Court of France, and more than once he confided to his private friends that he should make his voice heard when he had passed the frontier. He prepared to depart, and one day his disconsolate adepts learned that he was on the road to England.

Once in London he recovered his energy. He was received with great honour; many of his disciples from Lyons and Paris followed him. The English masons invited him to the metropolitan lodge, and gave him the first place, that of grand orient. He was entreated to convene a masonic lodge of the Egyptian rite, and consented with some sadness, for the memory of the brilliant Paris lodge which he had been on the point of founding was incessantly before him. He could not console himself for the fall of that beautiful and long-cherished plan, which had cost him so much study, pains, and preaching.

It was from this discreet distance that Cagliostro addressed his famous Letter to the People of France, which was translated into a number of languages, and circulated widely through Europe. It predicted the French Revolution, the demolishment of the Bastile, and the rise of a great prince who would abolish the infamous *lettres de cachet*, convoke the States-General, and re-establish the true religion.

The publication was intemperate in its language and revolutionary in its sentiments, and close upon its heels followed his well-known quarrel with the *Courrier de l'Europe*, which resulted in the exposure of the real life of Cagliostro from beginning to end.

Dreading the rage of his innumerable dupes, and extreme measures on the part of his creditors, he hastened to quit London, disembarked in Holland, crossed Germany, took refuge in Basle, where the patriarchal hospitality of the Swiss cantons to some extent reassured the unmasked adept. From the moment, however, of this exposure, the descent of Cagliostro was simply headlong in its rapidity. Nevertheless, he was followed by some of his initiates, who pressed him to return to France,

assuring him of the powerful protection of exalted masonic dignitaries. In his hesitation he wrote to the Baron de Breteuil, the king's minister of the house, but, as it chanced, a personal enemy of the Cardinal de Rohan. Considering Cagliostro as a *protégé* of the prince, he replied that if he had sufficient effrontery to set foot within the limits of the kingdom, he should be arrested and transferred to a prison in Paris, there to await prosecution as a common swindler, who should answer to the royal justice for his criminal life.

From this moment Cagliostro saw that he was a perpetual exile from France, and feeling in no sense assured of his safety even in Switzerland, he left Basle for Aix, in Savoy. He was ordered to quit that town in eight and forty hours. At Roveredo, a dependency of Austria, the same treatment awaited him. He migrated to Trent, and announced himself as a practitioner of lawful medicine, but the prince-bishop who was sovereign of the country discerned the cloven hoof of the sorcerer beneath the doctor's sober dress, and showed him in no long space of time his hostility to magical practices. The wandering hierophant of Egyptian masonry, somewhat sorely pressed, took post to Rome, and reached the Eternal City after many vicissitudes. Here, according to Saint-Félix and Figuier, he was rejoined by his wife; according to the Italian biographer, Lorenza had accompanied him in his wanderings, and persuaded him to seek refuge in Rome, being sick unto death of her miserable course of life. The former statement is, on the whole, the most probable, as it is difficult to suppose that she left Italy to rejoin Cagliostro at Passy, and she appears to have returned to him with marked repugnance. She endeavoured to lead him back to religion, which had never been eradicated from her heart. He lived for some time with extraordinary circumspection, and consented at last to see a Benedictine monk, to whom he made his confession. The Holy Inquisition, which doubtless had scrutinised all his movements, is said to have been deceived for a time, and he was favourably received by several cardinals. He lived for a year in perfect liberty, occupied with the private study of medicine. During this time he endeavoured to obtain loans from the initiates of his Egyptian rite who were scattered over France and Germany, but they did not arrive, and the sublime Copt, the illuminated proprietor of the stone philosophical and the medicine yclept metallic, came once more, to the eternal disgrace of Osiris, Isis, and Anubis, on the very verge of want.

His extremity prompted him to renew his relations with the masonic societies within the area of the Papal States. A penalty of death hung over the initiates of the superior grades, and their lodges were in consequence surrounded with great mystery, and were convened in subterranean places. He was persuaded to found a lodge of Egyptian Freemasonry in Rome itself, from which moment Lorenza reasonably regarded him as lost. One of his own adepts betrayed him; he was arrested on the 27th of September 1789, by order of the Holy Office, and imprisoned in the Castle of St Angelo. An inventory of his papers was taken, and all his effects were sealed up. The process against him was drawn up with the nicest inquisitorial care during the long period of eighteen months. When the trial came on he was defended by the Count Gætano Bernardini, advocate of the accused before the sacred and august tribunal, and to this pleader in ordinary the impartial and benign office, of its free grace and pleasure, did add generously, as counsel, one Monsignor Louis Constantini, “whose knowledge and probity,” saith an unbought and unbuyable witness (inquisitorially inspired), ”were generally recognised.” They did not conceal from him the gravity of his position, advised him to refrain from basing his defence on a series of denials, promising to save him from the capital forfeit, and so he was persuaded to confess everything, was again reconciled to the church; and being almost odoriferous with genuine sanctity, on the 21st of March 1791 he was carried before the general assembly of the purgers of souls by fire, before the Pope on the 7th of the following April, when the advocates pleaded with so much eloquence that they retired in the agonies of incipient strangulation, Cagliostro repeated his avowal, and as a natural consequence of the unbought eloquence and the purchased confession, the penalty of death was pronounced.

When, however, the shattered energies of the advocates were a little recruited, a recommendation of mercy was addressed to the Pope, the sentence was commuted to perpetual imprisonment, and the condemned man was consigned to the Castle of St Angelo. After an imprisonment of two years, he died, God knows how, still in the prime of life, at the age of fifty.

Lorenza, whose admissions had contributed largely towards the condemnation of her husband, was doomed to perpetual seclusion in a penitentiary. The papers of Cagliostro were burned by the Holy Office,

and the phantom of that institution keeps to the present day the secret of the exact date of its victim's death. It carefully circulated the report that on one occasion he attempted to strangle a priest whom he had sent for on the pretence of confessing, hoping to escape in his clothes; and then it made public the statement that he had subsequently strangled himself. When the battalions of the French Revolution entered Rome, the commanding officers, hammering at the doors of Saint-Angelo, determined to release the entombed adept, but they were informed that Cagliostro was dead, "at which intelligence," says Figuier, "they perceived plainly that the former *Parlement de France* was not to be compared with the Roman Inquisition, and without regretting the demolished Bastile, they could not but acknowledge that it disgorged its prey more easily than the Castle of Saint Angelo."

