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ORDERS OF THE GREAT WORK: ALCHEMY

The Adepts in the Western Esoteric Tradition, Part Two

Manly Palmer Hall

ORDERS OF THE GREAT WORK: ALCHEMY

MANLY P. HALL'S *ORDERS OF THE GREAT WORK: ALCHEMY* **is the second part in the Adepts in the Western Esoteric Tradition series. Herein is set forth the origin of Alchemy, its rise in Egypt as the secret doctrine of Hermes, its migration through the Byzantine Empire and into Europe.**

Through Alchemy's travels many pioneers in the field emerged, including Roger Bacon, Raymond Lully, and Nicholas Flamel. Manly Hall also discusses the letters of Sendivogius to the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, almost completely unknown to the modern world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR | **Manly P. Hall** (1901-1990) **founded the Philosophical Research Society, Inc. as a non-profit organization in 1935, dedicated to the dissemination of useful knowledge in the fields of philosophy, comparative religion, and psychology. In his long career, spanning more than 70 years of dynamic public activity, Mr. Hall delivered over 8000 lectures in the United States and abroad, authored over 150 books and essays, and wrote countless magazine articles.**

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ORDERS OF THE GREAT WORK

Foreword

During the Hermetic recension in Europe, the title of adept was applied almost exclusively to the Masters of operative alchemy. Certain philosopher-chemists who had gained unusual distinction—as Paracelsus, Lully, and Ripley—were referred to as adepts by later authors and disciples of the art. The title had a larger implication, however, when applied to those unnamed Masters to whose uncertain activities there are scattered references in the tracts published by aspiring chemists.

These unidentified *adepti,* like the Perfect Ones—the wandering Albigensian Bishops—had no certain identity or residence, but appeared miraculously in response to the earnest prayers of devout disciples. The adepts seemed to possess the power to examine into the hearts and minds of men, to weigh motives, and to determine merit. They appeared fortuitously at the precise moment when their advice and guidance were most necessary. They seldom lingered long in one vicinity, and justified their comings and goings by assuming the habits and trades of journeymen.

All who claimed adeptship were not honorable or sincere. Many chemists were deceived by pretenders who found it profitable to exploit the unwary. A curious little work titled *The Complete History of an Unknown Man,* which appeared as an appendix to an early edition of the *Fama Fraternitatis,* describes a suspected adept whose specialty was whistling rats out of houses. This Hermetic Pied Piper passed through the town of Wetzlar in 1615, claiming to be a Brother of the Rosy Cross. The account was faith-

fully prepared by George Molther, the town physician, as proof of strange and wonderful things.

The true adepts carried means of identification of a kind not to be discovered by the profane. They could not be distinguished by garb or appearance, though often they conveyed the impression of being foreigners. Sometimes these adepts revealed the supreme secret, but more often they merely proved the possibility of the Great Work by bestowing a small amount of the precious Stone. Such gifts frequently led to disaster if the recipient of the powder of transmutation advertised his good fortune without proper caution.

Albrecht Dürer, the celebrated German painter and engraver, is reported to have left a wood-block print depicting a council of the Hermetic adepts. The picture is extremely elusive and has not been identified with certainty among his enormous output. There is a considerable literature relating to the mysterious appearances of adepts and the wonders which they performed, but the examples which we have included in the present section will suffice.

It was not until the 18th century that the European adepts took on the full habiliments of Eastern mahatmas. With the rise of the Masonic Fraternity, interest in practical alchemy gave place to the restoration of the Hermetic Schools of universal philosophy. Wisdom, and not wealth, inspired the search for the higher secrets of the esoteric tradition. The adepts came to be regarded as wonderfully enlightened persons, like the patriarchs of old. They formed a Grand Lodge, a secret Fraternity of illuminated Master Builders. Craft Masonry did not satisfy completely the aspirations of the earnest human soul. The rites and rituals were but the symbols of sublime truths guarded by Secret Orders of initiates. This has been referred to as the romantic period of Freemasonry.

The present section of our outline of the adept tradition advances the hypothesis that the wandering sages were bound together in a vast project of social reformation. This is no more than is implied by the second "agreement" by which the Brothers of the Rosy Cross bound themselves. We have no strict accounting of what passed between the adepts and those disciples which they visited and instructed. The Bacstrom diaries suggest that under the symbolism of the bestowal of the Stone, a ritual of initiation was to be understood. Naturally, the true secrets were communicated "lip to ear" and under oath.

Thus, the adepts were recruiting the Sons of Light, who were to form the Army of the Elect. These were instructed to remain in readiness until "the day be with us." The inner machinery of this program was too subtle to be captured in the pages of prosaic history. Only the consequences appeared as "effects deprived of their cause." As the philosophic program unfolded, the adepts revealed themselves as Princes of the Invisible Empire. Within this Empire, there were all grades and degrees of citizens which gave allegiance to the Philosopher-King. Thus, the hierophant of the ancient Mysteries, robed in blue and gold, bearing the scepter and the ankh and crowned with a coronet of battlements, was dimly perceived enthroned between the Pillars of the Porch of the Everlasting House.

The esoteric priesthood was divided into several grades or degrees, of which, in ascending order, can be mentioned accepted students, disciples, initiates, and adepts. From Pythagoras, the first European adept, to the Masonic restoration of "the ladder of the sages," there has been no essential change in the internal structure of the adept tradition. The mathematical mystery of the structure of the Great School becomes obvious in times of general enlightenment, and retires into a state of obscurity as nations or

races fall away from the spiritual tradition. The pattern of the Invisible Empire is impressed like a seal upon all the physical institutions which it fashions and overshadows. Each of the Secret Societies is a microcosm of the whole design, and these microcosms when clustered in their proper geometric arrangement become the petals of a vast cosmic flower, like the mystic rose of Dante's vision and the white lotus blossom of the Eastern Mysteries.

The book of the adepts, like the *Mutus Liber,* is a book without words. The truth must be discovered through the contemplation of certain motions in the world and in man. We sincerely hope that by tracing the descent of the adept tradition through its appearances we may convey at the same time something of the substance behind the shadow. In this way, our project becomes in its turn a microcosm or compression of a sequence of events and occurrences. Any detail may be argued; any particular may be dissected to no avail, but the compound exhibits the signature of the Great Work.

Manly Palmer Hall.

Los Angeles, California; June 1949.

THE ADEPTS

ORDERS OF THE GREAT WORK

Alchemical Foundations

The foundations of alchemy must be examined both traditionally and historically. Often it is difficult to estimate correctly the factual elements involved in the origin and descent of arts and sciences. Most of the essential branches of learning emerge into the light of sober recording at a comparatively late date and when the subjects themselves are well-advanced in both theory and practice. Actually we have no adequate knowledge of the beginnings of mathematics, astronomy, music, medicine, or chemistry. These divisions of man's thoughtful inquiries about life and living are rooted in a dark, unknown earth, and emerge gradually from the prehistoric sphere of legendry to bear their fruit in the light of historic times.

The traditional account of the origin of chemistry involves a number of extravagant pretensions. Alchemy was included in the curriculum of the College of the Angels, which Adam attended in Paradise before the Fall. Moses and Aaron were instructed in the mystery of transmutation by God himself, and became great adepts in the secrets of the Stone. When the angels descended to take wives from among the daughters of men, as recorded in the *Book of*

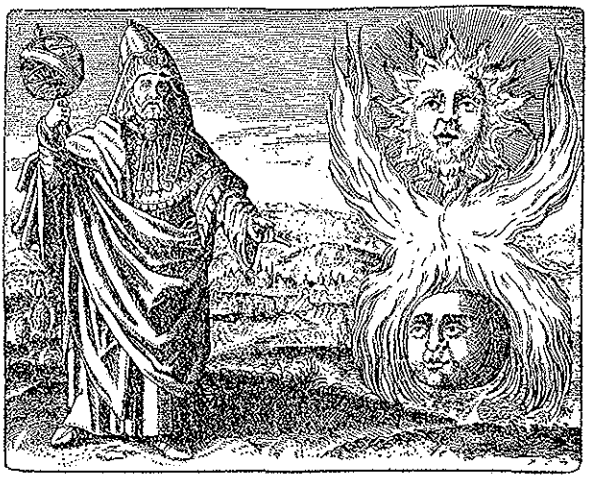
Enoch, they revealed to mortals the precious chemistry for the regeneration of elements. According to another account, the fallen angels, out of revenge, taught men the art of making gold, realizing that wealth would impede the progress of the human soul.

The later Egyptians believed that alchemy was revealed to mankind by the god Thoth, Lord of the Mind and Secretary of Nature. Thoth emerged as the initiate-priest-king, Hermes Trismegistus, or the Thrice-Greatest. Very little is known about this obscure adept who has been honored as the founder of the Hermetic arts. It is a moot question in the minds of many historians as to whether he really existed as a great philosopher, or whether he was a symbolic personification of a secret doctrine of chemistry, guarded by the priests of the Egyptian Mysteries. For centuries the term *hermetic* has been confused with alchemy or magic. Actually the Hermetic art is theurgy, the science of the perfection of man through internal illumination.

Most of the alchemical writers of the medieval period refer to the old legends as true and faithful reports, but proof is completely lacking. Scarcely any of the illustrious prophets and sages of old times are omitted from the traditional lists of philosophic chemists. Numerous books, presumably by these remote authors, were circulated throughout Europe, the Near East, and North Africa. We are justified in assuming that references to any extraordinary antiquity for alchemistical speculation should be regarded as allegorical or fabulous rather than literal.

Even the origin of the word *alchemy* is disputed. The prefix *al* suggests an Arabian source, and the Arabs, especially the mystical sects which flourished among them, were enthusiastic exponents of the art. The second syllable, *chemi,* is reminiscent of the Egyptian *khem* and the hieroglyph *khmi,* which signifies dark earth and, by extension,

simply darkness or blackness. Old authors refer to alchemy as the science of the Egyptians, the dark or hidden art. It is not unreasonable, therefore, that the Egyptian word *khmi* could have given us our modern word *chemistry,* and that the prefix *al,* forming *al*chemistry or *al*chemy, properly means God-chemistry or divine chemistry or, more generally, the "divine art." The basic axiom of alchemy is that man perfects Nature through art. Art is the wisdom to



—From *Symbola Aureae Mensae, etc.*

HERMES POINTING TO THE MYSTERY OF THE STONE
Here the solar and lunar principles are represented united by the philosophical fire.

know and the skill to do. Wisdom perfects art, and art perfects wisdom; and wisdom perfected by art is the wise man's Stone. He who possesses it is master of the world.

Actually, the same uncertainty surrounds the source of mystical chemistry that shrouds the reorganization of the Esoteric Schools in the early Christian world. There does not seem to be any solid body of Western records referring to alchemy earlier than the 1st century A.D. It is possible

that prior to this time the subject was included among the arcana of the Mysteries. If so, the secret was well-kept in spite of the hints and intimations to the contrary. Philosophical chemistry appears for the first time as a subject of general interest in the spheres of Hellenic influence in Syria and North Africa. The art was brought to the attention of a disbelieving world by the Greek and Syrian schools in Alexandria. The 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. cover the period of this first flowering. The circumstances are involved in the decline of the pagan Mysteries and the gradual rise of the North African Christian communities. The Gnostics and the Neoplatonists undoubtedly contributed to this emergence.

There is every indication that philosophic alchemy developed among the initiates of the pagan Mysteries, abetted by the heretical Christian sects that refused to acknowledge the authority and teaching of the early Church. It was convenient even at that time to circulate the report that alchemy was already an ancient and honored art. Unless new discoveries change the complexion of things, we may say that the first cycle of alchemical literature extended from the 2nd to the 10th century A.D. These date boundaries cannot be shifted by report alone, but must remain until codexes bearing directly upon the subject and actually written prior to this time are identified with certainty. It is sufficient to point out that this stream of philosophical chemistry followed the same course as that of the heretical religious doctrines of the Manichaeans, the Gnostics, and the Neoplatonists. For practical purposes, we may regard alchemy as part of the great heresy against which the Church thundered its anathemas.

Works considerably older than the alchemical writings are known dealing with physical chemistry, especially the compounding of medications, the making of alloys, and

the fusing of synthetic gems. A lead-glass composition called paste, used in making imitation stones of unusual brilliancy, was developed and became popular throughout the Roman Empire. Religious signets made of this paste, belonging to the Gnostics, the Chaldeans, and other philosophical communities, occur with considerable frequency. Such productions, however, or ancient writings relating to them cannot be said to be legitimate monuments of alchemy. It is possible that synthetic gems sometimes passed as genuine stones to the profit of the lapidary. He may have gained some reputation for cleverly imitating valuable metals and jewels, but such imposture has no direct bearing on the alchemical art.

If, as some students believe, alchemy was practiced in China at a slightly earlier period than its appearance in the West, it is possible that it reached North Africa from Eastern Asia. The Taoist priests indulged in philosophical speculations which paralleled closely the premises of the European mystic-chemists. The Chinese had their "esoteric drug" for the prolonging of human life. From their commentaries, however, it appears that this drug symbolized a state of consciousness by which Tao, or the Infinite Reality, was experienced or possessed inwardly. To become "one with Tao" was to rest in an eternal state beyond change or dissolution. Thus, to these Eastern mystics, alchemy was the science of Yoga, or union with the Divine. In a sense, this was also the burden of Neoplatonism.

The art of transmuting metals and the preparation of Universal Medicines were also cultivated, and professors of alchemy enjoyed imperial favor during the Tang dynasty. The "eight immortals" of Taoism were regarded as possessing the secrets of immortality, boundless wealth, and a variety of supernatural powers. After the rise of Buddhism in China, the alchemistical speculations of these Asiatics

included elements of Buddhist metaphysics. As always, the perfection of man himself was the principal end.

Dr. Obed Simon Johnson has noted that the Chinese have a record that in the year 166 A.D. an embassy, dispatched from Rome by the Emperor, Antoninus Marcus Aurelius, was received in China for the purpose of establishing a commerce between these nations. Dr. Johnson summarizes his conclusions thus: "The fact that these alchemical ideas first made their appearance in the West at some period 'from the 3rd to the 5th century' of this era is of particular interest. At that time Alexandria was still a mighty intellectual center, and even with the gradual decline of the Roman Empire, the city remained a commercial metropolis, second in importance only to Rome itself. A large portion of the Chinese trade, both by land and sea routes, passed through Alexandria. With the constantly increasing numbers of Oriental traders frequenting Alexandria, it is but natural that many ideas imported from the Orient should find congenial soil for growth in this center of culture and intellect. There seem to be no reasons why the alchemical ideas of China, already well-developed at the beginning of the Christian era, should not have reached Alexandria by the trade routes, to appear again after a certain transformation in Greek garb, and in an Occidental setting."*

While a Sinologist may opine differently, it is equally possible that both China and India were indebted to North Africa for elements of their magical chemistries. Usually we find that structures of religious, moral, and ethical convictions date themselves, not only by their internal content but also by the way in which they develop their basic premises. The philosophy of alchemy is a direct and

*See *A Study of Chinese Alchemy* (Shanghai, 1928).

natural outgrowth of Plato's vision of the Philosophic Empire and the Philosopher-King. The possibility of a Universal Reformation of human institutions and the regeneration of man himself by the disciplines of wisdom revealed a larger and fuller purpose for mortal existence. At first, this vision was in the keeping of a few initiated idealists. Society as a whole was not inclined to such lofty speculations, but that small group endowed with larger capacities had discovered a sufficient reason for a long-range program of co-ordinated endeavor.

If alchemy found enthusiastic acceptance among the transcendentalists of North Africa, it was received with still greater satisfaction and acclaim by the philosophers and mystics of Arabia. Reaching the Arabs from Grecian sources, alchemy remained for a time in the Arabian desert, only to return to Europe in the refined and polished productions of Eastern romantic thinking. Thus, many of the celebrated texts of the alchemistical art are translations from the Persian and the Arabic.

After the collapse of the pagan Roman Empire and the rise of the Christian Church, the Near East became the asylum of the cultured and the informed. Europe was plunged into the chaos of the Dark Ages, but the caliphs of Bagdad continued to bestow their patronage upon scientists and scholars. During the reign of Harun-al-Rashid and his equally illustrious son, al-Mamun, the genuine writings of Plato and Aristotle were translated into the Arabian language. Works composed by Alexandrian intellectuals found especial favor among the Arabs. The principal alchemical texts appealed to the dramatic instincts of the Islamites, and experiments in gold making became a popular diversion. Needless to say, the sober texts of the Greek and Egyptian scholars were ornamented with garlands of Arabic overtones

and implications, until the most exact sciences took on the qualities of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment.*

Among the illustrious adepts of the alchemical art who flourished among the Arabs should be mentioned Geber, Rhazes, Farabi (Alfarabi), and Avicenna. These men lived between the 8th and 11th centuries A.D., and belonged to what has been described as the "alchemic period" of Islamic culture. They contributed extensively to the foundations of Western chemical research, and were respected as distinguished experimentalists.

Francis Barrett refers to Geber as "the prince of those alchemical adepts who have appeared during the Christian era." The distinguished Belgian chemist, Jan Baptista van Helmont, speaks of this celebrated Arab as the oracle of medieval chemists, standing in the history of chemistry as Hippocrates stands in the history of medicine. Medieval bibliographers attributed nearly five hundred scientific, philosophical, and Hermetic tracts and treatises to Geber. He studied under several distinguished masters, and probably perfected his knowledge of alchemy, mysticism, and the occult arts after his initiation into the Sufi Order. Geber belongs in the direct descent of the Greek schools, which he may have contacted through Persian editors and compilers. Many tracts on esoteric subjects circulated under his name in Europe are spurious, but he was a man of extraordinary erudition and skilled in the preparation of elixirs, the perfection of metals, and the production of synthetic gems.