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The personal attractions of Cagliostro appear to have been exaggerated by some of his biographers. "His splendid stature and high bearing, increased by a dress of the most bizarre magnificence, the extensive suite which invariably accompanied him in his wanderings, turned all eyes upon him, and disposed the minds of the vulgar towards an almost idolatrous admiration."

With this opinion of Figuier may be compared the counter-statement of the Italian biographer:—"He was of a brown complexion, a bloated countenance, and a severe aspect; he was destitute of any of those graces so common in the world of gallantry, without knowledge and without abilities." But the Italian biographer was a false witness, for Cagliostro was beyond all question and controversy a man of consummate ability, tact, and talent. The truth would appear to lie between these opposite extremes. "The Count de Cagliostro," says the English life, published in 1787, "is below the middle stature, inclined to corpulency; his face is a round oval, his complexion and eyes dark, the latter uncommonly penetrating. In his address we are not sensible of that indescribable grace which engages the affections before we consult the understanding. On the contrary, there is in his manner a self-importance which at first sight rather disgusts than allures, and obliges us to withhold our regards, till, on a more intimate acquaintance, we yield it the tribute to our reason. Though naturally studious and contemplative, his conversation is sprightly, abounding with judicious remarks and pleasant anecdotes, yet

with an understanding in the highest degree perspicuous and enlarged, he is ever rendered the dupe of the sycophant and the flatterer.”

The persuasive and occasionally overpowering eloquence of Cagliostro is also dwelt upon by the majority of his biographers, but, according to the testimony of his wife, as extracted under the terror of the Inquisition and adduced in the Italian life:—”His discourse, instead of being eloquent, was composed in a style of the most wearisome perplexity, and abounded with the most incoherent ideas. Previous to his ascending the rostrum he was always careful to prepare himself for his labours by means of some bottles of wine, and he was so ignorant as to the subject on which he was about to hold forth, that he generally applied to his wife for the text on which he was to preach to his disciples. If to these circumstances are added a Sicilian dialect, mingled with a jargon of French and Italian, we cannot hesitate a single moment as to the degree of credibility which we are to give to the assertions that have been made concerning the wonder-working effects of his eloquence.”

But the Inquisition was in possession of documents which bore irrefutable testimony to the extraordinary hold which Cagliostro exercised over the minds of his numerous followers, and it is preposterous to suppose it could have been possessed by a man who was ignorant, unpresentable, and ill-spoken. Moreover, the testimony of Lorenza, given under circumstances of, at any rate, the strongest moral intimidation is completely worthless on all points whatsoever, and the biassed views of our inquisitorial apologists are of no appreciable value.

I have given an almost disproportionate space to the history of Joseph Balsamo, because it is thoroughly representative of the charlatanic side of alchemy, which during two centuries of curiosity and credulity had developed to a deplorable extent. There is no reason to suppose, despite the veil of mystery which surrounded Altotas, that he was an adept in anything but the sophistication of metals, and his skill in alchemical trickery descended to his pupil. That Balsamo was a powerful mesmerist, that he could induce clairvoyance with facility in suitable subjects, that he had dabbled in Arabic occultism, that he had the faculty of healing magnetically, are points which the evidence enables us to admit, and these genuine phenomena supported his titanic impostures, being themselves supplemented wherever they were weak or defective by direct and prepared fraud. Thus his miraculous prophecies, delineations

of absent persons, revelations of private matters, &c., may to some extent be accounted for by the insatiable curiosity and diligence which he made use of to procure knowledge of the secrets of any families with which he came into communication. Lorenzo declared upon oath during her examination that many of the pupils had been prepared beforehand by her husband, but that some had been brought to him unawares, and that in regard to them she could only suppose he had been assisted by the marvels of magical art.

His powers, whatever they were, were imparted to some at least of his Masonic initiates, as may be seen in a genuine letter addressed to him from Lyons, and which describes in enthusiastic language the consecration in that town of the Egyptian lodge called Wisdom Triumphant. This letter fell into the hands of the Inquisition. It relates that at the moment when the assembly had entreated of the Eternal some explicit sign of his approval of their temple and their offerings, “and whilst our master was in mid air,” the first philosopher of the New Testament appeared uninvoked, blessed them after prostration before the cloud, by means of which they had obtained the apparition, and was carried upwards upon it, the splendour being so great that the young pupil or dove was unable to sustain it.

The same letter affirms that the two great prophets and the legislator of Israel had given them palpable signs of their goodwill and of their obedience to the commands of the august founder, the sieur Cagliostro. A similar communication testifies that the great Copt, though absent, had appeared in their lodge between Enoch and Elias.[42]

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CONCLUSION.

It has now been made plain beyond all reasonable doubt by the certain and abundant evidence of the lives and labours of the alchemists, that they were in search of a physical process for the transmutation of the so-called baser metals into silver and gold. The methods and processes by which they endeavoured to attain this *désir désiré*, and the secrets which they are supposed to have discovered, are embodied in allegorical writings, and their curious symbolism in the hands of ingenious interpreters is capable of several explanations, but the facts in their arduous and generally chequered careers are not allegorical, and are not

capable of any mystical interpretations; consequently, the attempt to enthrone them upon the loftiest pinnacles of achievement in the psychic world, however attractive and dazzling to a romantic imagination, and however spiritually suggestive, must be regretfully abandoned. Their less splendid but substantial and permanent reputation is based on their physical discoveries and on their persistent enunciation of a theory of Universal Development, which true and far-sighted adepts well perceived, had an equal application to the triune man as to those metals which in their conception had also a triune nature.

As stated in the Introduction to this work, I have little personal doubt, after a careful and unbiassed appreciation of all the evidence, that the *Magnum Opus* has been performed, at least occasionally, in the past, and that, therefore, the alchemists, while laying the foundations of modern chemistry, had already transcended its highest results in the metallic kingdom. Now, the Hermetic doctrine of correspondences which is, at any rate, entitled to the sincere respect of all esoteric thinkers, will teach us that the fact of their success in the physical subject is analogically a substantial guarantee of the successful issue of parallel methods when applied in the psychic world with the subject man. But the revelations of mesmerism, and the phenomena called spiritualism, have discovered thaumaturgic possibilities for humanity, which in a wholly independent manner contribute to the verification of the alchemical hypothesis of development in its extension to the plane of intelligence. These possibilities I believe to be realizable exclusively along the lines indicated in Hermetic parables. I am not prepared to explain how the alchemical theory of Universal Development came to be evolved in the scientific and psychological twilight of the middle ages, but the fact remains. Nor am I prepared to explain how and why the method of a discredited science which is not commonly supposed to have attained its end, should not only be consistent within its own sphere, but should have a vast field of application without it; yet, again, the fact remains. I have brought a wide acquaintance with the history of modern supernaturalism to bear on the serious study of alchemy, and have found the old theories illustrated by the novel facts, while novel facts coincided with old theories. As all this has occurred, in the words of the alchemists, “by a natural process, devoid of haste or violence,” I may trust that it is no illusory discovery, and that its future enunciation may give a new

impulse to the study of the Hermetic writings among the occultists of England and America.

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Johann Valentin Andreas—Turris Babel, sive Judicium de Fraternitatis Roseæ Crucis Chaos. 24mo. Argentorati, 1619.

S. R. (*i.e.*, Sincerus Renatus, a pseudonym of Sigmund Richter)—Perfect and True Preparation of the Philosophical Stone, according to the Secret of the Brotherhood of the Golden and Rosy Cross. With the Rules of the above-mentioned Order for the Initiation of New Members. 8vo. Breslau, 1710.

Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Fol. Altona, 1785-88.

Joachim Fritz (? Robert Fludd)—Summum Bonum, quod est verum subjectum veræ magicæ, cabalæ, alchymiæ Fratrum Roseæ Crucis verorum in dictarum scientiarum laudem, et insignis calumniatoris … M. Mersenni dedecus publicatum. Fol. Francfurt, 1629.

Thomas Vaughan (Eugenius Philalethes)—The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of R. C., with a Preface annexed thereto, and a short declaration of their Physicall Work. 8vo. London, 1652.

John Heydon—The Rosie Crucian Infallible Axiomata. 12mo. London, 1660.

—— The Holy Guide, leading the Way to the Wonder of the World. 8vo. London, 1662.

—— Theomagia; or, The Temple of Wisdome. In three parts—spirituall, celestiall, and elementall. 8vo. London, 1662-3-4.

—— The Wise Man’s Crown, or The Glory of the Rosy Cross. 8vo. London, 1664.

—— El Havarevna; or The English Physitian’s Tutor in the Astrobolismes of Mettals Rosie Crucian. 8vo. London, 1665.

Hargrave Jennings—The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries. With chapters on the Ancient Fire and Serpent Worshippers, and Explanations of the Mystic Symbols Represented on the Monuments and Talismans of the Primeval Philosophers. 8vo. London, 1870.

Arthur Edward Waite—The Real History of the Rosicrucians. Founded on their own Manifestoes and on Facts and Documents collected from the writings of Initiated Brethren. 8vo. London, 1887.

Rosnel (P.)—Le Mercure Indien. (*Curious.*) 4to. Paris, 1672.

Rossello (T.)—Secreti Universali. 8vo. Venet., 1574.

Rossinus (H.)—De Opera Dei Creationis. 4to. Fran., 1597.

Rothscoltzii (F.)—Bibliotheca Chimica. 4to. 1719.

—— Bibliotheca Chemia Curiosa Adornata. 12mo. Noren., 1720.

Rouillac (P.)—Practica Operis Magni. 8vo. Lugd., 1582.

Rousselet—La Chrysospagirie. 8vo. Lyons, 1582.

Rudenius (M.)—Bendencten Von der Alchimistichen Artzen Kunst. 8vo. Lip., 1605.

Ruelli (J.)—De Natura Stribium. 2 vols. 8vo. Venet., 1538.

Rullandi (M.)—Progymnasmata Alchimiæ. 8vo. Fran., 1607.

Rullandi (M.)—Lexicon Alchimiæ. 4to. Fran., 1612.

Rupecissa (Johan, *adept*)—Cœlum Philosophorum. 8vo. Parisiis, 1543.

—— De Quinta Essentia Rerum Omnium. 8vo. Basil, 1561.

—— De Secretis Alchemiæ. 4to. Col. Agi., 1579.

—— Livre de Lumière. 16mo. Paris.

Sabor (Chr. Fer.)—Practica Naturæ vera Preparatio Lapidis Mineralis de Antimonio. (*German.*) 8vo. 1721.

Saignier (J.)—Magni Lapidis Naturalis Philosophia. 4to. Brem., 1664.

Saint Romain—Effets de la Pierre Divine. 12mo. Paris, 1679.

Salæ (Angeli)—Opera Medico-Chymica Omnia. 4to. Rothomagi, 1650.

Sale (De)—De Secreto Philosophorum. 8vo. Cass., 1651.

Salmon (William, M.D.)—Hermes, Kalid, Pontanus, Artephius, Geber, Flamel, Bacon, Ripley. 8vo. Lond., 1692.

—— Bibliothèque. Containing twelve tracts by reputed adepts. 12mo. Paris, 1672.

Saltzhal (S.)—De Potentissima Medicina Univali. 8vo. Argent., 1659.

Sapientia—Clavis Majoris Sapientiæ (Artephius). 8vo. Paris, 1609.

Sawtree (John)—Of the Philosopher's Stone. 4to. Lond., 1652.

Schennemannus (H.)—De Medecina Reformata seu denario Hermetico-Chemico. 8vo. Fran., 1617.

Schleron (H.)—De Lapide Philosophorum. 8vo. Marpus, 1612.

Schlussel—Zur Findung dess Steins der Weissen. 8vo. Leip., 1706.

Scholzii (L.)—Summum Philosophiæ. Fol. Hano., 1610.

Schotti (C.)—Physica Curiosa cum Figuris. 4to. Herb., 1667.

—— Mirabilia Artis. 2 v. 4to. Norim., 1664.

Schuleri (C.)—De Miraculo Chemico. 1616.

Schwertzer (Sibald)—Chrysopœiæ. (*Esteemed.*) 8vo. Hamb., 1618.