In his youth, Rhazes showed slight promise of distinction. He gained some prominence in music, but devoted most of his time to the luxury and dissipation for which his generation was famous. After his thirtieth year, he dedicated his life to medicine and philosophy, traveled extensively, and

gained practical experience as superintendent of the hospital at Bagdad. He interested the Prince of Khorassan in alchemical researches, but when the transmutation of metals was unsuccessful, the prince beat the physician over the head with a heavy alchemical book. It is reported that Rhazes became blind as the result of this violence. He left a number of writings which were used in the universities of Europe as late as the 17th century, and his works were consulted and frequently referred to by the great Avicenna. He died in poverty, having given most of his goods to the poor.

The life of Farabi has been embellished with numerous legends. He was of Turkish extraction, educated in Bagdad, where he studied the Greek philosophers, and was for a time the disciple of a Christian physician renowned for logic. Farabi traveled the greater part of his life, spent some time in Egypt, and made outstanding contributions to astronomy, mathematics, and music. He made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and was entertained in the court of the Sultan of Syria. He devoted his entire life to learning, and had the reputation for acquaintance with seventy languages and dialects. Some say that he died at the court of the Sultan, and others report that he was attacked and killed by robbers on one of his journeys. Farabi wrote of the Philosophers' Stone and other alchemical mysteries, and was considerably influenced by the teachings of the Neoplatonists.

Although Avicenna, like Paracelsus, was said to have lived an intemperate and erratic life, his genius has been accorded universal recognition. At an early age, he perfected his mind in mathematics, and then devoted himself to philosophy, psychology, and Neoplatonic transcendentalism. He had the courage to attempt a systematization of the categories of Aristotle, a project flavoring of audacity.

In his sixteenth year, Avicenna approached the study of medicine, and was fortunate enough to cure many influential persons, including members of the ruling house. He became grand vizier, but was more interested in his studies of the philosophic mercury and the *materia prima* of the Stone than the dreary concerns of public office.

Medieval European translations of Avicenna were standard texts in the universities and medical colleges. He had stature as a magician, and many *grimoires* and rituals of sorcery are attributed to him. The Arabs believed that the physician commanded a legion of spirits and was served by the Jinn. According to tradition, "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*."*

The alchemical tradition contains all the elements of a world program of enlightenment and reform. It requires only a superficial acquaintance with the philosophy and literature of alchemy in order to sense the magnitude of this concealed project. Had it been simply a science for the transmutation of metals, there would have been no need for the Masters of the art to depart from Christendom and to take refuge in Islam. Had these adepts been orthodox Christian chemists, they would scarcely have been received so hospitably by the Arabs. The very fact that the "Knights of the Golden Stone" found sanctuary in pagan communities still dominated by Hellenic scholarship should in itself reveal the truth of the matter.

For several centuries the Christian and pagan institutions were engaged in mortal conflict. In a curious way, Christian-

*See *The Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers* (London, 1888).

ity also was attempting to establish the Platonic Commonwealth. The pagans rejected the machinery of the Church, because they felt that it imposed unreasonable and unnatural restrictions upon the human mind, and that the clergy was resolved to dominate utterly the "new world order." The non-Christian communities functioned from the premise that only a truly enlightened man could administer himself and his world effectively. Enlightenment required self-discipline and a broad, deep program of education. The Christians were thinking in terms of a Priest-King ruling in glory by divine right. The pagans were thinking in terms of a Philosopher-King, a gentle and wise teacher ruling by the love and consent of the governed.

If we consider Nature as a sphere of instincts and impulses, then art becomes the method by which unorganized potential is integrated and directed. The pagans were not so much given to miracles as their Christian contemporaries. The Neoplatonists, for example, preferred to think of man accomplishing much with the help of God, rather than God accomplishing much with a little assistance grudgingly given by his children. If humankind longed for the paradise to come, it was up to them to earn a better state for themselves and for those who came after them. The only honorable way to earn was to grow. Growth alone, as the result of consecrated endeavor, proved to the gods that man deserved happiness and security.

The alchemical laboratory became the shrine of the spiritual sciences, taking the place of the ruined sanctuaries of the ancient Mysteries, which had been defiled by war, pillage, and the corruption of priesthoods. It was no longer possible to protect the physical houses of initiation. With the decline of the temporal power of pagan States, the hereditary descent of priestly offices became dangerous and

impractical. One by one the shrines were sought out and demolished, and legislation enacted to prevent their re-establishment. It became unsafe even to be suspected of addiction to classical philosophy. But wise men cannot be outwitted by stupid laws, and it would be foolish to assume that a structure of learning thousands of years old could be completely dissolved by a few unreasonable edicts.

The initiate-philosophers simply transferred their temples, shrines, sanctuaries, and palaces to a less tangible but equally real sphere of action. They rebuilt their Empire "along the shores of the air;" that is, on the plane of mind, substituting psychological association for physical Fraternities. Their enemies could not attack successfully these airy fortresses, and the old wisdom continued to permeate the social structure *from within*. The Mystery teaching emerged under a variety of symbols, emblems, and figures. It took up its abode in the very camp of its adversaries, gradually transmuting all other doctrines into the likeness of itself. It became the Universal Proteus, taking on all appearances at will, yet never revealing its own shape. This Invisible Empire was beyond the reach of the profane. Occasionally one of its citizens (initiates) was apprehended and destroyed, but another immediately filled the vacancy. The machinery of the Inquisition was set in motion against this Empire of the sages, but persecution only strengthened the resolution of these unknown philosophers.

Alchemy was one of the earliest appearances of the Mystery Schools in early Christian Europe. The contrivance was most adroit. It appealed to the ideals of the idealists, and to the avarice of the avaricious. It catered to the whims of princes, and to those dreams of inexhaustible wealth which have always intrigued the foolish. Later, when these alleged gold makers were solemnly pronounced insane, this

very cloak of madness served useful purposes. It was a medieval conviction that the insane were under the special protection of God, and to persecute them was contrary to the divine will. In fact, there are many instances in which the States, hoping to replenish their treasuries, supported colonies of philosophers in some luxury for years, allowing them privileges of assembly and freedom of conviction denied other groups.

The alchemistical tradition was largely restricted to the areas around Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean until the rise of Islamic culture in Spain in the 8th century. The Arabs brought with them a mass of scientific literature rooted in the Greek and Syrian cults. They placed special emphasis upon medicine and chemistry, and these led inevitably to philosophical speculation, especially where physical data was insufficient. Scholars of Western Europe, studying in the colleges of the Moors, translated most of the popular texts into the atrocious Latin of the period and distributed them widely among the universities and cloister schools. The resulting surge of mystical thinking did much to break up the crystallization that was threatening the survival of Western European education.

Alchemists drifted about Europe for centuries comparatively unmolested, except that every means was used to induce them to reveal their gold-making secrets. It was not even profitable to rack them too frequently, lest they die in the torture chamber and their priceless formulas be lost. Some, too boastful or imprudent, came to tragedy, but the majority was publicly ridiculed and privately cultivated. Even unbelievers, heretics, and Moslems were tolerated by the orthodox if there were some hope of future gain. In time, these alchemists drew about themselves strong groups of liberals, and fashioned an elaborate underground system

that eventually weakened the superstructures of ecclesiastical and political tryanny.

Albertus Magnus, who was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1932, enumerated eight rules or conditions to be observed by those seeking the Philosophers' Stone. The alchemist should cultivate discretion and silence. He should reside in a private house in an isolated situation. He should select the time for his labors with discretion. He should practice patience, diligence, and perseverance. He should obey implicitly the rules of his science. He should use only vessels of glass or glazed earthenware. He should have sufficient means to bear the expenses of his researches, and he should carefully avoid association with princes or nobles.* From these rules, it may be inferred that the chemist was engaged upon a program that required complete devotion, dedication, and freedom from outside interferences.

As the alchemical tradition unfolded, the devotees of the art fell into three distinct classes. The first group was made up of physical chemists, firmly convinced that the actual transmutation of metals was possible, thereby assuring worldly wealth. These gold makers took their art so seriously that one offered to finance the Crusades, and another volunteered to pay off the national debt of his country. George Ripley, a 15th-century alchemist, having discovered the Philosophers' Stone, contributed one hundred thousand pounds to the Knights of Rhodes, so that they could continue their war against the Turks. To prevent the upheaval which promiscuous transmutation might create in the monetary system, several governments, including England, enacted laws against the manufacture of artificial gold, except under the supervision of the officers of the mint.

*See *Libellus de Alchemia.*

The second group, composed of mystical chemists, raised its voice in protest aginst the gold makers, declaring alchemy to be a spiritual science of regeneration completely apart from all selfish, material interests. To these savants, transmutation was a Eucharistic Sacrament, and alchemy was a sacred art devoted to interpreting the mysteries of God through a cabala of chemical symbols and formulas. Boehme and Khunrath certainly held this opinion, and quotations from Roger Bacon and Basil Valentine support the same conviction.

The third group, philosophically inclined, attempted to unite these opposing concepts and to establish a common ground. The artists of this group reasoned thus: Nature is both spiritual and material. That which is true spiritually of invisible things must also by analogy be true physically of visible things. The physical transmutation of metals proves the possibility of the spiritual transmutation of man. Each in its own sphere justifies the other. If metals can be purified, man can be regenerated. Alchemy and chemistry are one art manifesting in two worlds—an inner world of divine mystery and an outer world of natural mystery.

Naturally, the motion of the Renaissance, sweeping across from Byzantium and touching, like the first rays of the rising sun, the great cities of Italy and France, brought with it the philosophy of alchemy. The obvious consequence of the Renaissance was the Protestant Reformation. Was not the Reformation a by-product of those Humanistic teachings which had kept alight the altar fires of the old Mysteries? The Reformation made possible the advancement of the arts and sciences and the liberation of the human mind from a sterile scholasticism. This liberation in its turn made possible the rise of modern democratic institutions and the restatement of the concepts of the Philosophic Empire. The

rights of man, long taught secretly, could now be publicly proclaimed.

Most men are too prone to think in terms of providence and accidents. Growth is one of those inevitable processes to be taken for granted. Actually the gradual release of the human mind from complete servitude to infallible dogmas was the result of tireless effort carried on secretly by groups well-aware of the importance of their task. Nothing happens by accident except disaster. All progress is by intent. We should hold in the highest regard and esteem those hidden powers behind the visible powers that change the world.

After the advent of Paracelsus, the outer form of the alchemical tradition passed through an important modification. The real purpose of the gold makers was gradually and cautiously revealed, although a certain amount of discretion was still necessary. The mysticism of alchemy—its cabalistic associations, its involvement in esoteric astrology, and its indebtedness to the learning of ancient peoples and distant countries—was allowed to become evident. The secret tradition in alchemy, with its divine science of human regeneration and redemption, was indicated through the enlarged and extended use of symbols and emblems. The spiritual mystery finally was so thinly veiled as to be almost immediately obvious. At the same time, several parallel groups, dedicated to the same ends but using different means, were merged to form the Confederation of Initiated Philosophers, which came into prominence in the opening years of the 17th century.

An ethical sphere was inserted between the worlds of God and Nature. This middle ground was human society. The institutions set up by men were in desperate need of transmutation. The foundations of alchemy shifted, and

the abstract symbolism was applied to the transformation of corrupt governments, thus preparing the way for the emergence of a democratic-socialized way of life. In time, the mystic-chemists became mystic-politicians. They bound themselves into a Secret Empire of Philosophic Reformers. Through them, magical, cabalistic, and transcendental lore was focused upon the practical task of the restoration of the golden age. This golden age was the symbol of the Philosophic Empire.

A remarkable book on philosophical alchemy, titled *A Suggestive Inquiry concerning the Hermetic Mystery and Alchemy, being an attempt to recover the Ancient Experiment of Nature,* was published anonymously in London in 1850. This work was almost immediately withdrawn from circulation, a circumstance giving rise to numerous speculations. The original edition of this book is now extremely rare. The truth of the matter seems to be that the authoress, a Mrs. Sarah Atwood, was closely related to a prominent Anglican clergyman, who suppressed the publication to prevent personal embarrassment. The book was later reissued with biographical notes and other details.

A Suggestive Inquiry is probably the most valuable exposition of esoteric alchemy so far compiled. No one can peruse the text without becoming aware of the esoteric pattern underlying the operations of the mystical chemists. These old philosophers are revealed as sharing a body of secret learning best described as the science of sciences, or the "master key" to the operations of Nature under divine law.

Seven years after the appearance of Mrs. Atwood's *Inquiry,* an American author, General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, enlarging on a pamphlet issued two years earlier, published his *Remarks Upon Alchemy and the Alchemists,*

etc., also anonymously. General Hitchcock, though working from a limited bibliography, proceeded thoughtfully and arrived at several relevant conclusions. He realized that the symbolical language of the chemical adepts indicated more than an accidental meeting of minds. For example: "There are many signs in alchemical volumes of a Secret Society, in which possibly the language used was conventionally determined. I have at times thought that some members of the Masonic fraternity might have found the secret language of the Alchemists a convenient mode of publishing, or rather of circulating among the initiated, doctrines of which they had taken 'an oath' not to speak directly, or to make known except to a brother. It is quite certain that books in a mysterious language were written by members of the Rosicrucian Society, who, I think it would be easy to show, had agreed to speak and write of each other before the uninitiated as sylphs, fairies, elfs, gnomes, and salamanders. The small volume under the title of the *Comte de Gabalis,* I am persuaded, was written by a Rosicrucian, and exhibits something of the manner by which the members of that fraternity approached strangers, and sounded them upon the subjects of becoming members."

General Hitchcock concludes his investigation with the following summary: "I have thus endeavored to show that Alchemy—the name of Hermetic Philosophers in the Middle Ages—was religious philosophy, or philosophic religion."

The philosophy of alchemy is concerned with the mystery of the *materia prima,* or the first matter of life. This first matter is the "chaos" of the Orphics—space itself—within which takes place the mystery of creation. Space is the infinite potential, and its social equivalent is the human collective. The races and nations of mankind, engaged in an endless striving, abide in an ethical privation equivalent

to chaos. As the Supreme Wisdom, which created all things, brought cosmos out of chaos by impressing upon the elements the pattern of universal law, so must the plan of the Philosophic Empire be revealed in the political sphere. Human society is then the base metal to be transmuted.

The great Masters of alchemy declared that the seeds of gold are present in all natural substances. Augmentation is the releasing of the universal energy in these seeds—not the creation of gold, but the growth of this precious metal. Growth is hastened by art. The tree of the philosophers, bearing its twelve kinds of fruit, is the "soul tree" of Jakob Boehme. This German mystic wrote that the seed of God is planted in the human heart. Nourished by holy aspiration, prayer, meditation, and the contemplation of the mysteries of the spirit, this seed grows miraculously, and its fruit feeds those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

The artist is the master of the secret of natural growth. He uses no artificial means, for if he does the results cannot be permanent. He becomes a secretary over Nature, a guardian of the sleeping gold. He must preserve this treasure against the vandalism of men and the corruption of false doctrines. Like Vulcan and Prometheus, he guards the sacred flame that is necessary to work the metals. The philosophic fire is the same that burned in the adyta of ancient sanctuaries. The fire chemist is descended from the mighty smithy, Tubal-cain, the iron worker, who pounded swords into plowshares. He belonged to the clan of that cunning artisan "our father, Chiram," who cast the golden implements for the Temple of Solomon the King.

The literature of alchemy forms in itself the material for a fascinating study. Unfortunately, little consideration has been given to this class of books and manuscripts. True enough, very few of the old scrolls and vellums were the

works of trained artists, although many show a measure of artistic ability. Their value lies principally in their extraordinary symbols and emblems. The recent research of Carl Jung indicates the psychological importance of the alchemistical writings and diagrams*

The Keepers of the Lamp have kept their trust for more than fifteen centuries, and they were long, dark, dismal centuries. The day for a larger revelation has struck, and the time is approaching when the institutions dedicated to the ends of the Philosophic Empire can reappear in the objective world. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the need for secrecy and caution has come to an end. The body of human society is still not strong enough to carry the full weight of its own regeneration. A broad program of educational reform must prepare the individual for his citizenship in the World Commonwealth. As long as tyranny in any of its forms and appearances remains, secret assemblies must continue. Noble purposes entrusted to the keeping of the unenlightened are rapidly perverted and fail of usefulness.

Today we think of alchemy as the "mad" mother of chemistry. We grudgingly acknowledge that to the old alchemists we are indebted for many choice secrets, remedies, and compounds. Actually, chemistry is older than alchemy, in the sense that it existed long before it became the medium for the perpetuation of the esoteric doctrines. Chemistry began in magic, unfolded in philosophy, and has finally emerged in the sober garb of science. Yet, without the keys reserved for the initiate, chemistry itself can never accomplish its true purpose. The undevout chemist, like the undevout astronomer, is mad. Until the restoration of the esoteric tradition, all the material arts and sciences

*See *Psychologie und Alchemie.*

are bodies without souls—physical ghosts in a spiritual universe.