Scientia Exemplar (*ex Lagneo*). 4to. Ulm., 1641.

Scot (Patrick)—Tillage of Light. 8vo. Lond., 1623.

Scoti (Michael)—De Secretis Naturæ. 12mo. Fran., 1614.

Sebilista (W.)—Manuale Hermeticum. 4to. Wolf., 1655.

Secrets Disclosed of the Philosopher's Stone. 24mo. 1680.

Seilerus—Of a Transmuting Powder Found. 4to. Lond., 1633.

Sel—Du Sel de Sapience. (*Disesteemed*). 8vo. Paris, 1619.

Semita Rectitudinis de Alchemia. 8vo. Gratianopoli, 1614.

Sendivogius (Mich.)—De Vero Sale. (*Spurious.*) Franc., 1651.

—— New Light of Alchymy.

Senfrid (J. H.)—Medulla Naturæ. 8vo. Taltzlach, 1679.

Sennertus (D.)—Institutions of Chemistry. 8vo. London.

Severini (Petri)—Totius Philos. Adeptæ. 8vo. Basil, 1572.

Severino (Scipione)—Triomfo d'Ell Alchimia. 8vo. Venet., 1691.

—— Filosofia Alchemia. Venet., 1695.

—— Commentary on Lully. (*Italian.*) 1684.

Seyfarti (A.)—Klar und Deutliche Luorterung. 8vo. Leypsich, 1723.

Sferza (La)—De Gli Alchemisti. Lion., 1665.

Sidrach—Le Grand Fontaine de Science. 4to. Paris, 1514.

Simpson—Of Fermentation. Lond., 1675.

Snoyus (R.)—De Arte Alchimiæ. Fol. Francof., 1620.

Sol Sine Vesta (*anonymous adept*). Amst., 1684.

Spacheri (S.)—Alchimia, cum Figuris. 4to. 1616.

Sperberi (J.)—Argumentum in Veram Triunius Dei et Naturæ. 8vo. Hamb., 1672.

—— De Materia Lapidis. 8vo. Hamb., 1674.

Stahli (G. E.)—Fundamenta Chimiæ. 4to. Norim., 1723.

Starky (G.)—Pyrotechny Asserted. 12mo. Lond., 1658.

—— Nature's Explication. 1658.

—— Marrow of Chemical Physic. 12mo. 1661.

Steebe (I. S.)—Elixir Solis. 12mo. Francof., 1672.

—— Cœlum Sephiroticum. Fol. Moguntiæ, 1679.

Stisseri (J. A.)—Acta Laboratorii Jesiæ. 4to. Helen., 1701.

Stolcii (D.)—Viridiarium Chimicum, cum Figuris. Franc., 1624.

—— Hortulus Hermeticus, cum Figuris. 8vo. Franc., 1627.

Struthius (J.)—Medecina Priscorum. Lugd., 1600.

Struvius (E. G.)—Chimicum sine Igne. 8vo. Jenæ, 1715.

Surmiti (J.)—Physica Electiva. 4to. Nor., 1697.

—— In Collegium Experimentale Curiosum. 4to. Norim., 1701.

Suchten (Alex.)—Clavis Alchemiæ. (*German.*) 8vo. Montis., 1614.

—— Secrets of Antimony. 8vo. Lond., 1670.

Sudum Philosophicum. 8vo. Hamb., 1660.

Swedenburgii (Em.)—Regnum Minerale. 3 v. Fol. Liq., 1734.

Synes—De Sapientia Divina. 12mo. Lutet., 1635.

T. W.—Marrow of Chemical Physic. Lond., 1659.

Tabulæ Septem Synopsim Lapidis. Erph., 1598.

Tachemius (Oth)—De Liquore Alkæst. 4to. Hamb., 1655.

—— Hippocrates' Viperine Salt. 4to. London, 1677.

Tackii (J.)—Triplex Phasis Sophicus Solis arbe expiditus. 4to. Franc., 1673.

Tankins (J.)—Collection of Alchemy in German. Leipsic, 1610.

Teichmeyeri (H. F.)—Institutiones. Jenæ, 1729.

Tenzelius (A.)—Medecina Diastatica. 12mo. Jenæ, 1629.

Theatrum Chimicum. Two hundred and nine treatises by Arnold, Albert, Augmelli, Aristotle, Aquinas, Alanus, Alvetanus, Alphonso, Avicenna, Artephius, Aphorisms, Bacon, Balbius, Bernard, Bernaud, Bona, Brentzius, Brosse, Blawenstein, Caravantis, Colleson, Christopher, Dee, Dornea, Democritus, Egidius, Eck, Ficinus, Fanian, Flamel, Ferarius, Gaston, Greverius, Grossius, Haymonis, Hermes, Hogheland, Hornius, Isaac, Kalid, Lagneus, Lasinoro, Lavinius, Lacinius, Lampsprink, Lully, Muffetus, Mary, P. Mirandola, Micreris, Meneus, Monachus, Nigrius, Orthelius, Odomar, Ortholan, Ponlanus, Penotus, Pantheus, Plato, Phedio, Quercetan, Rhedargii, Rupecissa, Ripley, Richard, Rosary, Phasis, Sendivogius, Silento, M. Scott, Trithemius, Turba, Troginani, Vogelius, Ventma, Vallensis, Vigenerus, Zacharia, Zonetus, Zadith. 6 v. 8vo. Argent., 1662.

Theobaldi (Zach.)—Arcana Naturæ. 4to. Norin., 1628.

Thomæ Aquinatis—Secreta Alchemiæ. 4to. Colon., 1579.

—— Thesaurus Alchemiæ. 8vo. Lugd., 1602.

—— De Esse et Essentia Mineralium. (*Spurious.*) 4to. Venet., 1488.

Thor (G.)—Cheiragogia Heliana. (*English.*) 8vo. Lond., 1659.

Thornburgh (John)—Nihil, aliquid, omnia in gratiam eorum qui artem auriferam Phisico-chimice et pie profitentur. 4to., Oxon., 1621.

Thurneyssers (Leo.)—Hoechste sublilitad der Alchimia. 4to. Munst., 1569.

Tombeau de la Pauvreté, par Atramont. 12mo. Par., 1673.