The Alchemical Schools in Europe

In his *Four Books Concerning the Secrets of the Adepts,* Johannes Weidenfeld explains that the goddess Diana, the Mother of Mysteries and the great deity of the Ephesians, represents the chemical-Hermetic Mystery. So that this Diana should not be exposed to the lust of insatiable gold makers and to the scorn and contempt of the ignorant, the adepts have covered her body with several sorts of garments. To this kind of apparel, antiquity has been pleased to apply the name of allegory. In this way, seeds of truth anciently received are concealed from the profane. This is according to the will and way of Hermes, the Thrice-Greatest, who was called the father of the adepts.

Art is a philosophical generation according to Nature, perfected by mind and will. The moon is the mother of generation. She conceives, impregnates, brings to birth, and nourishs the Sons of Wisdom, therefore, she is properly the *Mater Deorum.* Morianus tells us that the mystery of the generation of the adepts is concealed under the allegory of the generation of man himself, and of all creatures born in Nature that are brought to birth by the *Lunar Menstruum.*

The moon is the "old mother." Thus the esoteric tradition itself was bestowed by the lunar ancestors, the Lords of the White Face. Diana is the nurse of the Mysteries—the nourisher—and to understand her hidden ways is to possess the secret of bringing to birth all that is conceived in time. The adept is the child of the sun and moon. He is born of fire and water. In him the Great Work is perfected. He is born in heaven, and generated in earth. He ascends

from the earth to a middle distance. He is the hero soul, conceived immaculately and ruling over all Nature with the serpent-wound rod of Hermes.

The European school of Hermetic adepts, illuminates, and initiates developed according to a well-defined pattern. The dimensions of the alchemical program can be traced through the literature of the 16th and 17th centuries deal-

—From *Subtilis Allegoria, etc.*, by Michael Maier

THE ANONYMOUS ADEPT

In his *Symbola Aureae Mensae,* Maier uses the figure of an unnamed adept to represent all those Masters of the Great Work whose identities have been concealed by intent or by the lapse of time. The nameless Master stands at the left, pointing to the crippled figure of time, who is the ancient gardener in the symbolical orchard of alchemy.

ing with the mysteries of esoteric chemistry. Most of the books were not written by the adepts themselves, but by their initiated disciples or by those seeking acceptance in the Secret Schools. Many of these books are remarkable for the profundity of their contents and for the symbolical figures which illustrate them, but we must limit our present inquiry to those parts which unfold or sustain the adept tradition.

The best alchemical writers agree that scattered about England, Europe, and the Near East were men divinely enlightened in the mysteries of the transmutation of metals, the preparation of the Universal Medicine, and the compounding of the Philosophers' Stone. The most advanced and proficient of these spiritual alchemists were properly termed adepts. They lived secluded lives, and in only a few instances have their real names been reported. Some of these adepts, especially in the Near East, had fixed places of residence, but most of them wandered from town to town and country to country, instructing such as they found worthy to receive the priceless arcanum. Some of these extraordinary men attained to great age without infirmity, and their lives have become the subject of extravagant fiction.

These higher initiates changed their names as they journeyed, and in a variety of ways confused and outwitted such as tried to trace their movements. They adapted their minds to local conditions, assumed the clothing, manners, and even languages of the communities through which they journeyed. They always gave the appearance of humility and gentleness, passing easily for merchants or scholars, sometimes even for doctors or the religious. All were bound together by one inflexible rule: Each must seek an appropriately-qualified person to whom, before death, he could confide the esoteric secrets of philosophy. If no such disciple could be found, the arcanum died with the Master.

In their writings, many of the struggling alchemists claimed to have contacted one or more of the Hermetic adepts. After numerous disappointments due to the false or incomplete formulas available in the writings of the alchemistical philosophers, a true Master would appear to the faithful novice. The meeting was regarded as an act

of providence made possible by the infinite wisdom and mercy of God. Sometimes the adept bestowed priceless chemical secrets, but more often the disciple received only a small amount of the mysterious "powder of projection" which was called the Red Lion. If the grateful adept for some reason gave the transmuting agent without revealing the method of its production, confusion and disaster nearly always followed the gift.

The recipient was severely tested and all too often succumbed to the pressure of environment. He transmuted base metals to enlarge his fortune, thus focusing upon himself a dangerous kind of fame. For a time he amazed his friends, enraged his enemies, and impressed powerful and influential persons. But when his supply of the mysterious powder was exhausted, he had no way of replenishing this precious substance. Disgrace, imprisonment, and death were likely to be the lot of the pretender. Lacking the power or skill to discover the formula of the Red Lion, the alchemist was driven to charlatanism and pretension to maintain his physical dignities and estates.

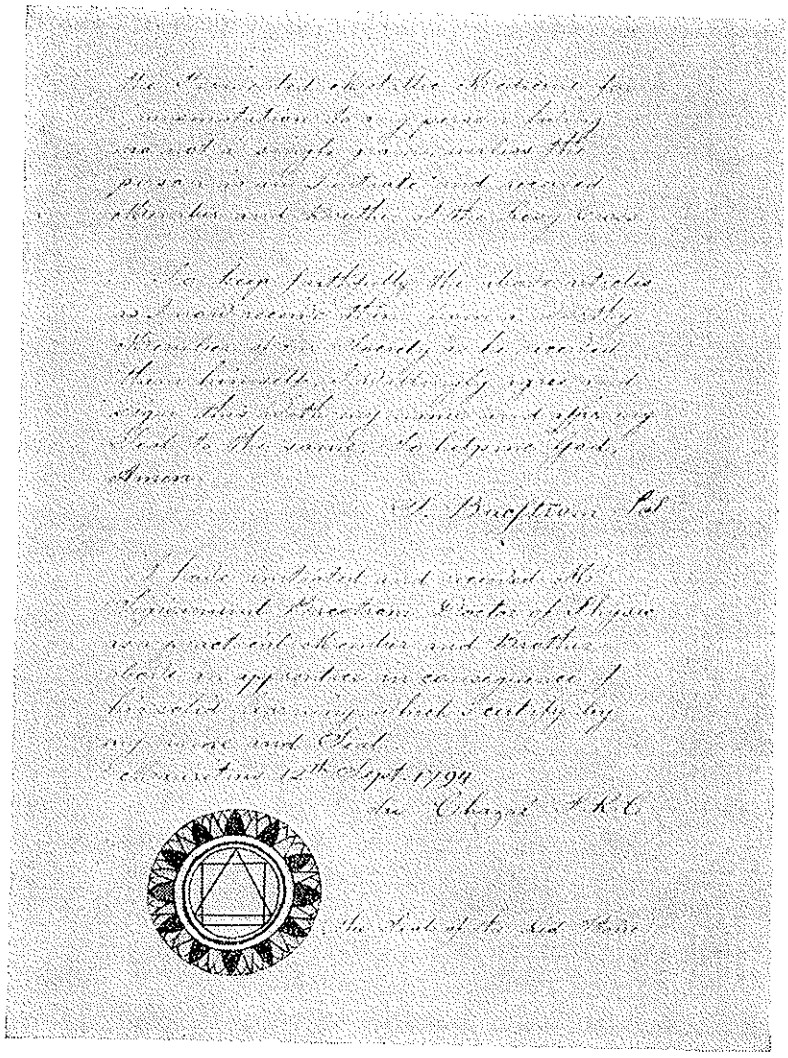
Avaricious gold makers used every means conceivable to discover the secrets of the adepts. Wholesale bribery was resorted to, and those whose avidity knew no bounds even married the widows of suspected adepts in the hope of thus securing the secret.

The mysterious adept usually appeared without warning to some struggling chemist whose sincerity seemed admirable. No charge was ever made for the instructions, but the recipient was obligated by oath to preserve his new knowledge from the profane even at the cost of his own life. Some of the chemists were privileged to secure assistance early in their work. Others, like Bernard Trévisan (1406-1490), struggled with false formulas for fifty or sixty years before the true secrets were communicated to them.

At one time it was fashionable for alchemists to advertise their requirements, usually in the form of short tracts which were circulated in the hope that they would reach the eye of a Hermetic initiate. These tracts told in veiled language the progress that the chemists had made, and indicated the nature of the present difficulty. Such tracts usually had little merit in themselves, but are interesting mementos of the prevailing temper.

Take the case of Thomas Charnock, who was born in 1524. This man had no formal education, but had trained himself in astronomy and philosophy. One day while Charnock was visiting an inn, he met a small boy leading a blind old man. Recognizing from the ancient one's conversation that he had some knowledge of chemistry, Charnock waited until the other guests had retired and then begged the old man to instruct him. The adept, for such he was, replied that he could not, as his teachings were reserved for a certain Thomas Charnock, for whom he was then searching. After Charnock had revealed his identity, the old man bound him with a promise that he would never use the secret of the gold for personal gain or advancement, but should communicate it before his death to a prepared disciple. The two men then retired to a nearby vacant field where no one could approach unseen, and conversed together for nine days. Such incidents are frequent in the alchemical tradition.

If means and facilities permitted, alchemists traveled extensively in search of the elusive adepts. As legends spread indicating the abodes of reputed Masters, many an enthusiast wasted his worldly goods pursuing shadows. At that time, the Near East abounded in chemists and savants of obscure sciences. Several famous alchemists, including Paracelsus, claimed to have received the final secrets of the Great Work in Constantinople or Arabia.



—From a copy of the last page of the Bacstrom Rosicrucian diploma. Dr. Bacstrom signed the articles of the Society, and it was certified by the Comte du Chazal, F.R.C.

Most of the Hermetic adepts carried certain credentials by which they could identify themselves when need arose.

These were exhibited only to such as were qualified to demand proof. Sometimes the adept bestowed some formal document upon his selected disciple as evidence of initiation. It is interesting that such documents are seldom if ever found on the bodies of the adepts or among the possessions of their disciples. Evidently these diplomas were held in the highest esteem and were destroyed before they could fall into the hands of the profane.

An example of these diplomas will indicate the obscurity which invariably surrounds documents of this kind. Dr. Sigismund Bacstrom, a distinguished student of alchemy, was initiated into a Society of Rosicrucians on the Island of Mauritius, September 12, 1794, by a mysterious adept who used the name Comte du Chazal. Bacstrom received a certificate signed by du Chazal, but the original document, if it has survived, cannot be found. Copies were made, however, and two are mentioned by A. E. Waite in his *Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross.* Frederick Hockley, a dilettante in matters esoteric who gathered many curious fragments, left a version of this certificate among his papers. The source of his transcript is unknown. A magazine, *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record,* for October 1876, reprinted Hockley's copy, but has very little to say about the source of the certificate. It is doubtful if the full facts will ever be known.

It is also difficult to divide genuine credentials from the spurious sheepskins which were issued in huge quantities by impostors and charlatans. These elaborate but worthless vellums were manufactured as need arose, and were ornamented with a conglomeration of emblems, characters, symbols, high-flown phrases, and fraudulent signatures of miscellaneous Grand Masters, hierophants, imperators, and the like. Certificates are worthless unless the circumstances under which they were granted or the persons giving or re-

ceiving them are known to have possessed authority and integrity.

In a rare and curious manuscript written about the year 1800, entitled *Veritables Adeptes, Illuminés et Initiés de l'Hermetisme,* the anonymous author compiled a list of the true Hermetic sages, and each name is accompanied by a term designating the honors to which the Master had attained. As far as we have been able to learn, this roster is unique and merits careful consideration.

Those who are devoted to the esoteric sciences are properly called sages, meaning *eminent in wisdom. L'Escalier des sages* (the ladder of the sages) is a symbol of the degrees of initiation from that of novice to that of adept. Our unknown writer thus defines the terms which he applies to the three higher rungs of the Hermetic ladder: "I call an Adept the man who has made the Great Work because he knows and he has seen. The illumined one knows and has seen the marvels of the Light but it has not been necessary for him to do the Great Work. The initiate has not done the Great Work but knows the secret of it; he has not seen the Light, but he knows the secret of it; and he can very aptly (or justly) talk of both the Light and the Great Work. There are many false initiates who impose themselves upon the credulity of amateurs. The true sages are in small number. There are more initiates than truly illumined ones; as to the Adepts, they are very rare."

The adepts listed include Moses, Solomon, Hermes, Democritus, Albertus Magnus, Raymond Lully, George Ripley, Nicholas Flamel, and Alexander Sethon. In the list of illumines are such names as St. John the Apostle, Plotinus, Henry Khunrath, Jakob Boehme, and John Daustin. Khunrath reached the sixth degree of the Hermetic School, but did not accomplish adeptship. Among the

initiates are Homer, Hesiod, Apuleius, Virgil, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, Michael Maier, Robert Fludd, and John Dee.

The title of spagyrist is used to distinguish those Masters of philosophical alchemy whose researches were dedicated to chemical medicine, such as Paracelsus, Isaac of Holland, Basil Valentine, and the two brothers Vaughan. In addition to those named, several others are identified only by anonymous works attributed to them.

The phantom adept, Elias Artista, is mentioned. He is the Master of the Mysteries, the "one who is to come." To this Elias, a number of rare tracts are attributed, and he is mentioned with caution in several printed works, which we will examine later.

These adepts are the links of the Golden Chain of Homer, the true Knights of the Golden Stone. They are the Argonauts seeking the Golden Fleece. They are the doorkeepers of the palace of Semiramis, the mythical Queen of Babylon.

It is impossible to trace exoterically the descent of the alchemical tradition through the body of its adepts. These men used every means in their power to obscure their identities and their activities. There can be no doubt that they were bound together and had knowledge of each other, but there is no indication that any group of them ever assembled to form a lasting physical Fraternity or Organization. Each told the same story: in effect, that the secrets had descended to them through a long line of initiates from the remote past. Their method of operation was dictated by the times in which they lived, and the changing temper of European civilization played an important part in the dying out of the alchemical tradition.

The 18th century ushered in a period of revolution and social change. The popular fancy shifted from abstract scientific speculation to the imminent problems of political reform. The old Secret Societies retired to those cloud-capped towers referred to in their writings. It became ever more difficult for the Hermetic adepts to discover suitable successors. Chemistry took on the complexion of a materialistic science of physical research and experimentation. By the beginning of the 19th century, the alchemical tradition was represented by only a handful of philosophic chemists.

Roger Bacon

It is not without just cause that Roger Bacon was honored with the title *Doctor Mirabilis.* He is generally acknowledged to have been the first Englishman who cultivated alchemical philosophy. It is difficult to estimate the scope of Bacon's addiction to the Hermetic arts of antiquity. According to Franciscus Picus, Roger Bacon, in his *Book of the Six Sciences,* describes the means by which prophetic powers can be induced through the use of a mirror called *Almuchefi,* composed in accordance to the laws of perspective under the influence of a benign constellation, *and after the body of the individual has been modified by alchemy.* In view of Bacon's frequent references to "spiritual experience" as distinguished from "experience of the senses," we may be justified in affirming that he favored the doctrines of the Alexandrian Neoplatonists.

The historians of 13th-century England were few and inadequate. Contemporary accounts of the life of Roger Bacon leave much to be desired. There is more of legend than of sober fact in the reports generally circulated about this extraordinary man. He was born near Ilchester in

Somerset (circa A.D. 1214), and lived to the age of about eighty years. It would seem that he came from a family of considerable means, and invested his entire patrimony in books and scientific instruments. G. G. Coulton estimates that the money so expended by Bacon would have a present value of at least ninety thousand dollars.*

Roger was well-educated, according to the facilities of his time. At thirteen he entered Oxford where he attained his Master of Arts. His early age does not necessarily imply precocity, as it was usual for young men to reach the university in their middle teens. Fired with the hope for higher learning, he went to Paris where he studied under eminent but blundering pedagogues, and also received a Master of Arts at the Sorbonne. Thus equipped with an impressive but comparatively sterile scholasticism, Bacon was qualified to perpetuate the opinionism of the higher schools. As a lecturer in the university, Bacon decided to reform the entire sphere of learning and the faculty of the Sorbonne. In the words of Edward Lutz: "He spared neither himself nor them, freely pouring out his energy and his scorn."†

Bacon never made any effort to endear himself to the entrenched educators of the university. He walked out of their classes while a student, and attacked them bitterly as a graduate. It was reported that he was in considerable esteem with the student body, a state of affairs also quite understandable. While still in his twenties, Bacon wrote several books, including one on metaphysics that indicated the direction of his thinking if not the maturity of his genius. Throughout his career, he leaned heavily upon internal inspiration as a source of general truths, and upon the mental faculties for censorship and order and the

*See *Medieval Garner* (London, 1910).

†See *Roger Bacon's Contribution to Knowledge* (New York, 1936).

application of knowledge to the requirements of human life.

At a time when mental horizons were extremely narrow, the breadth of Bacon's vision requires some reasonable explanation. The means he used to assemble the information which he required paralleled closely the methods of the illustrious Paracelsus. Bacon recognized no man-made limitations or boundaries in his search for truth. He visited

—From *A True & Faithful Revelation, etc.*

ROGER BACON

prominent scholars, listened to the reports of travelers and adventurers, and interviewed representatives of every social class. He mingled with farmers, housewives, journeymen, and even magicians, sorcerers, and astrologers. In many cases, his acquaintanceships damaged his reputation but enlarged his knowledge.

From tradition, Bacon gained much, and he did not hesitate to explore pagan and heathen sources. He realized

that all races and nations had produced wise men, and that the search for truth was eternal and universal. He gained considerable proficiency in the learning of the Arabs and the Jews, and was well-equipped to estimate the works of the Greek and Latin philosophers. In languages, he mastered not only the classical tongues but also Aramaic and Arabic. In mathematics, he followed Pythagoras, Euclid, and Ptolemy. He gave much thought to geography, and made important reforms and innovations in liturgical music. Though not a physician, he contributed much to the profession of medicine, and his experiments with the microscope were revolutionary. It is said that Bacon's interest in alchemy was largely to advance the science of chemistry, and his inclination to astrology was inspired by a desire to reform the calendar. It is difficult to reconcile the miserable condition of 13th-century learning in general with Bacon's contributions in zoology, embryology, histology, and optics.