Tombeau de Semiramis. 8vo. Par., 1689.

Tractat—Gulden Rose Chit der Natur, &c. 8vo. 1706.

Tractatus Antiquorum Arcanorum. 8vo. 1612.

Tractat. 7 Von Stein der Weissen. 8vo. Ham.

Tranas Facilis ad Hermetis Artem. 12mo. Corolopili, 1686.

Transformation Métallique. 8vo. Paris, 1651.

Transfiguratione Metallorum (De). 8vo. Hanov., 1593.

Treasure of Treasures. 24mo. Lond., 1680.

Tres Tractatus de Metallorum Transmutatione. Amst., 1668.

Trinum—Koffski, Alphidius, and Lully. 8vo. Arg., 1699.

Triomphe Hermétique (*i.e.*, Ancient War of the Knights). 12mo. Amst., 1689.

Trifolium Hermeticum. (*German.*) 1629.

Trimosin (S., *adept*)—La Toison d'Or. 8vo. 1611.

Trithemius (J.)—De Lapide Phil. 8vo. 1611.

Trinum Magicum Opus Secretorum. 12mo. Tran., 16, 1809.

Trompette de Philosophie Hermétique. 12mo. Paris.

Tubicum Conviviale Hermeticum. 4to. Gedani, 1682.

Tymme (J.)—Nature's Closet Opened. 4to. Lond., 1612.

Ulstadii (P.)—Cœlum Philosophorum. 12mo. Lugd., 1553.

Untzerus (M.)—Anatomia Mercurii. 4to. Hale Sax., 1620.

Urbigero (Baro., *adept*)—Aphorisms. 12mo. Lond., 1690.

Vallensis (R.)—De Veritate et Antiquitate Artis Chemicæ. 16mo. Par., 1651.

Valentine (Basil, *adept*)—Last Will, Practica, Twelve Keys, Manual, Natural and Supernatural Things, Microcosm, &c. 8vo. Lond., 1671.

—— Triumphal Chariot of Antimony. 8vo. 1656.

—— Scripta Chimica. 8vo. Hamburgi, 1700.

Vallerlis (V.)—Lulliam Explicano. 4to. August., 1589.

Vanderlinden—De Scriptis Medecis. 4to. Norim., 1686.

Vanner (T.)—Way to Long Life. 4to. Lond., 1623.

Vannucio Pyrotecnia della Minere. 4to. Venet., 1540.

Vargas (B. P.)—De Re Metallica. 8vo. Madrid, 1569.

Vigam of Verona—Medulla Chymiæ. Lond., 1683.

Vigenerus (B.)—Of True Fire and Salt. Lond., 1649.

Vigani (J. A.)—Medulla Chymiæ. Lug. Bat., 1693.

Villanova (Arnoldus de)—Opera Omnia—Conversion of Metals, Rosary, Speculum, Questions, Flos Florum, &c. Fol. Lugd., 1520.

Villanovani (Petri), *compiler*—Speculum. Duæ, 1626.

Vittestein—De Quinta Essentia. 8vo. Basil, 1582.

Vogelii (Ewal.)—De Lapide Physici. Colon., 1575.

Vonderbeet (D.)—Experimenta. Ferrariæ, 1688.

Wallerus—Chemia Physica. 8vo. Lond.

Water—The Water Stone of the Wise. 8vo. Lond., 1659.

Webster's History of Metals. 4to. Lond., 1671.

Wecker (Dr, of Basle)—Secrets. 8vo. Lyons, 1643.

Weidenfeld (J. J.)—Secrets of the Adepts. 4to. Lond., 1685.

Weidnerus (J.)—De Arte Chimica. 4to. Basil, 1610.

Wickffbain (J. P.)—Salamandra. Norimb., 1683.

Williams (W.)—Occult Physics. 8vo. Lond., 1660.

Willis (T.)—Theophisical Alchemy. 8vo. Lond., 1616.

—— Opera Omnia Medicin. 2 v. Lugd., 1681.

Wilson (G.)—Three Hundred Unknown Experiments. Lond., 1699.

Wirdig (Sebas.)—Medicina Spiritum. Norimberg, 1675.

Wittestein (C.)—De Quinta Essentia. 8vo. Basil, 1583.

Wittichius (J.)—De Lapide Philos. 8vo. Francof., 1625.

Zacharia—Clavis Spagirica. 4to. Venet., 1611.

Zacharii (D., *adept*)—La Vraie Philosophie des Metaux. 8vo. Anvers., 1567.

—— De Chimico Miracule. 8vo. Basil, 1583.

Zadith—Antiquissimi Philos. 8vo. Argent., 1566.

Zelator (J.)—Alchemistici. 8vo. Basil, 1606.

Note.—The titles of some of the treatises enumerated above have been mutilated by the original bibliographers, and owing to the extreme rarity of most alchemical books, it has been impossible to correct all errors.

Appendix

I.

The life of Denis Zachaire has been made the subject of an interesting and well-written novel—”A Professor of Alchemy”—by “Percy Ross,” recently published by Mr George Redway. The life of the great adept, after his accomplishment of the Magnum Opus, is detailed at some length, M. Louis Figuier being apparently the authority for the bare facts of the case. The alchemist is represented by the French writer as having travelled to Lausanne, where he became enamoured of a young and beautiful lady, whom he carried from Switzerland into Germany, and then abandoned himself completely to a life of dissipation and folly, which closed tragically at Cologne in the year 1556. He was strangled in the middle of a drunken sleep by the cousin who had accompanied him in his travels, and who coveted his wealth and his mistress. The murderer effected his escape with the lady, who appears to have been his accomplice. The sole authority for this narrative appears to be a poem by Mardoché de Delle, who was attached, as a sort of laureate, to the court of Rodolph II. It is not improbably a mere invention of the versifier; there is nothing in the sober treatise of Denis Zachaire, written at the period in question, to give colour to the account of his extravagance.

II.

The manuscript volume entitled “Egyptian Freemasonry” fell, with the other papers of Cagliostro, into the hands of the Inquisition, and was solemnly condemned in the judgment as containing rites, propositions, a doctrine and a system which opened a broad road to sedition and were calculated to destroy the Christian religion. The book was characterised as superstitious, blasphemous, impious, and heretical. It was publicly burnt by the hands of the executioner, with the instruments belonging to the sect. Some valuable particulars concerning it are, however, preserved

in the Italian life; they are reproduced from the original proceedings published at Rome by order of the Apostolic Chamber.

“It may be necessary to enter into some details concerning Egyptian Masonry. We shall extract our facts from a book compiled by himself, and now in our possession, by which he owns he was always directed in the exercise of his functions, and from which those regulations and instructions were copied, wherewith he enriched many mother lodges. In this treatise, which is written in French, he promises to conduct his disciples to perfection by means of physical and moral regeneration, to confer perpetual youth and beauty on them, and restore them to that state of innocence which they were deprived of by means of original sin. He asserts that Egyptian Masonry was first propagated by Enoch and Elias, but that since that time it has lost much of its purity and splendour. Common masonry, according to him, has degenerated into mere buffoonery, and women have of late been entirely excluded from its mysteries; but the time was now arrived when the grand Copt was about to restore the glory of masonry, and allow its benefits to be participated by both sexes.

“The statutes of the order then follow in rotation, the division of the members into three distinct classes, the various signs by which they might discover each other, the officers who are to preside over and regulate the society, the stated times when the members are to assemble, the erection of a tribunal for deciding all differences that may arise between the several lodges or the particular members of each, and the various ceremonies which ought to take place at the admission of the candidates. In every part of this book the pious reader is disgusted with the sacrilege, the profanity, the superstition, and the idolatry with which it abounds—the invocations in the name of God, the prostrations, the adorations paid to the Grand Master, the fumigations, the incense, the exorcisms, the emblems of the Divine Triad, of the moon, of the sun, of the compass, of the square, and a thousand other scandalous particulars, with which the world is at present well acquainted.

“The Grand Copt, or chief of the lodge, is compared to God the Father. He is invoked upon every occasion; he regulates all the actions of the members and all the ceremonies of the lodge, and he is even supposed to have communication with angels and with the Divinity. In the exercise of many of the rites they are desired to repeat the *Veni* and

the *Te Deum*—nay, to such an excess of impiety are they enjoined, that in reciting the psalm *Memento Domine David*, the name of the Grand Master is always to be substituted for that of the King of Israel.

“People of all religions are admitted into the society of Egyptian Masonry—the Jew, the Calvinist, the Lutheran, are to be received into it as well as the Catholic—provided they believe in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, and have been previously allowed to participate in the mysteries of the common masonry. When men are admitted, they receive a pair of garters from the Grand Copt, as is usual in all lodges, for their mistresses; and when women are received into the society, they are presented by the Grand Mistress with a cockade, which they are desired to give to that man to whom they are most attached.

“We shall here recount the ceremonies made use of on admitting a female.

“The candidate having presented herself, the Grand Mistress (Madame Cagliostro generally presided in that capacity) breathes upon her face from the forehead to the chin, and then says, ‘I breathe upon you on purpose to inspire you with the virtues which we possess, so that they may take root and flourish in your heart, I thus fortify your soul, I thus confirm you in the faith of your brethren and sisters, according to the engagements which you have contracted with them. We now admit you as a daughter of the Egyptian lodge. We order that you be acknowledged in that capacity by all the brethren and sisters of the Egyptian lodges, and that you enjoy with them the same prerogatives as with ourselves.’

“The Grand Master thus addresses the male candidate: ‘In virtue of the power which I have received from the Grand Copt, the founder of our order, and by the particular grace of God, I hereby confer upon you the honour of being admitted into our lodge in the name of Helios, Mene, Tetragrammaton.’

“In a book, said to be printed at Paris in 1789, it is asserted that the last words were suggested to Cagliostro, as sacred and cabalistical expressions by a pretended conjuror, who said that he was assisted by a spirit, and that this spirit was no other than the soul of a cabalistical Jew, who by means of the magical art had murdered his own father before the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

“Common masons have been accustomed to regard St John as their patron, and to celebrate the festival of that saint. Cagliostro also adopted him as his protector, and it is not a little remarkable that he was imprisoned at Rome on the very festival of his patron. The reason for his veneration of this great prophet was, if we are to believe himself, the great similarity between the Apocalypse and the rites of his institution.

“We must here observe that when any of his disciples were admitted into the highest class, the following execrable ceremony took place. A young boy or girl, in the state of virgin innocence and purity, was procured, who was called the pupil, and to whom power was given over the seven spirits that surround the throne of the divinity and preside over the seven planets. Their names according to Cagliostro’s book are Anaël, Michaël, Raphaël, Gabriel, Uriel, Zobiachel, and Anachiel. The pupil is then made use of as an intermediate agent between the spiritual and physical worlds, and being clothed in a long white robe, adorned with a red ribbon, and blue silk festoons, he is shut up in a little closet. From that place he gives response to the Grand Master, and tells whether the spirits and Moses have agreed to receive the candidates into the highest class of Egyptian masons….

“In his instructions to obtain the moral and physical regeneration which he had promised to his disciples, he is exceedingly careful to give a minute description of the operations to which they are to submit. Those who are desirous of experiencing the moral regeneration are to retire from the world for the space of forty days, and to distribute their time into certain proportions. Six hours are to be employed in reflection, three in prayer to the Deity, nine in the holy operations of Egyptian Masonry, while the remaining period is to be dedicated to repose. At the end of the thirty-three days a visible communication is to take place between the patient and the seven primitive spirits, and on the morning of the fortieth day his soul will be inspired with divine knowledge, and his body be as pure as that of a new-born infant.

“To procure a physical regeneration, the patient is to retire into the country in the month of May, and during forty days is to live according to the most strict and austere rules, eating very little, and then only laxative and sanative herbs, and making use of no other drink than distilled water, or rain that has fallen in the course of the month. On the seventeenth day, after having let blood, certain white drops are to be

taken, six at night and six in the morning, increasing them two a day in progression. In three days more a small quantity of blood is again to be let from the arm before sunrise, and the patient is to retire to bed till the operation is completed. A grain of the *panacea* is then to be taken; this panacea is the same as that of which God created man when He first made him immortal. When this is swallowed the candidate loses his speech and his reflection for three entire days, and he is subject to frequent convulsions, struggles, and perspirations. Having recovered from this state, in which, however, he experiences no pain whatever, on the thirty-sixth day, he takes the third and last grain of the panacea, which causes him to fall into a profound and tranquil sleep; it is then that he loses his hair, his skin, and his teeth. These again are all reproduced in a few hours, and having become a new man, on the morning of the fortieth day he leaves his room, enjoying a complete rejuvenescence, by which he is enabled to live 5557 years, or to such time as he, of his own accord, may be desirous of going to the world of spirits."