Among important inventions associated with his name are the microscope, the telescope, the thermometer, and gunpowder. In all probability, he gained some of his basic ideas from lesser-known contemporaries, but he had the wit and the skill to advance and to perfect concepts previously incomplete. Naturally, it was necessary for him to break with the rigid scholastic pattern which held the medieval mind in bondage to authority. In all things, he advocated experience and experiment, thus anticipating by several centuries the modern temper.

The circumstances which induced Roger Bacon to join the Franciscan Order are not entirely clear, nor is the exact date at which he entered the Brotherhood of St. Francis recorded. Professor Newbold, who devoted so many years to the study of Roger Bacon's cipher manuscripts, suggests 1256 or 1257 as the most probable year.*

*See *The Cipher of Roger Bacon* (Philadelphia and London, 1928).

This would mean that Bacon had reached his early forties. Possibly Roger was influenced by the fact that several scholars whom he especially respected were Franciscans. Also, he may have felt that the calm of the cloister would give him the leisure to pursue his researches. It is difficult to imagine that a man of his interests, which included even Gnosticism and the cabala, could have been in complete accord with the Franciscan program. There are evidences, however, that he did not share the mystical ideals and convictions of the Franciscan founder, and, like St. Francis, may have imbibed principles from the secret doctrines of the Albigensian Troubadours.

Although Bacon's contributions to human progress are now generously acknowledged, he did not fair so well in his own day. If it was a misfortune to differ with the schoolmen, it was a tragedy to cross purposes with the Church. Today it would appear ridiculous for anyone to be accused of advocating "novelties," yet this is the charge that was brought against Friar Bacon. The precise nature of the novelties is a matter of some dispute. Even though Bacon's interests were not entirely orthodox, they were consistent in general with the interests of the times. Most intellectuals pretended to be conversant with the conflicting mass of ancient traditions and doctrines. Even alchemy and astrology were practiced by the members of monkish Orders, and not a few old abbots were suspected of sorcery. Such pursuits were regarded with disfavor, and appropriate chidings administered. It took something more, however, to set the whole machinery of theological displeasure in motion.

The crux of the trouble may well have been Bacon's direct attack upon the sapience of several distinguished clerics among the Dominicans and Franciscans. Then, as now, it was dangerous to attack honored names. As a member

of a religious Order, Bacon came under the displeasure and, to a degree, under the temporal power of prominent Churchmen. These, gathering their resources, resolved to quell the ardor of the "Oxford upstart." The Bishop of Paris decided to cleanse the air of novelties, so he invoked the rule of censorship which required that the writings of the religious be approved by the Church before publication. About this time, an anonymous work appeared which attacked the very foundations of such censorship. Though unsigned, this vibrant criticism bore the stamp of Bacon's genius, and invited immediate reprisals. Although Bacon had powerful friends and supporters, his writings were condemned and he was imprisoned for fifteen years.

In this way, the novelties resulted in "salutary penance." The wording was more gentle than the method, and Friar Bacon had himself and his ideas "withheld from an unappreciative world" for fifteen years. We have no record that Roger was seriously mistreated, although his diet is reported to have been limited to bread and water for a considerable period. He lost weight but not zeal, and it is believed that during this time he incorporated many of his choicest discoveries in the curious ciphers which discouraged Father Kircher, but which were finally decoded by Professor Newbold.

Most of Bacon's scientific work seems to have been done prior to his involvement in the Franciscan-Dominican controversy. He enjoyed the friendship of Clement IV, and submitted several manuscripts for the consideration of this Pope. Possibly it was fortunate that Clement had no opportunity to peruse these writings, for they contained material which might have proved disastrous to their author. Clement died in 1268, and Bacon lost his greatest source of security. The long years of imprisonment must

have weighed heavily indeed upon the aging friar. Devoted to study, he was deprived of those instruments and means nearest to his heart. He was released in 1292, and although he began immediately an important work on theology, he died before the project could be matured. Like Confucius, Friar Bacon departed from this life convinced that he had failed in his self-appointed mission. It is reported that on his deathbed he said: "I repent of having given myself so much trouble to destroy ignorance."

The place of Roger Bacon in the descent of the Mysteries in the Christian world is sustained largely by his alchemical writings. In these, he revealed beyond doubt that he possessed the true key to the Great Work. He is mentioned frequently and with high esteem by later alchemists and, according to Gabriel Naude, an admirable defense of Roger was written by Dr. John Dee.* The cipher manuscripts decoded by Professor Newbold remove any possible doubt about Roger Bacon's religious and philosophical accomplishments. After six hundred years, the work of this great man is revealed to the world.

The alchemistical adepts of the 17th-century restoration of the Hermetic arts not only acknowledged Roger Bacon to be one of their earliest Masters, but did not hesitate to include him also among the adepts of the Great Schools. The anonymous author of the *Veritables Adeptes, etc.* included Roger Bacon among the initiates with Michael Maier, Robert Fludd, and John Dee.

In addition to the genuine works of Roger Bacon, a number of tracts and treatises attributed to him appeared during the great alchemical revival. *The Famous History of Friar Bacon, etc.,* which passed through many printings, is a spurious production, centered in the legend that Bacon, like St. Thomas Aquinas, invented a talking head of brass.

*See *The History of Magic* (London, 1657).

This head only spoke three times, its words being: "Time is. Time was. Time has passed." After these cryptic remarks, the brazen head fell to pieces with great noise and commotion.

In summarizing the character and career of Roger Bacon, it must be evident that he was not an isolated phenomenon. Every interest of his life, every source of his inspiration, every concept he defended belonged to the Mystery Schools. While he did not personally acknowledge his association with heretical sects, he preached their gospel of the right of man to think, to learn, and to grow according to the dictates of his own conscience. His life was dedicated to the enlargement of the human empire—the victory of man over the limitations imposed by ignorance. His researches and writings are permeated with Pythagoreanism, Platonism, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and the heresy of Manes. Through him, an ageless stream of wisdom was partly revealed to a world dominated by scholastic theology. His disclosure of principles, laws, and instruments already known to Esoteric Fraternities was premature. He was born before his time, but the influence of his teachings, joined with that of other initiated philosophers, prepared the way for the Universal Reformation. It is remarkable that two men, both with the same surname—Roger Bacon and Francis Bacon—should stand forth as universally enlightened citizens of the Philosophic Empire.

Raymond Lully

The *doctor illuminatus,* Raymond Lully, gained a wide reputation in Catalonia, and is honored to this day by the Majorcans, among whom his doctrines still have a considerable following. He was a man of unusual attainments in literature, poetry, philosophy, religion, mysticism, sociology, linguistics, and the sciences. Popularly venerated as a

saint, he attempted single-handed a broad missionary program against Mohammedanism, and was stoned to death outside the city walls of Bougie, in Northern Algeria. Although Lully exposed himself to the vengeance of the infidels with fanatical zeal and was frequently imprisoned, he was nearly eighty years of age at the time of his death. He would almost certainly have been beatified and probably canonized had he not come under the disfavor of the powerful Dominican Order. His doctrines also had influential support, however, and his reputation was stoutly defended by the Jesuits.

Raymond Lully was born on the island of Majorca about the year 1235. He came from an old and noble Catalonian family, and during his youth devoted himself almost entirely to the pleasures of court life. He acquired high favor with the king and was installed as Seneschal of the Isles. Although Lully had a ready mind, his family despaired of restraining his tempestuous disposition, and allowed him to follow his father's profession of gentleman-soldiering. The young courtier married early, but his disposition was deficient in fidelity, and his extramarital associations gained for him considerable notoriety. When already the father of three children, he conceived a *grande passion* for Signora Ambrosia Eleonora de Castello de Genes. This charming and accomplished lady, herself happily married, was deeply embarrassed by Lully's unsolicited attentions. After several unpleasant episodes, she took counsel with her husband to end the situation without unnecessary distress to her persistent admirer.

With the consent of her husband and in his presence, Signora Ambrosia wrote a letter to Lully beseeching him not to tarnish his reputation by devoting himself to a hopeless passion and warning him that a terrible disillusionment would result if he pressed his affections any further. The

letter had no effect, and finally the lady summoned young Raymond to her house. "Look on what thou lovest, Raymond Lully," she cried, with tears in her eyes. Then tearing open her dress, she showed her breast almost entirely eaten away by cancer. Lully was completely overcome, and, falling on his knees, begged forgiveness for his conduct. This experience transformed his entire life. He renounced his dissipated and dissolute existence, and, casting himself at the foot of a crucifix, dedicated his life to the service of God.

Lully gave up his office at court, renounced the world, and divided the larger part of his estate among his family, reserving only enough for the absolute necessities of life. He also distributed his goods generously among the poor. During this same period, he received several visions of Christ which consoled him through desperate illness and misfortune. Convinced by mystical experiences that he had been selected to enlighten mankind, he traveled extensively, studied diligently, and for several years served as a professor of the Arabic language in the Franciscan monastery at Miramar. Driven by relentless pressures within himself, he resolved to attempt the conversion of the Mohammedans. He visited Rome to exhort the Pope to establish monasteries for the education of missionary friars. Honorius IV, who might have furthered this program, died just as Lully reached Rome, and the project received no immediate attention.

Like St. Augustine, whose repentancies are poverbial, Lully struggled incessantly with real or imaginary defects of his own character. He journeyed to Tunis, where his fiery zeal against Islamism caused him to be arrested, cast into prison, and condemned to death for seducing the people. He was saved by one of the learned Islamites whom he was attempting to convert. On another occasion in

Algiers, the authorities, exasperated by Lully's preachings, put a bridle in his mouth depriving him of speech for forty days, then beat him roundly and expelled him from the kingdom.

—From an early woodblock

THE MARTYRDOM OF RAYMOND LULLY

The remaining years of Lully's life were mostly devoted to his missionary activities among the Mohammedans and

the inevitable retaliations which he brought upon himself. At last his earthly journey ended under the walls of Bougie. According to one account, merchants passing Tunis saw a strange light hovering over the ground. Going ashore in a small boat, they found that this light came from a heap of stones which had been hastily piled over Lully's body. A more-sober account says that these merchants found Lully in a dying condition and carried him to their ship, and that he died on board the 29th of June 1315, in sight of the island of Majorca.

The life of Lully and the preoccupations of his mind do not appear to substantiate the reputation for alchemical learning later associated with his name. He is said to have been a voluminous writer. Various authorities make him the author of from five hundred to several thousand treatises. Such a literary output seems incredible when we consider his missionary career. There is little in common between Lully, the ardent apostle unto the gentiles, and Lully, whom Eliphas Levi describes as "a grand and sublime adept of the Hermetic science." There is a report that Lully was a disciple of the initiated chemist-philosopher, Arnaldus de Villa Nova, and that he also had the acquaintance of John Cremer, the phantom abbot of Westminster. Neither of these associations has been satisfactorily established.

John Cremer presents especial difficulties. This saintly servant of the Philosophers' Stone is represented in the *Musaeum Hermeticum* (Frankfort, 1678) by a short and spirited tract, titled *Testamentum Cremeri.* There is a vignette portrait of the abbot on the title page, which could be a reasonable likeness of almost anyone. Incidentally, the identical vignette ornaments the title page of an earlier work published by Luca Jennis in 1625. This is entitled *The Philosophers' Stone, a Beautiful Article by a German*

Philosopher in the year 1423. The work is signed H.C.D., the initials standing for Hermannus Condesyanus, Doctor. Thus, the reverend abbot of Westminster has no claim on his own supposed portrait.

A charming biography has been manufactured for Abbot Cremer. He was given apartments in the Tower of London, where he manufactured gold to the sum of eighteen million pounds sterling. Lully is supposed to have been the guest of Cremer in the abbey of Westminster, although it is extremely doubtful if the Majorcan mystic ever visited England. Of course, no John Cremer was ever abbot of Westminster at any period in the history of the abbey. It is interesting that we are indebted to Count Michael Maier, the Rosicrucian apologist, for the publication of Cremer's *Testament,* which appeared in Maier's *Tripus Aureus* in 1618.

As may be expected, the works attributed to Lully relating to the Hermetic and alchemistic arts were published between 1596 and 1670. There are earlier editions of his religious and scientific writings, but such as have a fair claim to authenticity may be described as conservative. Lully emerges as a patron saint of the fire chemists with other names rescued from distinguished desuetude by the moving spirits behind the 17th-century Reformation.

There is some ground, however, for including Raymond Lully in the descent of the esoteric tradition. In 1283 he wrote *Blanquerna,* a mystical or philosophical fiction belonging to the order of Utopias. This work shows acquaintance with the Platonic concept of the Philosophic Empire, and anticipated by three hundred years the Utopian Cycle beginning with Sir Thomas More and ending with Sir Francis Bacon. By his poems and literary works, Lully may be entitled to inclusion in the descent of the Troubadours,

and he is known to have had some acquaintance with the teachings of the Spanish cabalists.

Several writers, who will probably never be indentified, used Lully's name to advance tracts of a much later date; and confronted with this confusion, some historians have taken refuge in the old and convenient device that the works of two or more men of the same name have been jumbled together. Perhaps the later alchemists were as skillful in transmuting old authors and their writings as they were in digesting and augmenting their mineral compounds. Lully is a good example of the "methods of convenience" practiced in such German literary workshops of Esoteric Fraternities as the one in Frankfort, presided over by Luca Jennis and Theodore de Bry. Without such sympathetic and obliging printers and engravers, the program for the universal regeneration of human society would have been seriously impaired.

Nicholas Flamel.

Nothing is known of the early life of Nicholas Flamel (born circa 1330), scrivener and notary, except that he was born of poor but honest parents, and lived on the Street of the Notaries near the chapel of St. James of the Bouchery, in Paris. His fame began in the year 1357 when he purchased for two florins (at least so he says) a large, gilded book very old and curious. The cover of the strange volume was of brass, engraved with letters and figures, and the inside consisted of thin leaves of bark, or delicate rinds of young trees. Each leaf was covered with writing and symbols, beautifully executed and brilliantly colored. Upon the first page was written in great capital letters of gold *Abraham the Jew, Prince, Priest, Levite, Astrologer, and Philosopher, to the Nation of the Jews, by the Wrath of God dispersed among the Gauls, sendeth Health.* It should be

noted that the materials used were entirely inconsistent with European fashions, and indicate the possibility of Eastern origin.

The burden of the *Book of Abraham the Jew* was as remarkable as its appearance. It seems that after the Diaspora (the scattering of Israel) the Jewish people became wanderers, and took up their dwellings in unfriendly Gentile nations. Here they were subjected to heavy taxation, and were required to "contribute" generously,

—From *Les Figures Hieroglyphiques of Nicolas Flamel*, etc. (Paris, 1612)

NICHOLAS FLAMEL AND HIS WIFE

These portraits were included among the figures placed in the churchyard of the Innocents. Of them, Flamel writes: "The man painted here doth expressly resemble myself to the natural, as the woman doth lively figure Perrenelle."

if reluctantly, to treasuries of avaricious princes. These misfortunes weighed so heavily upon them that one of their learned men, Abraham the Jew, an alchemist and a cabalist, perfected the means of transmuting base metals into gold. He gave the secret to his people in order that they might create vast stores of wealth with which to meet their taxes.

Flamel and his wife devoted many years and much effort to the *Book of Abraham the Jew,* and on the 25th day of April 1382, at five o'clock in the evening they accomplished the transmutation of base metal into pure

gold. These pious folks devoted the riches resulting from numerous transmutations entirely to charity and religion.

If Flamel had been the only one to record this extraordinary manuscript, the whole account might be regarded as a fable or invention, but the elusive volume made at least one other public appearance. Robert H. Fryar, writing in 1865, notes: "One thing which seems to prove the reality of this story beyond dispute, is, that this very *Book of Abraham the Jew* with the annotations of 'Flammel'.....was actually in the hands of Cardinal Richelieu, as Borel was told by the Count de Cabrines, who saw and examined it."*

Arthur Edward Waite further complicates the story of Flamel with a curious account. He tells that prior to securing the *Book of Abraham the Jew,* Flamel was privileged to enjoy a strange vision. A being of the spirit world, by name Bath-Kol, appeared to him in the guise of an angel, bearing in his hand a strange book bound in brass, written upon bark, and graven with an iron pen. "Flamel!" cried the radiant apparition. "Behold this book of which thou understandest nothing; to many others but thyself it would remain forever unintelligible, but one day thou shalt discern in its pages what none but thyself shall see." In his vision Flamel eagerly stretched out his hand to take the precious gift, but the angel and the book disappeared in a tide of light. We can well imagine the joy of the scrivener when later the book he had seen in his vision came into his possession.†

Such is the story that has descended through the alchemical tradition, but there is something else to be added. So remarkable is this epilogue that we must give attention to the persons, the places, and the circumstances involved.