Concerning the Lodge of Freemasons discovered at Rome.

The final chapter of the Italian life of Cagliostro, which appeared before the death of its subject, contains a curious and interesting account under the above title. The lodge was situated in the quarter of the city called the Holy Trinity of the Mountain. It was visited on the night of Cagliostro's capture, but the members had been evidently forewarned; they had taken precautions as to their personal safety, had removed the symbols of their craft and the greater part of their books and papers, which perhaps, says the writer, contained secrets of great importance. The Inquisition claims to have a true insight, notwithstanding, into the origin, establishment, and other particulars of this lodge, drawn in part from the depositions of "a multitude of well-informed persons."

The founders were seven in number, five Frenchmen, an American, and a Pole, all of whom had been previously initiated into other lodges. It assumed the title of the Lodge of the Reunion of True Friends, and the first meeting took place on November 1, 1787. Proselytes were immediately made, and included candidates who had not been received into any other society. Its numbers rapidly increased, and to establish it with all the necessary formalities approbation was procured from the Mother Lodge at Paris, and a deputy was sent to reside in that city as its representative. Its letters were transported by special messengers.

Mention is made in the register of archives kept under three locks, in which the statutes, the mysteries, and the symbols transmitted from Paris were preserved, with all the most interesting speeches delivered within the lodge. However, the Egyptian lodge is affirmed to have been in this instance devoid of special characteristics. The list of its officers was as follows:—

The Venerable, or Grand Master.

The Superintendent, or Deputy Grand Master.

The Terrible.

The Master of the Ceremonies.

The Treasurer.

The Almoner.

The Secretary.

The Orator, or Export Broker.

The entire Lodge was composed of two chambers, or halls. The first was called the Chamber of Reflections. A death's head was placed on a table, and above it were two inscriptions in French, which contained an arcane significance. The second apartment was called the Temple; it was adorned according to the various rites performed in it. On all occasions it was provided with a throne, on which the Venerable constantly sat. Some emblems of masonry adorned the walls—among them were the sun, moon, and planets. On the two sides of the throne several magnificent pillars were placed, and opposite to these the brotherhood were arranged in order, each of them wearing his leathern apron, and a black ribbon in the form of a deacon's stole about his neck, while in his hands, which were covered with a pair of white gloves, he brandished a naked sword, a hammer, or a compass, according to the different formalities prescribed by the institution.

With the secret signs and passports, the Inquisition does not seem to have been acquainted.

THE END

Notes

[←1]

There is no need to suppose a metonymy. The conscience is a guide which education easily perverts. Therefore, supposing it to be really the *instrument* of the alchemists, it may eminently stand in need of purification, and, except in the most general matters, is at best an uncertain guide.

[←2]

“L’Alchimie et les Alchimistes,” p. 93.

[←3]

Baro Urbigerus—“One Hundred Aphorisms demonstrating the preparation of the Grand Elixir.”

[←4]

Aphorismi Urbigerani.

[←5]

Commentary on the “Ancient War of the Knights.”

[←6]

J. J. Mangeti, “Bib. Chem. Curiosa,” 2 v. fol. 1702.

[←7]

Figuier, *L'Alchimie et les Alchimistes*, pp. 95, 96.

[←8]

Thomson, “Hist. of Chemistry,” vol. i., pp. 32, 33.

[←9]

Nam quadraturam circuli se ignorasse confitetur, quod his diebus scitur veraciter.

[←10]

Figuier, *L'Alchimie et les Alchimistes*, p. 97.

[←11]

This illness is referred to by another writer, with details of a miraculous kind. “About 1275 (the chronology of all the biographers is a chaos of confusion) he fell ill a second time, and was reduced to such an extremity that he could take neither rest nor nourishment. On the feast of the Conversion of St Paul, the crucified Saviour again appeared to him, glorified, and surrounded by a most exquisite odour, which surpassed musk, amber, and all other scents. In remembrance of this miracle, on the same day, in the same bed and place where he lived and slept, the same supernal odour is diffused.”

[←12]

The following variation is also related:—“Finding him still alive when they bore him to the ship, the merchants put back towards Genoa to get help, but they were carried miraculously to Majorca, where the martyr expired in sight of his native island. The merchants resolved to say nothing of their precious burden, which they embalmed and preserved religiously, being determined to transport it to Genoa. Three times they put to sea with a wind that seemed favourable, but as often they were forced to return into port, which proved plainly the will of God, and obliged them to make known the martyrdom of the man whom they revered, who was stoned for the glory of God in the town of Bugia (?) in the year of grace 1318.” From this account it will be seen that the place of Lully’s violent death, as well as the date on which it occurred, are both involved in doubt. He was born under the pontificate of Honorius IV., and died, according to Genebrand, about 1304; but the author of the preface to the meditations of the Hermit Blaquerne positively fixes his decease on the feast of the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul, June 29, 1315, and declares that he was eighty-six years old.

[←13]

E.g., Jean-Marie de Vernon, who extends the lists to about three thousand, and, following the Père Pacifique de Provence, prolongs his life by the discovery of the universal medicine.

[←14]

“Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers,” ed. 1815.

[←15]

Kenyon, “Gold Coins of England,” pp. 57, 58.

[←16]

Gruelin, *Geschichte der Chemie*, i. 74.

[←17]

According to Louis Figuier, there were two minor persecutions of the Jews, one in 1346, when Flamel was merely a boy, and the other in 1354, when he was scarcely established in business.

[←18]

He is said to have been a French monk of the order of St Francis.

[←19]

Eadem ætate (scilicet anno 1413) Basilius Valentinus in divi Patri monasteris vixit arte medica *et naturale indagatione admirabilis*.

[←20]

“Lives of Alchemysticall Philosophers.” Ed. of 1815.

[←21]

Stow, “Annales of England,” p. 424, ed. 1615.

[←22]

See Appendix I.