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*See *Flammel's Book, etc.* (Bath reprint, footnote).
†See *Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers.*

Sieur Paul Lucas was commissioned by Louis XIV of France to travel through Greece, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Africa in search of antiquities. When he returned he published an account of his journey under the title *Voyage de sieur Paul Lucas, par ordre du Roi dans la Crece, etc.,* (Amsterdam, 1714), and dedicated the book to his majesty. Louis XIV was not the type of man to be patient if his favors were abused, and Lucas would not have retained the royal favor had he published fables in the name of a sober narrative. A digest of the relevant sections of Lucas' story is as follows:

While journeying in Natolia, he came to a small mosque. In this little cloister were four dervishes, persons of the greatest worth and learning. Lucas was received with all imaginable civility and invited to share their food. One of them who said he was of the country of the Uzbeks, a tribe of Tatars, was the most learned. "And I believe verily he spoke all the languages in the world."

After they had conversed for a time in Turkish, the dervish asked if Lucas could speak Latin, Spanish, or Italian. Lucas suggested Italian, but the holy man soon discovered that this was not the native language of his guest. He then frankly inquired, and the traveler told him that he was a native of France. The dervish then spoke in good French as if he had been brought up in Paris.

After some conversation, the dervish confided to Lucas that he was one of the sages who had retired to a quiet place for study and meditation. He seemed to be a man about thirty years old, but by his discourses and the accounts of his long journeys he had made, it appeared that he must have lived at least a century.

This sage said that he was one of the seven friends who wandered up and down the world to perfect themselves

and their studies. When parting, they always appointed another meeting at the end of twenty years. When this time came, those who arrived early waited for the rest. The little mosque was the one decided upon for the present gathering.

The conversation ran over an abundance of curious topics. Religion and natural philosophy were discussed, then chemistry, alchemy, and the cabala. A sage, explained the dervish, is that kind of a man to whom the title of philosopher naturally belongs. He has no sort of tie to the world; he sees all things die and revive without concern; he has more riches in his power than the greatest of kings, but he tramples them under his feet, and this generous contempt sets him ever in the midst of indigence above the power of events.

The wise man, though he must die, does not leave this world before the utmost time fixed, and a sage may live nearly a thousand years. The Philosopher's Stone is not a chimera. Then the name of Flamel was mentioned, and the holy dervish remarked: "Do you actually believe Flamel is dead? . . . No, no, my friend, don't deceive yourself, Flamel is living still, neither he nor his wife are yet at all acquainted with the dead. It is not above three years ago since I left both the one and the other in the Indies, and he is one of my best friends."

The dervish then told a fragment of the secret story of Flamel and Abraham the Jew. More than three hundred years before, one of the sages of their Brotherhood was a most learned Jew, who had an ardent affection to see his family once more before renouncing the world forever. The other members of the Order attempted to dissuade him from the dangerous journey, but at last the desire grew so strong that he departed, with the solemn promise to return

as soon as possible. Reaching Paris, he found his father's descendants held in high esteem. Among them was one who seemed to have the genius for true philosophy. The Jewish sage confided in him, and even produced a transmutation of metal to prove that he possessed the secret. The afore-mentioned relative then attempted to persuade the initiated Brother to remain with him, but he would not break his word to the other members of his Order. Avarice then turned the relative into a mortal enemy, and he resolved to extinguish one of the lights of the universe. He contrived the murder of the sage to make himself master of the mysterious medicine. Such a horrible action could not remain unpunished, and for another crime this wicked man was thrown into prison and buried alive.

Nicholas Flamel came into possession of the mysterious book which had been written by the Jewish initiate, and in time, due to his own virtues, learned its secrets. Then realizing the danger of his position, Flamel decided to escape publicity by a strategy. At his advice his wife feigned a serious illness, and, when she reached the borders of Switzerland, a mock funeral was arranged. They buried in her stead a wooden image dressed up and, that nothing might seem amiss, the image was interred in one of the churches they had founded. Sometime later, Flamel repeated the strategy and joined his wife. Prior to this he made his own last will and testament in legal form, including the request that his remains be buried near those of his wife.

Lucas was astonished by the substance of the account no more than by the circumstances under which it was told. That a dervish, who had never set foot in France but was a person of extensive knowledge and superior genius, should be so precisely informed appeared little short of miraculous.

The French traveler's experience is reminiscent of that described by other disciples of the Hermetic arts, who journeyed to the Near East to be initiated by the adepts in Constantinople and Damascus.

It is reported that Cardinal Richelieu seized the houses and properties that had been owned by Flamel in an effort to secure the records of his alchemical experiments. In this way the Cardinal secured the *Book of Abraham the Jew,* and even built a laboratory to carry on experiments. Grave robbers vandalized Flamel's tomb and at that time discovered the grave to be empty. At least one copy of the complete text of the manuscript of Abraham was in existence, and it was examined in a private library in Milan.

Basil Valentine

The case of Basil Valentine, Monk of St. Bennet and referred to by early writers as Prior of the Monastic House of St. Peter's at Erfurt, is an outstanding example of the deliberate obscuring of the adept tradition. To summarize the proportions of the difficulty: There is general uncertainty as to whether Valentine flourished in the 12th, 13th, 14th or 15th century, or, for that matter, whether a friar of that name ever flourished at all. As early as 1515, the Holy Roman Emperor, Maxmillian I, was so intrigued by the stories about this remarkable monk that he caused a thorough search to be made for some trace of this astonishing person among the Benedictine archives at Rome, but without success.

It has been suggested that the popular report by which Valentine was Prior of Erfurt in 1414 was a simple invention to conceal an unknown adept, who actually lived at a considerably later date. Also, it is possible that a monk of this name, who gained some reputation for obscure learning, did exist as recorded in the vulgar account, and a

circle of Hermetic initiates fathered him with their productions. The practice of attributing to ancient authors the works which might cause embarrassment to living men is well-established in the field of occult literature.

One ingenious explanation suggests that the name Basil, or *Basilius,* is equivalent in Greek to *royal* or *kingly;* and

—From the *Chymische Schriften* (Leipzig, 1760)

BASIL VALENTINE AND ALCHEMICAL SYMBOLS

Valentine, or *Valentinus,* is associated with Latin forms implying *strong, vigorous,* or *powerful.* Thus the name could mean, without unreasonable extension, the strong or mighty king. Most students of alchemy will remem-

ber the royal figure that appears in so many of the mysterious emblems. This mighty personage has several meanings, but in some cases he definitely signifies the dignity of the adept.

Johannes Gudenus, the historian of Erfurt, stated definitely that a monastery of the Benedictines existed there in the first half of the 15th century. He then assumed that Valentine was an inmate of this holy house. Unfortunately, however, his documentation at this point shifted from formal records to traditional accounts gathered from alchemical writings. As a result, the conclusions were not so conclusive as they might at first have appeared. Substantially, nothing is known of Brother Valentine except such stray and fugitive intimations as appear on the title page of various editions of his supposed writings or in the introductions affixed thereto by editors and translators equally obscure.

Most reports associate Basil Valentine with early experiments in the medicinal use of antimony. It is said that in the process of introducing this element into the pharmacopoeia our chemist experimented upon his religious Brothers so strenously that most of them became violently ill "nigh unto death." It is in this way, if we may believe the legends, that Valentine came to name the mineral from which these medications were derived *antimoine,* which means *hostile to monks.* The researches of Valentine in the alchemical mysteries of this element are contained in his *Currus Triumphalis Antimonii,* or *The Triumphant Chariot of Antimony.*

This work, which was held in the highest esteem by disciples of the Hermetic art, seems to have been published for the first time A. D. 1600. Albert L. Caillet describes no edition earlier than the German, published in Leipzig in

1604. He mentions another edition in 1611.* Early in the production of the *Currus Triumphalis Antimonii,* the work was associated with the commentaries of Theodore Kerckringius, whose entire contribution to alchemical literature seems to have been restricted to this one production. Editions containing the comments by Kerckringius, or Kerckring, were issued in several languages, places, and times.† Dr. Kerckringius appears to have been party to a considerable share of the uncertainty surrounding Basil Valentine. Mr. Waite says that nothing is known about Kerckringius, but we may mention that he was a Dutch physician born in Amsterdam, and a condisciple of Spinoza. He died in Hamburg in 1693.

In his *Dedicatory Epistle* to the 1685 edition of *The Triumphant Chariot,* Kerckringius makes certain ambiguous remarks addressed to the Sons of Art; that is, the Hermetic initiates. (In these selected quotations, I have italicized certain parts for sake of particular emphasis.) For example: "In return for this dedication I expect no reward but to bask in the rays of your favor, *and to be promoted in the way you know,* since you will see from this book that *I am in the straight road,* and am mounting to the bright temple of knowledge by the right path." Again he says: "In the words of Basilius, I have already gained a place in a *higher class.*

Kerckringius describes the Lord Mercury appearing to him in a vision and restoring him to the *One Way.* The good doctor then addresses his spirit visitor: "Mercury, eloquent scion of Atlas, and *father of all Alchemists,* since thou hast guided me hitherto, show me, I pray thee, the way to those Blessed Isles, which thou hast promised to reveal

*See *Manuel Bibliographique des Sciences Psychiques ou Occultes* (Paris, 1912).
†These include the Latin editions of 1671 and 1685. The latter was translated in 1893, with a biographical preface by A. E. Waite.

to all *thine elect children.*" Mercury then speaks of "a son, *adorned from his birth* with the royal crown which he may not share with others. *Yet he may bring his friends to the palace,* where sits enthroned the King of Kings, who communicates his dignity readily and liberally to all that approach him."

Later, Mercury gave Kerckringius a golden ring from the finger of the royal son, with the following words which can hardly be misunderstood: "They know the *golden branch* which must be consecrated to Proserpina before you can enter the palace of Pluto. When he sees this *ring,* perhaps one will open to you with a *word* the door of that chamber, where sits enthroned in his magnificence the Desire of all Nations, who is *known only to the Sages.*" Those who have studied the rituals and symbols of the ancient Mysteries can scarcely fail to recognize the landmarks by which Kerckringius is revealing, in the form of an allegory, the Lodge of the Adepts and the circumstances of his own acceptance into this Hermetic Brotherhood.

The Secret Books, or *Last Testament of Basil Valentine, of the Benedictine Order,* appeared first in Strasbourg in 1645. The edition published in London, 1671, bears title and inscription thus: *The Last Will and Testament of Basil Valentine, Monke of the Order of St. Bennet. Which alone, he hid under a table of marble, behind the High-Altar of the Cathedral Church, in the Imperial City of Erford; leaving it there to be found by him, whom God's Providence should make worthy of it.* In his preface to this work, Valentine is made to say: "And because this book affordeth another knowledge, differing from others of my writings, wherein I have not written so obscurely, nor made I use of such subtilities, as the ancients did, who lived before me and ended their days happily, therefore doth it require another place also to be laid up in, and kept secret from the

perverseness of men in the world. I do not desire it should be buried with me, to be a prey, and food for worms, but it shall be left above ground, and kept secret from wicked men, and my purpose is, that it shall be laid into a secret place, where none shall come near it, but he, for whom God hath ordained it, other writings of mine shall sooner see the public light."

There seems to be some uncertainty as to the exact place in which Valentine concealed his Hermetic legacy. According to one historian, the great alchemist enclosed his manuscript in one of the pillars of the abbey church. There the priceless treasure remained for a long time, but was at last discovered "by the fortunate violence of a thunderbolt." In this way, a convenient explanation is given for the late appearance of the *Testament*. We are reminded of the vault in which the Rosicrucian arcana rested unknown for one hundred and twenty years. In each instance, and there are many, highly-significant manuscripts and documents, supposedly prepared at an older time, are available only after the beginning of the 17th century.

We might be inclined to take a romantic view of the situation were it not that Valentine's writings, especially *The Triumphant Chariot,* contain internal evidence of being written later than the editors and publishers would have us believe. For instance, the appendix to *The Triumphant Chariot,* in which the author concludes his arguments, states that antimony has many good purposes and uses beyond that of the typographer or printer. This is most revealing, as Valentine is supposed to have been laid to rest *before* the invention of printing. There are references also throughout Valentine's writings to historical incidents which had not occurred in the lifetime of the Benedictine Brother. Everything points to the emergence of a considerable literature attributed to this man during the critical years of the Uni-

versal Reformation, the period from 1590 to 1630. Perhaps, then, we shall not be far from the truth if we attribute this fortuitous emergence to the same group responsible for the Rosicrucian *Manifestoes.*

We should consider the contributions of the elusive Basil and the almost equally-elusive Kerckringius to one of the greatest mysteries of the alchemistical tradition—the coming of Elias the Artist. In one place our commentator tells us: "Are not those times at hand, in which Elias the Artist, the Revealer of greater Mysteries is to come? Of whose coming Paracelsus so clearly prophesied in various parts of his writings. . . .Therefore be comforted, be comforted, O lover of Chemistry, and prepare the way of that Elias, who brings happy times and will reveal more secrets than our ancestors, by reason of envy, and the iniquity of their days durst discover. . . . the times of Elias come 'for arts also, as well as is understood of other things, have their Elias,' saith Theophrastus.*

To summarize our position: Basil Valentine was the product of those same Orders of the Quest which precipitated the whole elaborate pageantry of alchemical emblemism. Elias the Artist was the perfect Master of the Great Work; in fact, the personification of the art itself by which Nature is regenerated and redeemed. To the Christian Hermetist, Elias was Christ, in whom the miracle of transmutation was fully revealed to those of sufficient internal perception. Thus we find in alchemy a trace of the Eastern doctrine of Avatars, those men out of God who appear at the times appointed. It is important to remember that alchemy did not take on the overtones of the World Mystery until it became the vehicle of that Society of Unknown Philosophers

*Paracelsus predicted the advent of Elias the Artist in the 8th chapter of his treatise, *De Mineralibus.*

which set up the Invisible Empire, to perpetuate in the modern world the great Mystery Schools of antiquity.

Paracelsus

Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (Paracelsus), often called the Swiss Hermes, was the most spectacular figure in the European adept tradition. He was born at Einsiedeln in Switzerland about 1493. Paracelsus was a learned but eccentric man, who spent a great part of his life in travel, visiting most of the countries of Europe and, according to some reports, reaching Asia. While in Russia, he was taken prisoner by the Tatars, who brought him into the presence of the great khan. This fabulous monarch was so impressed with the erudition of the Swiss doctor that arrangements were made for the physician to accompany the son of the khan on an embassy to Constantinople.

From van Helmont we learn that Paracelsus was initiated in Constantinople into the supreme secrets of alchemy by a college of Islamic savants, who bestowed upon him the Universal Mystery under the symbolism of the Stone Azoth, the "philosophic fire" of the Western adepts. Thereafter, Paracelsus carried this Stone with him in a special knob on the hilt of his sword. Most early portraits of this Master emphasize the sword handle with its magical contents. After his initiation in the City of the Golden Horn, the great chemist is reported to have continued his journey to India, but this has never been historically established.

Paracelsus had for his first teacher the initiate Trithemius of Sponheim. This learned abbot revealed many of the secrets of the cabala and of the Christian mysteries to the young Paracelsus, but was not sufficiently interested in the practical side of medicine to satisfy his youthful disciple. It is then reported that Paracelsus received the assistance of

the Master Basil Valentine, who initiated him in philosophic chemistry. This reference from an early manuscript presents certain difficulties in dates, but it is possible that this establishes the actual period in which Valentine was working.

The greatest of the European Masters with whom Paracelsus associated was the Hermetic adept, Salomon Tris-

—From *Geheimes Manuscript*

16TH CENTURY PEN-AND-INK PORTRAIT OF PARACELSUS

mosin. In our collection is a manuscript of unique Paracelsian interest. It is undated, written on very heavy paper, and bound with a simple label on the backbone, *Geheimes Manuscript (Secret Manuscript)*. The title page is inscribed with a large black cross, with the word *Iesus* written as an acrostic on the upright and crossarm. The initials

N.R.I. appear on the upper end of the cross. About the cross is written in Latin: "In the cross I am a sphere. From it comes true wisdom." At the bottom of the page is the inscription: "After the cross, light; after the clouds, jubilation will arise." As a frontispiece, there is a pen-and-ink sketch of Salomon Trismosin, and in the body of the text a similar portrait of Paracelsus, with magic squares above him and the Stone Azoth in the hilt of his sword.

The manuscript contains copies of correspondence from Salomon Trismosin to Paracelsus, and some fragments of Trithemius and Isaac of Holland giving alchemical processes and formulas. The first letter is from Salomon Trismosin, written in the village of Lusin, April 18, 1515. Extracts from this letter leave little doubt as to the relationship between the two men: "You have been to me the most beloved disciple of my school, therefore I will reveal to you what otherwise I keep secret . . . I cannot teach you, neither can any man in this world, how to place your hand so that the Lion will show himself in his good rays. You must experience it . . . . I have consummated the Work for another time. I will now rest. Amen!" In closing, Trismosin refers to Paracelsus as "my beloved former pupil."

In the British Museum, there is a magnificent manuscript on vellum dated 1582, which is a copy of the alchemical treatises of Salomon Trismosin, titled *Splendor Solis.* At hand also is *La Toyson d'Or, . . . Par ce Grand Philosophe Salomon Trismosin Precepteur de Paracelse* (Paris, 1612). This little work, which was dedicated by permission to the Prince of Conde, is illustrated with twenty-two hand-colored Hermetic emblems, pasted into spaces prepared for them in the text. The figures are identical in import with the lovely miniatures adorning the British Museum manuscript. According to an obscure work, *Aureum Vellus,* printed

in 1598, the adept from whom Paracelsus received the *Magnum Opus* was his fellow countryman, Trismosin. It is also reported that the Master Salomon possessed the Universal Medicine, and was seen alive by a French traveler at the end of the 17th century.*

Some details are available about the career of Trismosin, whose real name probably was Pfeiffer. This adept began his search for the mystery of the Stone in 1473. He studied in Venice as an itinerant chemist, where he worked in the laboratory of a German, named Tauler. Later he went away from Venice "to a still better place for my purpose, where Cabalistic and Magical books in Egyptian language were entrusted to my care; these I had carefully translated into Greek, and then the Greek translated into Latin. There I found and captured the Treasure of the Egyptians."**

Although the esoteric tradition is indeed the mother of Mysteries, it is a mistake to assume that the several schools which flourished in Europe between the 15th and 19th centuries were of great antiquity as Societies or Fraternities. The case of Paracelsus is typical of the prevailing tendency to confuse principles and persons. H. P. Blavatsky writes: "Although there had been alchemists before the days of Paracelsus, he was the first who had passed through the true initiation, that last ceremony which conferred on the adept the power of traveling toward the 'burning bush' over the holy ground, and to 'burn the golden calf in the fire, grind it to powder, and strow it upon the water.' "†

The memory of Paracelsus passed to the keeping of enthusiasts who adopted him as the patron saint and true founder of their dubious modern sects and cults. We are told, for example, that Bombastus von Hohenheim was a

*See *Paracelsus*, by Franz Hartmann (London, 1887).
**See *Splendor Solis*, with notes by J. K. (London, 1911).
†See *Isis Unveiled*.

great Rosicrucian and the Grand Master of the Brotherhood. This notion probably originated from the reference in the *Fama* to the writings of Paracelsus being found in the symbolic vault of Father C. R. C. The mere fact that the *Fama* also states definitely that Paracelsus was not a member of the Order but greatly admired by them passes unnoticed because it is inconvenient.

The prophetic hieroglyphics of Paracelsus include rose-form devices. There is a quaint figure of a man in monkish garb, holding a rose in one hand and a scythe in the other. Figure No. 26 of the *Figurae Magicae* features a crown, from which rises an open rose—the flower itself supporting a capital F. While these symbols bring comfort to some devotees, it is needless to say that, like the rose in Simon Studion's *Naometria* (MS., 1604), they prove nothing. Those seeking to understand the rose of Paracelsus and, for that matter, the symbolism of the rose in the entire European alchemistical tradition will do well to study the "Rose of Damascus." To do this, however, one must explore the secret doctrines of the Dervishes and the Sufis, as did Paracelsus.

The effect of the Paracelsian corpus upon the Continental mind was profound. Science, religion, politics, education, and medicine were broadly and deeply influenced by this choleric and eccentric physician. Even Erasmus consulted him on matters of health, and the contributions which Paracelsus made to the pharmacopoeia have been adequately summarized by Lessing. "Those who imagine that the medicine of Paracelsus is a system of superstitions which we have fortunately outgrown will, if they once learn to know its principles, be surprised to find that it is based on a superior kind of knowledge which we have not yet attained, but into which we may hope to grow."*

*See *Paracelsus.*

The courage of Paracelsus and his complete indifference to the opinions of his illustrious contemporaries made it possible for him to serve as a channel for the dissemination of the mystical and magical doctrines of the Masters of Islam and the initiates of the Eastern Church of Christendom. Thus, this Swiss Hermes carried on the unfinished work of the Knights Templars. The Invisible-Philosophic Empire was seated in Asia Minor and North Africa from the period of the collapse of the Greek schools to the advent of Paracelsus. For more than a thousand years, Europeans seeking initiation were forced to journey to Constantinople, Damascus, or Alexandria. Such travels are specifically mentioned in connection with early European adepts and initiates. As the era of the emancipation of Europe approached, the center of the Esoteric Fraternities moved into the Balkan area where it remained for some time and left important landmarks. It crossed Europe by slow and silent degrees, establishing several focal points, and from Albion's magic isle it administered the magnificent project of planning and guiding the colonization of the Western Hemisphere.

Although several permanent, or at least enduring, secret assemblies were formed to serve as auxilliaries to the principal purposes of the adepts, these groups should never be confused with the grand motion which remains nameless and whose official representatives have never been actually identified. Even a man like Paracelsus was not a free agent, for, like St.-Germain, he was the servant of "one stronger than himself."

It is convenient to interpose dramatic personalities between a working project and its source. In this way, efforts to destroy either the plan or the planner are frustrated. Cagliostro was a typical example of a scapegoat. He was a voluntary victim, fully aware of the responsibility

entrusted to him. After he served his purpose by centering attention upon himself and away from the vital facts, he was quietly rescued from his predicament. *For some reason,* the Holy Office decided against capital punishment, and the glamorous Comte was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment in the Castle of San Leo. After the excitement subsided, he retired to Asia, and the official announcement of his death forestalled further inquiry.

The funerals of initiates and adepts usually are well-publicized but poorly attended. For thousands of years the symbolism of death has been associated with the ritualism of the Mystery Schools. The so-called *Book of the Dead* of the ancient Egyptians was in reality a religious drama given in the temples, and veiled the mysteries of the death and resurrection of the human soul. Even today, those entering certain religious Orders are said to have died so far as the physical world is concerned, and receive new religious names. This practice was used frequently during that period of European history in which it was convenient, if not absolutely necessary, to take refuge in obscurity.

When Francis Bacon, one of the most powerful men of England, is supposed to have departed from this mortal sphere, there is no record that his body lay in state and no account of his funeral has survived. In fact, there is no agreement as to the cause of his death or the place in which it occurred. St.-Germain did not fare any better. His death was announced, but no witness saw the body who has seen fit to record his presence. Even when the tomb of an illuminate has been identified, sometimes it is empty or contains the bones of some unknown mortal. Inscriptions have been falsified, dates manufactured or mutilated, and natural decay has been hastened by artificial means.

In the case of Paracelsus, it appears that he died on September 24, 1541. *Due to circumstances,* he was buried the same day, and the Prince Archbishop arranged appropriate solemnities. On one pretext or another, the tomb was opened several times. The real reason was not always pious interest in the comfort of his bones, but was inspired by reports that priceless secrets of chemistry and great treasures had been buried with this poor but honest savant. In the 18th century, a marble pyramid was placed in the porch of the church. In this obelisk was a niche with a small iron door, and here the earthly remains of the great chemist were placed.

One biographer of Paracelsus* devotes a few lines to research carried on by Doctors Sommering and Aberle upon the bones of their illustrious fellow physician. Sommering discovered the wound in the back, which seemed to support the report that Paracelsus had been assassinated. Dr. Aberle, somewhat later, was most industrious and examined the bones in 1878, 1881, 1884, and 1886. As may be expected, he disagreed with the findings of Dr. Sommering. There was discussion as to whether Paracelsus had been flung down amongst rocks, and had his neck broken and his skull shattered. Aberle decided that Paracelsus could not have dictated his will with a broken neck, but there is doubt as to whether he could have done better with a dagger in his back. The doctors compromised on rickets as the cause of death! If the body does not fit the facts, perhaps the bones belong to an unidentified stranger who had perished from some violent cause—or rickets. Incidentally, the sword with the Philosophers' Stone in the handle has never been found or mentioned.

Paracelsus traveled extensively, and is known to have selected his acquaintances from classes popularly regarded

*Anna M. Stoddart, in *The Life of Paracelsus.*

with ill-favor. He frequented the camps of gypsies, the dens of witches, and the cells of aged ascetics. He could not have done this without coming into direct contact with the Bogomiles, the Albigenses, and the Troubadours. He was always the champion of lost causes and underprivileged groups. Though nominally Christian, his whole philosophy was pagan and heretical in the terms of his day. No man of his accomplishments in the cabala, talismanic magic, magnetic therapy, and the Hermetic arts could have remained unaware of the great program of the Universal Reformation that was developing beneath the surface of European politics. His references to Elias the Artist indicate his acquaintance with the program of the Mystery Schools.

In the *Order Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix,* issued in 1891 and signed by several persons of distinction, including Stanislas de Guaita, Jacques Papus, and Oswald Wirth, occurs the following panegyric: "Elias Artista! Genius director of the Rose-Cross, symbolical personification of the Order, Ambassador of the St. Paraclet! Paracelsus the Great has predicted thy coming, O collective breath of generous vindications. Spirit of liberty, of science and love which must regenerate the world!"

Henry (Heinrich) Khunrath

The name of Dr. John Dee occasionally occurs in association with persons involved in the Universal Reformation. Dee resented certain comments on his book, *Monas Hieroglyphica,* made by Andreas Libavius, and entered into a mild controversy with him. Libavius first attacked and then defended the early Rosicrucian *Manifestoes.* Dr. Dee emerged as an astrologer, alchemist, and ardent spiritist-magician, with a profound knowledge of the Hermetic Mystery, though it has been difficult to determine his correct

place in the descent of the esoteric tradition. Dee is known also to have had the acquaintance of Henry Khunrath, a mystical alchemist of distinction. Eliphas Levi refers to Khunrath as "a Sovereign Prince of the Rosy Cross, worthy in all respects of this scientific and mystical title."*

—From *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae, etc.*

HENRY KHUNRATH, MYSTIC AND ALCHEMIST

Henry Khunrath, Doctor of Divinity and of Medicine, and *amateur de sagesse,* is reported to have attained the 6th degree of Hermetic initiation which brought him to the threshold of adeptship. His principal contribution to the literature of the Mysteries was *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae Solius Verae, Christiano-Kabalisticum, Divino-*

*See *History of Magic.*

Magicum, nec non Physico-Chemicum, Tertriunum, Catholicon (Hanover, 1609). Several phantom editions of this work are referred to by early writers. Some of these probably exist, as I have examined a copy dated 1605. The *Amphitheatrum* opens with an argument, setting forth the seven grades of the theosophical wisdom, and Khunrath's observations upon the matter of these grades are no doubt responsible for Levi's unqualified endorsement.

As is usual of suspected initiates, few particulars are available of the life and activities of Henry Khunrath. He was born in Saxony about 1555, traveled extensively, and held a doctorate of medicine from the University of Basle. In several respects, his career paralleled the eccentric pattern previously established by Paracelsus, to whose writings Khunrath was profoundly indebted. Like the immortal Bombastus, the German physician was by temperament irritable and eccentric, and was given to a broad criticism of existing religious and educational institutions. Khunrath appears to have been a devout Protestant, and his natural choler was considerably softened by a devotional spirit. He was initiated by a German adept named Steiner, of whom nothing is known except that he was working in 1574 and left some writings, which were edited and compiled by later alchemists.

Khunrath practiced medicine, first at Hamburg and later at Dresden. He was not especially successful as a practitioner, probably due to his disposition; and he died the 9th of September 1601, at the age of about forty-five years. The *Amphitheatrum* is said to have been among Khunrath's manuscripts and was presented to the world through the industry of his friend, Erasmus Wolfart, who added a preface. The book is remarkable for a magnificent series of engravings, setting forth the mysteries of Christian cabalism and alchemy. These plates were engraved in Antwerp,

and several of them are dated 1602. The book presents many confusing details, and suggests that it was compiled by a group with diversified resources.

Certain of Khunrath's diagrams with modifications recur in later works claiming to have originated in the sanctum of the Rosy Cross. This "mystic citizen of the Eternal Kingdom," as he has been called, was evidently familiar to Michael Maier, and Khunrath's name has also been linked with the Dukes of Brunswick, who took such kindly interest in the career of Johann Valentin Andreae. The interlocking careers of most, if not all, of the early Rosicrucian apologists stimulate reflection.

Jakob Boehme, the psychochemical mystic, received his illumination about the time of Khunrath's death, and inherited the principal concepts with which Khunrath was concerned. The Hermetic doctrine, as unfolded in the *Amphitheatrum,* is a kind of Christian Yoga. The path of initiation begins with purification—the cleansing of the inner life—and with the realization that illumination is possible only to those who have purified their consciousness of all worldliness. The second step is a discipline for controlling the sensory perceptions and the attainment of an inner stillness, by which the human soul is rendered capable of receiving in meekness and humility the light of the Eternal. The true Stone of the philosopher is the transmuted and regenerated soul of man, which not only attains to its own perfection but can also bestow itself and its power upon other creatures. Thus the powers of the Christened soul become the Universal Medicine, by which all impure natures attain to health and eternal life in God through Christ. Thus the Word is made flesh by the mystery of art. The Hermetic Elixir is truth itself which, revealed in the human heart, perfects Nature. The adept is the "living

Stone" which, rejected by those who build in darkness, becomes, by the glory of God, the head of the corner.

Many of the alchemists, especially those of the previous century, emphasized the physical transmutation of metals, and spent their goods in the quest of temporal wealth. Khunrath does not appear to conflict with the testimony of the great Masters who preceded him, but he really emphasized a doctrine already cautiously circulated but frequently overlooked by avaricious gold makers. By this emphasis, he exposed the genuine proportions of the Albigensian heresy. These persecuted mystics taught "a way of divine union." The regeneration of man and his institutions could be attained only by a symbolic resurrection. The soul, when lifed up to its God by illumination, drew all other mundane things unto itself. Only the perfected man could rescue his mortal institutions. Thus, in the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, the consummation of the Great Work is symbolized by the resurrection of Christ, crowned with glory, who is depicted stepping from a sepulcher from which a heavy lid has been rolled away. The association of cabalism, alchemy, and transcendental magic with the emblems of Christian redemption did not originate in the 16th or 17th century, but was rescued at that time from the lost Gnosis. The esoteric tradition merely emerged as the operative key to a faith which had languished for centuries in a state of general benightedness.

The Mysteries always operated through two parallel streams of descent. The philosophical Orders emphasized the wisdom aspect of the Universal Mystery. The mystical Orders stressed the devotional aspect. Thus understanding and faith, identical in content, accomplished two works in one. Through understanding, the initiate overcame the illusion of worldliness, and through faith, he attained to participation in the substance of the Divine.

Jan (Johann) Baptista van Helmont

To the modern encyclopedists, the character of Jan Baptista van Helmont suggests a mild form of schizophrenia or dual personality. On the one hand, he was a progressive Humanist, touched by the new order of learning cultivated by Francis Bacon; and on the other hand, he was a supernaturalist, a mystic, and alchemist, with a pronounced fondness for the cosmical and microcosmical speculations of Paracelsus. Under such conditions, it has seemed the wiser course to acknowledge that he was the first to distinguish gases from natural atmosphere, and to credit him with the invention of the word *gas,* suggested by the Greek *chaos,* to signify these tenuous substances.

Van Helmont was born of a noble family in Brabant in 1557. He was a lecturer on physics in the university at seventeen, and a doctor of medicine at twenty-two. By the time he secured his doctorate, he was familiar with the theory and practice of medicine from Hippocrates to Avicenna. Although a licensed physician, he was less inclined toward practice than toward theory, and devoted most of his time and means to research. After ten years of devoted but unsuccessful experimentation, he came upon a wandering Paracelsian chemist (Hermetic initiate?), through whom he gained certain choice secrets of the alchemic art.

Convinced that he possessed important keys to chemical analysis, van Helmont retired to a castle near Brussels, where he lived in almost complete retirement. He only ventured forth to minister to his sick neighbors, whom he treated without charge. He declined court appointments, and lived in seclusion and scholarship till his death, which occured in 1644. The writings of van Helmont reveal familiarity with the best classical authors and, at the same time, much reflection and original thinking. His character was above re-

—From *Ausgang der Artznen-Kunst*

JAN (JOHANN) BAPTISTA VAN HELMONT

proach, and he was untouched by the vices and corruptions of his day. He enjoyed the admiration and respect of his more enlightened contemporaries, but had few intimates.

About 1609, van Helmont married Margaret van Ranst, a woman of quality and wealth. Apparently the marriage was successful and they remained devoted throughout life. As van Helmont rejected and exposed certain follies of the Galenists, his success in treating obscure ailments and his contributions to the literature of medicine soon aroused the animosity of both the Church and the university. In 1621, he was incautious enough to publish a treatise on the curing of wounds by magnetism and sympathy. In this work, he opposed the conclusions of the Jesuit writer, Johannes Roberti, who insisted that these cures were the work of the devil. Naturally, van Helmont was immediately suspected of heretical ideas. A recent biographer summarizes the situation which developed, thus: "As a matter of fact, van Helmont was the last man who could justly be accused of heresy. He was a pious and devout catholic, and from a modern point of view is, indeed, open to criticism for having treated the dogmas of the Church with too great deference. Thus, in one place in his works, for instance, he refused to speak of an earthquake as a movement of the earth, because the Church taught that the earth was immobile."*

His enemies continued to press the charge of heresy and, supported by reactionary medical and theological leaders, succeeded in having van Helmont arrested in 1634. The Holy Inquisition of Spain condemned certain propositions in his books, his manuscripts and papers were confiscated, and he was imprisoned in the convent of the Friars Minor. This was the least of the physician's misfortunes, however, for he was released after two weeks by posting a very large bail, said to have been supplied by his father-in-law. He was then permitted to serve his term in his own house. The larger tragedy was the sickness of his two older sons.

*See *Johannes Baptista van Helmont*, by Stanley Redgrove (London, 1922).

They were placed in the hospital at Vilvorde, with the promise that they would be treated with their father's remedies. Once the boys were in the hospital, however, the nuns refused to keep their word and treated the patients with the orthodox Galenical remedies; and as a consequence, both boys died.