[←23]

Dictionnaire des Sciences Occultes, i. p. 232.

[←24]

Morhof, *Epistola ad Langlelotum de Metallorun Transmutatione*.

[←25]

Chausepié, *Dictionnaire*.

[←26]

See De Quincey's "Rosicrucians and Freemasons."

[←27]

Ce chevalier, très-révérée des alchimistes, est mentionnée souvent dans la *Trompette Française*, petit volume, contenant une *Prophétic de Bombast sur la Naissance de Louis XIV.* On a, du Chevalier Impérial, le *Miroir des Alchimistes*, avec instructions aux dames pour dorénavant être belles sans plus user de leurs dards venimeux, 1609, 16mo. *Dictionnaire des Sciences Occultes.*

[←28]

The names Seton or Seatoun have been given as that of the village in question, but in Camden's "Britannia" it appears as the name of the house itself. The alchemist himself is sufficiently myrionimous, being variously denominated Sethon, Sidon, Sethonius, Scotus, Sitonius, Sidonius, Suthoneus, Suethonius, and even Seehthonius.

[←29]

Epistola ad doctorem Schobinger, printed by Emmanuel Konig in his *Ephemerides*.

[←30]

Théobald de Hoghelande, *Historiæ aliquot Transmutationis Mettalicæ pro defensione Alchemiæ contra Hostium Rabrein*. Cologne, 1604.

[←31]

Galdenfalk, “Alchemical Anecdotes.”

[←32]

See Desnoyer's Letter in Langlet du Fresnoy's *Histoire de la Philosophie Hermétique*. Borel, in his Gallic Antiquities, recounts that he, with many others at Paris, saw this crown-piece. He describes it as partly gold, so far only as it was steeped in the elixir. The gold part was porous, being specifically more compact than in its silver state. There was no appearance of soldering, or of the possibility of deception.

[←33]

See *Vie de Sendivogius, tirée de la Rélation de Jean Bodowski*.

[←34]

It was published at Amsterdam in 1667, and is supposed to have been free from the numerous typographical errors of the later editions.

[←35]

La Chiave del Gabinetto del Cavagliere G. F. Borri, col favor della quella si vedono varie lettere scientifiche, chimice, e curiosissime, con varie istruzioni politiche, ed altre cose degne da curiosita e molti segreti bellissimi. Cologne (Genève), 1681, 12mo.

[←36]

In the Memoir written by Joseph Balsamo during his imprisonment in the Bastille, he surrounds his origin and infancy with romantic and glamorous mystery. “I am ignorant,” he asserts, “not only of my birthplace, but even of the parents who bore me. All my researches on these points have afforded me nothing but vague and uncertain, though, in truth, exalted, notions. My earliest infancy was passed in the town of Medina, in Arabia, where I was brought up under the name of Acharat—a name which I afterwards used during my Asiatic and African travels—and was lodged in the palace of the muphti. I distinctly recollect having four persons continually about me—a tutor, between fifty-five and sixty years of age, named Altotas, and three slaves, one of whom was white, while the others were black. My tutor invariably told me that I had been left an orphan at the age of three months, and that my parents were noble, and Christians as well, but he preserved the most absolute silence as to their name and as to the place where I was born, though certain chance words led me to suspect that I first saw the light at Malta. Altotas took pleasure in cultivating my natural taste for the sciences; he himself was proficient in all, from the most profound even to the most trivial. It was in botany and physics that I made most progress. Like my instructor I wore the dress of a Mussulman, and outwardly we professed the Mohammedan law. The principles of the true religion were, however, engraven in our hearts. I was frequently visited by the muphti, who treated me with much kindness and had great respect for my instructor, through whom I became early proficient in most oriental languages.”

[←37]

“Life of the Count Cagliostro, compiled from the original Proceedings published at Rome by order of the Apostolic Chamber. With an engraved Portrait.” London, 1791.

[←38]

L'Histoire du Merveilleux dans les Temps Modernes, tom. iv.

[←39]

"At a later period, when Cagliostro, uplifted by notoriety and fortune, returned in state to Paris with a sumptuous equipage, he strenuously denied his first sojourn in our capital, and the disgraceful episode of Sainte-Pélagie. He maintained that his wife, to whom he now gave the name of Seraphina, had no connection with the imprisoned Lorenza Feliciani, nor he, the Count Cagliostro, with the quack who at this epoch was prohibited from continuing his rogueries. But certain legal documents of irrefutable authenticity substantiate the contrary assertion of his enemies. It is interesting to know that, as a fact, during the incarceration of Lorenza, depositions were made before the tribunal of police by M. Duplaisir, who stated that, in addition to supporting Balsamo and his wife for the space of three months, they had contracted debts to the amount of two hundred crowns, chiefly for clothes, for the perruquier, and the dancing-master." These depositions, with others, will be found in a pamphlet entitled, *Ma Correspondence avec le Comte de Cagliostro*. Figuier. *Histoire du Merveilleux dans les Temps Modernes*, t. iv. pp. 83, 84.

[←40]

"It was his ambition to inaugurate a mother-lodge at Paris, to which the rest should be entirely subordinate. He proclaimed himself as the bearer of the mysteries of Isis and Anubis from the far East. Though he threatened common masonry with a radical reform, his innovations triumphed over all obstacles. He obtained numerous and distinguished followers, who on one occasion assembled in great force to hear Joseph Balsamo expound to them the doctrines of Egyptian freemasonry. At this solemn convention he is said to have spoken with overpowering eloquence, and such was his signal success that his auditors departed in amazement and completely converted to his regenerated and purified masonry. None of them doubted that he was an initiate of the arcana of Nature, as preserved in the temple of Apis at the epoch when Cambyses belaboured that capricious divinity. From this moment the initiations into the new masonry were numerous, albeit they were limited to the aristocracy of society. There are reasons to believe that the grandees who were deemed worthy of admission paid exceedingly extravagantly for the honour."—Figuier, *Hist. du Merveilleux*, t. iv. pp. 23, 24.

[←41]

These projects included a determination to force the royal government to recognise the new order, and to obtain its recognition in Rome as an institution constituted on the same basis, and therefore to be endowed with the same great privileges which had belonged to the order of St John of Jerusalem.

[←42]

See Appendix II.