In his autobiographical notes, van Helmont acknowledged that he had met one of the alchemical adepts who had given him a small amount of the "powder of projection." With this material, he transmuted nine ounces of quicksilver into pure gold. In *De Vita Eterna,* the physician commits himself completely to the alchemistical tradition: "I have seen and I have touched the philosophers' stone more than once; the color of it was like saffron in powder, but heavy and shining like pounded glass." He further states that he personally performed operations of transmutation many times, even in the presence of a large company. He acknowledges acquaintance with a master artist, who possessed enough of the "red stone" to make gold to the weight of two hundred thousand pounds.

These references and many others have proved most annoying to those condemning the principles of alchemy. Van Helmont was a man of large learning, and it is impossible to dismiss his remarks as the boastings of an impostor. Although the references are veiled, we must also conclude that van Helmont possessed clairvoyant faculties. In his treatise, *The Image of God,** the physician describes one of his mystical experiences. He explains that after long contemplation he chanced into a calm sleep "beyond the limits of reason." After thirteen years, he attained the "Sabbath of tranquillity." He beheld his own soul, or interior nature. There was a transcendent light "in the

*In *A Ternary of Paradoxes,* translated by Walter Charleston (London, 1650).

figure of a man, whose whole was homogeneous, actively discerning, a substance spiritual, crystalline, and lucent by its own native splendor." The light was so brilliant that it was difficult to discern anything within it except a cortex, or shrine. Van Helmont evidently saw the magnetic field of the human body by what he called "an intellectual vision in the mind," for he stated definitely that had the eye of the body beheld so resplendent an object, it would have been blinded. The physician described other visions, mostly symbolical, and indicated under appropriate figures his initiation into Esoteric Schools.

In one of his dreams, van Helmont beheld "the vaults of Nature." He seemed to see Galen with a tiny lamp enter the vaults and, stumbling, almost fall over the threshold. Later Paracelsus, bearing a great torch, entered the darkened chambers, using a thread, like that of Ariadne, that he might be able to retrace his steps. Paracelsus, unfortunately, filled the vaults with fumes from the smoke of his torch. Van Helmont himself then attempted to explore the mysterious rooms with his own small lantern, and proceeding according to the rules of caution "there saw far other things than the foregoing company of Ancestors had described." The writings of this great chemist deserve much more consideration than they have yet received. He was not only a pioneer in the sciences, but was also one of the outstanding mystical philosophers of the modern world.

Michael Sendivogius

The life and adventures of the Moravian adept, Michael Sendivogius, have been the subject of numerous accounts, mostly derogatory. He was the disciple of the Scottish adept, Alexander Sethon. The tragedy of Sethon's life indicates clearly why it was necessary for the alchemistical philosophers to circulate their doctrines with extreme

secrecy. He was imprisoned by Christian II, the Elector of Saxony, and subjected to every torture that covetousness and cruelty could suggest. He was pierced with pointed iron, scorched with molten lead, burned with fire, beaten with rods, and racked from head to foot; yet his constant state never forsook him, and he refused to betray his God-given knowledge.*

Sendivogius, learning of Sethon's plight, sold his house to raise the necessary money, and settled himself in Dresden in the vicinity of the prison. Gaining the favor of several officials with gifts and bribes, he was able to release Sethon, and carried him from the prison in his arms, for the older man was unable to walk. They escaped in a post chaise. On his deathbed two years later, Sethon revealed his knowledge to Sendivogius, and presented his rescuer with a certain amount of the powder of transmutation.

Sendivogius in his turn, known to possess what covetous princes regarded as a formula of limitless material wealth, was forced to flee from place to place. He was imprisoned on several occasions, and once freed himself by cutting an iron bar from the window of his dungeon and making a rope of his own garments. He changed clothes with a servant, and concealed his formulas and materials in the step of his carriage, with one of his lackeys dressed to impersonate him sitting inside. Sendivogius died in Parma in 1646 at the age of eighty-four years, having been Councilor of State to four emperors. Most biographers have assumed that his entire fame depended upon the powder of projection which had been given to him by Sethon, and that when this was exhausted, he lacked the knowledge to provide himself with more.

There is an account that Sendivogius was visited in his castle on the frontiers of Poland and Silesia by two stran-

*See *Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers* (London, 1888).

gers, one young and the other old. They presented him with a letter bearing twelve seals. At length persuaded to open the letter, he learned that they were a deputation from the Society of the Rosy Cross which wished to initiate him. He is said to have declined the invitation, but the report is incomplete; and in light of other matters, the popular opinion may require revision.

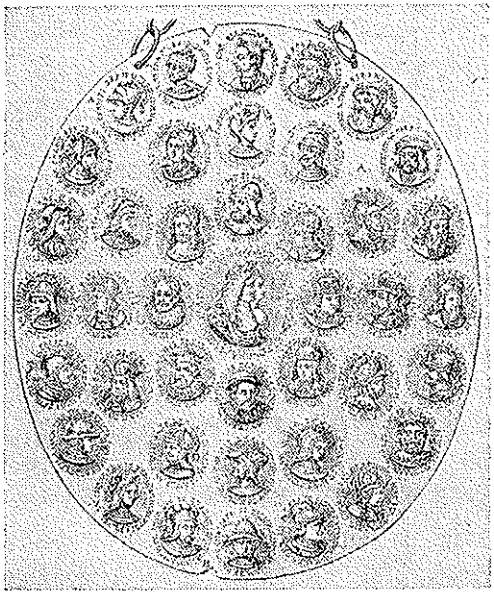
When Elias the Artist recommended to Helvetius that he should study the works of Sendivogius, it seems strange that the writing of this highly-controversial character should have been so emphasized. Perhaps there is more to this than meets the eye. The manuscript collection of Dr. Sigismund Bacstrom includes *Letters of Michael Sendivogius to the Rosey Crusian Society.* We are not able to learn that this remarkable correspondence has ever been published. Dr. Bacstrom notes that he secured access to a manuscript copy of these letters, which had been made by Dr. Sibly in 1791.

Ebenezer Sibly gained some reputation as an astrologer, and dabbled extensively in transcendentalism, leaving quite a trail of manuscript copies of old and rare works. He may have had access to a collection of tracts by Sendivogius published in 1691, which dealt with a secret Cabalistic Society, including correspondence on the subject. Bacstrom describes Dr. Sibly's translation as "barbarous." Enough remains, however, to indicate that Sendivogius was a member of a functioning Fraternity. In the first letter, he extends greetings to a most honored friend and "most worthy companion of the Society of Unknown Philosophers." He refers to the patron of the new member, and notes that a plan is under way to enlarge the Society throughout France. He therefore sends, as requested, a Latin copy of the statutes of his Society in strict confidence. He then agrees to instruct the new member in the theoretical and practical aspects of alchemy.

There are, in all, fifty-four letters, dated between February 7, 1646 and January 18, 1646-7. They were all written from Brussels, apparently in the last year of the life of Sendivogius. At the conclusion is a short section titled "The Hieroglyphical Seal of the Society of Unknown Philosophers." This is accompanied by four circular figures, which are nothing more than exact copies of the designs appearing in early editions of Jakob Boehme's writings. There is nothing to indicate the authority by which Bacstrom included these symbols. We shall later have further reference to the Society of the Unknown Philosophers, which was one of the early forms of the Royal Society. In his correspondence, Robert Boyle mentions this Society of Unknown Philosophers, whose meetings he was invited to attend. Again we are in the presence of an interlocking directorate of European intellectuals, whose paths cross at odd angles.

We should remember that most works relating to the esoteric tradition in Europe were written by adversaries or skeptics. This can only mean a general disregard for subtleties and overtones. For example, in his *Mundus Subterraneus,* the illustrious German Jesuit Father, Athanasius Kircher, writing in 1678, refers to a transmutation of metals which took place in his presence. The Brothers of the Rose Cross are drawn into this episode. Father Kircher was visited by an unknown man who made gold in his presence. The visitor refused any reward, described himself as a traveler, and retired to his inn. The next day he had vanished, bag and baggage. Kircher was so intrigued that he attempted to repeat the experiment, but failed utterly, and wasted a considerable part of his worldly goods in the experiment. The pious Jesuit concluded that his unknown guest was a devil seeking to deceive men by the lust of riches. He was only saved by the kindly assistance of his confessor.

An anonymous alchemist, who was called the Adept Merchant of Lubec, performed a transmutation before Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, in Pomerania about the year 1620. The gold so-produced was coined in medals



—From *In the Pronaos of the Temple of Wisdom*, by Franz Hartmann

THE MEDAL OF COUNT LEOPOLD HOFFMAN

This medal, long-preserved in the Imperial treasure chamber in Vienna, was partly transformed into gold by Wenzel Seiler, a monk of the Order of St. Augustine. About one third of the upper part of the medal remains silver, and the notches in the edge were made in 1883 to test the metals.

bearing the king's effigy, with Mercury and Venus on the reverse. The Adept Merchant did not appear rich, and he engaged in no business which brought him a profit, yet a great fortune was found in his house after his death.

In the early years of the 18th century, a gentleman presented himself to the King of Prussia at Berlin, and promised to communicate the secret of the transmuting of metals. The king desired to see proof, and the operation was performed in his presence with all precautions against imposition. The projection was completely successful.

A transmutation took place at Dresden before Frederick Augustus about the year 1715. An apothecary's apprentice had befriended a sick and unknown traveler. This wandering adept, out of gratitude, gave the youth a small amount of the powder of projection to insure his future security. The vanity of the apprentice nearly cost him his life, but he escaped death by professing the secret of making a delftware equal to china. The amateur alchemist succeeded, and laid the foundation of the famous Dresden manufacturies.

Eugenius Philalethes

There was little to indicate that Thomas Vaughan would rise to distinction in the secret sciences. He was born in a farmhouse in Llansaintffraid in Wales, educated at Jesus College, Oxford, graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. He was ordained by the Bishop of St. David's, and received the living of St. Bridget's in his native town. He jogged along as rector of his parish until he was unfortunate enough to be on the losing side of the second civil war, which ended with the execution of Charles I. Vaughan was ousted for several offenses, of which peculiarities of character were the lesser, and royalist persuasions the greater. He found asylum at Oxford, but traveled frequently to London, and seems to have visited Gray's Inn on occasion. In September 1651, he married a lady named Rebecca, to whom he was deeply devoted until her death in 1658.

The notebook of Thomas Vaughan contains sufficient personal material to show that he was essentially a mystic

—From *Chymica Vannus*, (Amsterdam, 1666)

The lower compartment of this figure shows five philosophers within a band representing the mystic tie of initiation.

rather than a chemical philosopher. He reports occasions on which his wife appeared to him after her death, and

implies that the door of the Mysteries opened for him during the early years of his marriage. The tone of the diary can be gathered from an entry made after Vaughan received in a vision what he believed might be an intimation of his own death: "Great is the love and goodness of my God and most happy shall I be in this interpretation if I may meet her [Rebecca had died a few weeks previously] again so soon and begin the heavenly and eternal life with her, in the very same month wherein we began the earthly: which I beseech my good God to grant us for his dear Son and our Saviour's sake, Christ Jesus. Amen!"

It seems advisable to mention here a remarkable book, *Chymica Vannus,* associated with Vaughan on somewhat uncertain grounds. Caillet attributes the *Chymica Vannus* to him, in his *Manuel Bibliographique.* The French transcendentalist, Stanislas de Guaita, describes the book as a very mysterious work on alchemy and mystical philosophies, published in 1666 by the Brothers of the Rose Cross. He adds that in the catalogue of *Bibliotheque* of the Abbe Sepher, the *Chymica Vannus* is definitely attributed to Philalethes, Grand Master of the Rose Cross.

Chymica Vannus is illustrated with curious symbols, the frontispiece being in the form of the cross of the adepts—a maltese cross within a circle ornamented with inscriptions. In one remarkable plate, reproduced herewith, the philosophic school is represented by five men in classical costume, standing within a band or circle, clearly indicating the "mystic tie." The entire work binds the speculations of the 17th-century Society of the Unknown Philosophers with the great classical Greek and Latin schools of initiation.

Most biographers assume that Vaughan died childless, but there is a report or legend that he had a son. This uncertainty resulted in a complication almost unique in its

field. In connection with the confusion over a possible issue, we must advance the case of Diana Vaughan.

This lady claimed to be a direct descendant of Thomas Vaughan, the Welsh adept. Miss Vaughan published extensive memoirs, concerned principally with expose and defamation of character. Her literary style has been described as not exactly captivating. Her productions included a life of Thomas Vaughan based upon secret family records. Her approach is reminiscent of the completely delightful biography of Shakespeare, fabricated by that gifted young forger, William Henry Ireland. There is one difference, however. There was no maliciousness in Ireland's mind; whereas Miss Vaughan seems to have been motivated by a devout desire to destroy the reputation of honorable and distinguished persons.

Diana of the Palladians (if we may create the title) was dedicated to the discovery of Satanism in outstanding religious, philosophical, and fraternal organizations of the 19th century, with the exception of the church which she had recently joined by conversion. She made a magnificent muddle involving Freemasonry, various mystical groups, and the 19th-century Rosicrucian-Masonic auxiliaries. She accused the great Freemasonic scholar, General Albert Pike, of being the secret head of a cult of devil worshipers, and that venerable old gentleman, Dr. W. Wynn Westcott, a prominent Mason and Supreme Magus of the English Rosicrucian Society, of being the chief Luciferian of the British Isles. She also "discovered" that the skull of Jacques De Molay, the martyred Grand Master of the Knights Templars, was being preserved in Charleston, South Carolina, to inspire later-day worshipers of Baphomet.

Together with Leo Taxil (the pseudonym of M. Gabriel Jogand-Pages), a formidable adversary of Freemasonry, and several others less eminent, Diana Vaughan circulated

a quantity of information and misinformation which must be examined with some thoughtfulness. The best survey of this rather appalling situation is contained in *Devil-Worship in France,* an unfortunate title which obscures the scope of the work, by Arthur Edward Waite (London, 1896). While Mr. Waite is rightfully indignant, he seems to have made the mistake of being correct in generals and incorrect in a number of particulars. One of his comments, in which he attempts to refute the Vaughan-Taxil anti-Masonic conspiracy, is indicative of other observations equally faulty. He writes: "I can find no Mason, of what grade or rite soever, who has ever heard of Pike's *Sephar d'Hebarim,* his book called *Apadno,* or lectures in which he imparted extracts unacknowledged from Eliphas Levi." He then implies that these works do not exist. As a Masonic historian and scholar, Mr. Waite should have known better.

Some years ago I secured a copy of *Sephar H'Debarim* (mispelled in Waite's quotation), by Albert Pike. An extremely-limited edition of this rare and curious work was published anonymously. Laid in is a letter from the custodian of books of the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A., dated May 1, 1880, accompanying an errata slip in which Pike adds certain material to his text. The *Sephar H'Debarim,* or *The Book of the Words,* explains and defines terms used in the higher grades of Freemasonry, and the ethical implications are above reproach. Also, any consideration of the *Liturgies* and *Legendas* of the Scottish Rite prepared by Pike will prove that he was deeply indebted to Eliphas Levi. I am not acquainted with the book by this author titled *Apadno,* but considering the quantity of unpublished manuscripts conserved in the House of the Temple, it is quite possible that the work exists. This would seem to indicate that the tirades of Monsieur

Taxil and Miss Vaughan contain material of interest, if the facts can be divided from the miserable interpretations.

Incidentally, the *Sephar H'Debarim* opens with extensive extracts from the preface of a book titled *Long-Livers,* published in London in 1732. *Long-Livers* opens with the following greeting: "To the Grand Master, Masters, Wardens and Brethren of the Most Ancient and Most Honourable Fraternity of the Free Masons of Great Britain and Ireland, Brother Eugenius Philalethes Sendeth Greeting." The author of this preface cannot be identified with certainty, for the reason that he signs his remarks at the end, Eugenius Philalethes, Jun., F.R.S., March 1, 1721. The *junior* implies that he is not the original bearer of this pseudonym.

According to the Diana Vaughan-Leo Taxil account, the Hermetic adept, Thomas Vaughan, was born in 1612; reached London, and was initiated into the lower grade of the Rosicrucian Fraternity by Robert Fludd in 1636, and received from him a letter of introduction to the Grand Master, Johann Valentin Andreae, which he took to Stuttgart and presented a few months later. Vaughan returned to London and was present at the death of Robert Fludd in 1637. About 1640, he was advanced in the Rosicrucian Fraternity to the grade *Adeptus Minor* by Amos Komenski (Comenius), the same year that Elias Ashmole entered the Order. Vaughan presided over a Rosicrucian assembly, at which Ashmole was present, in 1644, and became Grand Master of the Rosicrucians in 1654. In 1667, he converted Helvetius, the celebrated physician of The Hague, who in turn became the head of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Vaughan also made two visits to America, published a number of works, edited others, and wrote *The Open Entrance to the Closed Palace of the King.* He departed from this vale of tears in 1678.

Although Waite pronounces the entire narrative to be a gross and planned imposture, we may wonder if emotion did not sway his judgment. Certainly some of the elements of the story were in circulation long before the advent of the 19th-century recension of the Luciferians. Our main problem is an effort to determine the place of Thomas Vaughan, tentatively identified with Eugenius Philalethes, in the Rosicrucian controversy. In this project, we cannot permit ourselves to be unduly influenced by the weight of traditional authorities. It is generally believed that the twin boys, Thomas Vaughan, the Hermetist, and Henry Vaughan, the mystical poet, were born in 1621 or 1622, although no register of births existed for the district at that time.

Mr. Waite* is satisfied that the data recorded in *Athenae Oxonienses* is approximately correct. He considers this an important factor in discrediting the account given by Diana Vaughan. But let us look a little further. Dr. John Henry Cohausen, a German physician, left several literary landmarks indicating that he was a profound student of mystic alchemy. He was born in Heldesheim in Hanover, 1675, and died in 1750. Many substantial sources, including the Bibliotheque Nationale, have identified him as the anonymous author of *Hermippus Redivivus,* or *The Sage's Triumph Over Old Age and the Grave.* This is a most unusual book, the writer of which concealed carefully his large learning in the Hermetic tradition.

Dr. Cohausen refers to the English alchemistical artist, who disguised himself under the name of Eugenius Philalethes, as one of the most candid writers on alchemy. There is reference to the occasion when Philalethes attempted to sell a quantity of fine silver. The silversmith immediately told him that the ore had never come from the earth, but was the product of art. The embarrassed alchemist

*See *The Works of Thomas Vaughan.*

hastily retired, leaving the silversmith in possession of the valuable metal.

To quote Dr. Cohausen: "This famous man, who certainly was an adept, if ever there was one, led a wandering kind of life, and fell often into great dangers, merely from his possessing this great secret. He was born, as we learn from his writings, about the year 1612, and what is the strangest part of his history, he is believed by those of his Fraternity, to be yet living, and a person of great credit in Nuremberg, affirms, that he conversed with him but a few years ago.* Nay, it is further asserted by all the Lovers of Hermetic Philosophy, that this very Philalethes, is the President of the Illuminated in Europe, and that he constantly sits as such in all their annual meetings."

Here the date 1612 is reported by a working alchemist almost contemporary with Vaughan, and we also learn from him that Vaughan was the head of the European Hermetists, and still alive at a great age. Mr. Waite gets himself into further complications in his biographical preface to *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*. Remember, Thomas Vaughan is supposed to have died in 1665; whereas the debated account of the Taxil contingency gives the date as 1678. The following ruminations of Mr. Waite are stimulating: "I must confess that imagination is disposed, on the other hand, to speculate whether Vaughan really died in 1665, whether he did not change his local habitation, adopting another pseudonym, as he had done once previously. A certain romantic coloring is reflected on such a notion by the fact that nothing was issued under the style of Eirenaeus Philalethes until Eugenius had been settled in his grave at Albury, according to rumor."

We now find the situation further confused by another obscure figure, who published important alchemical writings

*Cohansen wrote about 1720.

isted in several parts of Europe, and more than one suspected adept has disappeared into these secret and holy houses.

John Frederick Helvetius

In 1667, John Frederick Helvetius, at that time practicing medicine in The Hague, published a short alchemical tract which he titled *Vitulus Aureus,* or *The Golden Calf.* Helvetius, who has been seriously slighted by the biographers, was physician to the Prince of Orange, and Caillet suggests that his true name was Schweitzer. He was born about 1625, and died in Holland in 1709. There is an early portrait of this learned doctor which presents him as a puritanical-looking person, definitely not handsome, but with the air of a man of solid religious principles.

Dr. Helvetius appears to be the only student of alchemy to record a personal visit from Elias the Artist, and it is on this account that the good doctor is most frequently mentioned. The circumstances are so extraordinary and the report is so evidently sincere as to require detailed examination. Dr. Ferdinand Maack has compiled a list of references to Elias the Artist which appeared in alchemical writings between 1750 and 1780.*

Dr. Maack found no reference to Elias the Artist prior to Paracelsus. After him, Alexander von Suchten and Basil Valentine mention this Elias who is to come. In one place, Paracelsus, speaking of vitriol, adds: "What is small and humble, God has revealed, but the more important is still in the dark and shall likely remain so until the arrival of Elias Artista." There is also a prophetic statement in the same writings: "One shall come after me whose splendor is not yet in this life, and who shall reveal much." In the section on the "Physical Tincture," Paracelsus dwells at some length on the same theme: "Nothing is concealed that

*See *Elias Artista Redivivus* (Berlin, 1913).

shall not be revealed. There are many more secrets concerning the transmutation, though they are little known, for if they are revealed to someone their fame is not immediately common. With this art, the Lord bestows the wisdom to keep it secret until the advent of Elias Artista. Then shall be revealed what has been concealed."

Elias the Artist (Helias Artista) appears with sufficient frequency in the first cycle of Rosicrucian literature to deserve some consideration. He will be mentioned again later in this work, and his place in the descent of the esoteric tradition further considered. This Elias is Elijah, the prophet of Tishpeh, who was fed by ravens. Most important, he ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire, leaving his mantle to Elisha. He was associated with miracles and magic, and he emerges in early Jewish folklore as a culture hero. Like all such heroes, he takes on the attributes of adeptship. Julius Wellhausen, the German Biblical scholar, wrote of Elijah: "In solitary grandeur did this prophet tower conspicuously over his time; legend, and not history, could alone preserve the memory of his figure."*

What better symbol could be advanced to conceal the proportions of the Hermetic adept than the dim, uncertain shadow of the magician-prophet who walked with God without the mystery of death? A work attributed to Helias Artista on the transformation of metals appeared in 1612, but the later writers appear to be considerably indebted to the brief reference in the works of Paracelsus. Albert Calliet notes of this Hermetic Elias: "This person is not always a disguised author as one could believe. In general he is believed to be the reincarnation of the prophet Elijah (prophesied by the Brothers of the Rosy Cross), who, as we know, did not die but ascended to heaven in a

*See *History of Israel.*

chariot of fire. This reincarnation has been the subject of numerous works of alchemy."

It appears to me from the treatment of the subject that a reappearance rather than a reincarnation is implied. Elijah, carried into the presence of the mystery of God, was to reappear at a certain time accompanied by signs and wonders. It was the burden of the Rosicrucian *Manifestoes* that the hour of the Universal Reformation had struck. There were portents in the heavens. The old prophecies were fulfilled, and the coming of Elias the Artist might reasonably be expected. Thus, Elias appears as the personification of the esoteric tradition and its adepts.

References to Elias the Artist divide into two definite groupings. According to one, he is the personification of a time and a circumstance—"a symbol of the ripeness of an age." He is the great day to come when all secrets shall be brought to light, "and things now rooting in the dark earth shall come forth to full growth and flower and bear a treasure, which is for the healing of the nations." According to the other, Elias is a definite person, and Paracelsus seems to take this attitude when he says that Elias "is not yet in this life." Elias thus becomes a John the Baptist, heralding the advent of the golden age. "This Elias Artista shall restore the true spagyric medicine of the old Egyptian philosophy which was lost over a thousand years. He shall bring it with him and show it to the world."*

Dr. Glauber (1604-1668) enriched the sciences with several original discoveries, the most popular of which was a sodium sulphate ($Na_2SO_4 . 10\,H_2O$), a cathartic, often called Glauber's salt in his honor. Glauber's devotion to his salt was as devout as was Bishop Berkeley's affection for his tar water. Even Elias the Artist be-

*Digested from the writings of Johann Rudolf Glauber.

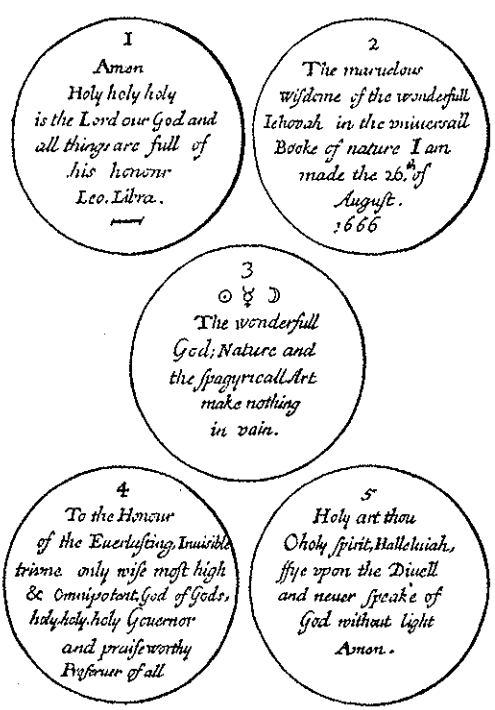
comes involved in this miraculous remedy. Glauber's reasoning is most ingenious: "If you transpose the letters of Elias, they make the word *salia,* also out of the word Elisa you can make *salia.* These two words signify . . . that to the philosophers Elias Artista means the uncommon, and to the world still unknown, salia, through which great and unbelievable things can be accomplished. When the secrets of the salia are someday known to the world, then without doubt great changes will take place in the world. Great things shall be accomplished through that to the world unknown Salia Artis in Philosophia, Alchemia, and Medicina Secretiori. In the *Turba Philosophorus* it is clearly indicated that Elias Artista is to be considered as the Sal Artist."

It has been said that Glauber belonged to that group which was breaking away from the spiritual side of alchemy. To him, and to most who came after, alchemical symbolism was merely a blind to conceal the working principles of physical chemistry. His interpretation of Elias Artista is distinctly in the spirit of the moderns.

On the 27th day of December 1666, a stranger knocked at the door of the house of Johann Frederick Helvetius. The doctor described his visitor as a small slender man with a long, somewhat-scarred face, straight black hair, clean-shaven, and appearently in his middle forties. This "certain man" wore the plain, simple dress of a rustic, and particular mention is made of his muddy boots.* Dr. Hel-

*One of the most extraordinary monuments of alchemy is the *Rotulum Hierogyphicum Pantarvae Philosophorum,* which was compiled by George Ripley (d. circa 1490) or one of his disciples. The "Scrowle" was designed to be used for the initiation or instruction of neophytes in the Hermetic arts. Examples of this "Scrowle" are usually about twenty inches in width and twenty feet in length. They are elaborately colored and consist principally of a series of remarkable emblems. The "Scrowle" ends with a figure of the Hermetic adept, represented as a rustic reminiscent of a wandering Troubadour or jongleur. An engraved version of Ripley's figures was published by David Beuthers, guardian of the mint in Dresden, in his work, *Wahren Adepti, Universal und Particularia* (*True Adept, Universal and Particular,* Hamburg, 1718).

vetius was of the opinion that his visitor was a native of North Holland. The rustic-looking person, after a most civil salutation, chided the doctor for a tract which he had



—From *The Philosophical Epitaph*

THE FIVE GOLDEN MEDALS OF ELIAS ARTISTA

These are exactly as described by Helvetius, except that the inscriptions have been translated into English.

written expressing certain doubts and reservations about the mysteries of higher alchemy.

In the privacy of Helvetius' study, the strange guest took from his belongings a cunningly-worked ivory box, which contained three large pieces of a substance resembling pale

yellow glass, explaining that with this amount of the Philosophers' Stone he could transmute twenty tons of base metals into pure gold. Later, from an inner breast pocket of his coat, the stranger drew forth five massive golden medals wrapped in a green silk handkerchief. These were inscribed with mystical words of adoration, and on one medal it said: "I am made the 26th of August, 1666."

In the house of Helvetius, this adept performed the transmutation, and presented his host with a tiny grain of the glasslike stone. With this minute particle, Helvetius himself transmuted metals in the presence of witnesses. He was visited on two occasions by the adept, who then disappeared from the community and was never seen again. In his *Vitulus Aureus,* Helvetius states definitely that the "rustic with the muddy boots" was Elias the Artist. A considerable part of the *Vitulus Aureus* is devoted to a dialogue between Helvetius and Elias. It is unnecessary for our purposes to publish the full account, so we will digest those parts in which Elias speaks of himself or of matters relevant.

The adept said that he was a close student of Nature's secret and delighted in the company of those of similar aim. He was not a physician, but a brass founder, who from earliest age had been devoted to the secret quality of metals. The Universal Medicine is called by the adepts "the great mystery of Nature." It does not lengthen life, but permits those who possess its power to complete the full term of their days, which is far longer than most realize. Elias kept the five medals in memory of his own Master, for he in turn had been instructed by a certain stranger, both in the philosophy and practice of the art. No torture or bribery could induce him to reveal the secret, yet he had given it to but one other person—an old, good man. Elias read but few books, but recommended the study of Sendivogius. He

then addressed Helvetius thus: "If you find grace in the sight of God, He will commission either me or some other adept of our art to unfold to you the right way of destroying the outward body of metals and seizing the inward vital life-giving soul."

Helvetius concludes the account of his experience in these words: "Thus I have unfolded to you the whole story from beginning to end. The gold I still retain in my possession, but I cannot tell you what has become of the Artist Elias. Before he left me, on the last day of our friendly intercourse, he told me that he was on the point of undertaking a journey to the Holy Land. May the Holy Angels of God watch over him wherever he is, and long preserve him as a source of blessing to Christendom!"*

Bacstrom's diary extracted several formulas relating to antimony from the edition of the chemical writings of von Suchten published in Frankfurt in 1680. Included is a reference to an adept named Vieroort, who discussed the processes with Dr. Helvetius at The Hague. Dr. Helvetius is quoted as saying: "Elias Artista has confirmed me in the opinion of Paracelsus that by metals, through metals, and out of metals spiritualized and well purified the living Sophic gold or tincture for human and metallic bodies must be obtained." Bacstrom notes that Elias Artista personifies the spirit of life and the secret fire.

The unknown author of *Bibliopraphie Occulte* refers briefly to Elias Artista, the adept, as a great friend of Baron Emanuel Swedenborg. Elias deposited with Swedenborg more than three million francs worth of gold bars and ingots in the Bank of Hamburg, and the register of this bank

*The text of the *Vitulus Aureus is available in the Museum Hermeticum Reformatum*, etc., (Frankfurt, 1678), and in the English translation, *The Hermetic Museum Restored and Enlarged* (London, 1893). There is an early English translation in *A Philosophic Epitaph*, etc., published by W. C. Esq. (London, 1673). All these include reproductions of the medals.

has witness to the occurrence. So the mystery grows, and Elias the Artist remains the most spectacular of the elusive adepts of the Hermetic tradition.

The New Philosophy

It is said that the age of modern chemistry began with Robert Boyle (1626-1691). Boyle was born the year that Francis Bacon is reported to have died, and was intimately associated with the Royal Society, which was dedicated to the extension of Bacon's scientific concepts. Boyle was the seventh and youngest son of Richard, Earl of Cork, and was born at Lismore in Ireland. He received his academic education at the University of Leiden in Holland, and afterward traveled extensively in France, Switzerland, and Italy. He settled in the University of Oxford about 1657, devoting his attention to experimental philosophy and chemistry. He frequented the Society of Virtuosi, which met in the lodgings of Dr. John Wilkins. After the restoration of King Charles II, this Society was enlarged to form the Royal Society, which will be discussed in the next part of this work.

Boyle has been described as "the greatest promoter of the New Philosophy of any among them,"* referring in this instance to the members of the Royal Society. The disciples of modern chemistry like to assume that Boyle was emancipated from the chimera of alchemy and other superstitions which had dominated the speculations of his predecessors. The facts, however, scarcely support such conclusions, for this distinguished savant of the phlogistic theory was not only profoundly learned, but was also deeply devout. He was versed in Hebrew and other Oriental languages, and was a profound student of the Rabbinical writings. He was equally informed in the works of the

*See Fasti. Oxon., Vol. 2, by Wood, quoted by Bayle in his *General Dictionary.*

early Church Fathers, and has been called a true Master of the whole body of divinity. His capacities in mathematics, geography, navigation, history, and metalurgy are too well-known to require examination.

Dr. Peter Shaw* was fully persuaded that Boyle believed in the possibility of the Philosophers' Stone, and the illustrious Dr. Edmund Halley questioned Boyle directly on the subject. The chemist declared that though he thought the grand elixir very difficult to be obtained, yet he did not imagine it impossible. In the *Philosophical Transactions* for February 1676, there appeared an article by Boyle, titled "An Experimental Discourse of Quicksilver growing hot with gold." Referring to alchemical transmutations in this article, Boyle wrote: "Thro' God's blessing, my trials afforded me positive proof about the year 1652." Boyle's stand in the *Philosophical Transactions* resulted in a lengthy letter from Sir Isaac Newton to the secretary of the Royal Society. Newton was courteous but skeptical. "I question not," wrote Newton, "but that the great wisdom of the noble Author will sway him to high silence, till he shall be resolved of what consequence the thing may be, either by his own experience or the judgment of some others, that thoroughly understand what he speaks about; that is of a true Hermetick Philosopher, whose judgment (if there be any such) would be more to be regarded in this point, than that of all the world beside to the contrary. . . . "

Newton, a fellow member of the Royal Society, was himself deeply immersed in mystical speculations. The catalogue of his library indicates his taste for alchemy, cabalism, and even astrology. The first English edition of the *Fama* and the *Confessio* of the Rosy Cross, with marginal notes in Newton's autograph, was offered for sale by an English bookdealer a few years ago. It is only fair, therefore, to

*In the general preface to his *Abridgement of Mr. Boyle's Philosophical Works.*

bear in mind that the transition from alchemy to chemistry was neither rapid nor abrupt. The New Philosophy of Bacon intensified the interest in scientific methods, but was not responsible for the drift toward materialism which dominated higher learning in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The material advancements in science and the social and political changes affecting the minds of men gradually obscured the sublimer parts of the Hermetic tradition. Alchemy ceased as a dynamic force, and the art passed from public notice. Investigation will prove, however, that the genuine exponents of the "new method" were also proficient in the old method. With them a division was taking place in their own minds. Spiritual convictions were coming to be regarded as private matters, and scientific convictions as public concerns. Discretion dictated this policy. The exponents of the "new method" were most intolerant of earlier doctrines and concepts. To be convicted of mental sympathy for the esoteric tradition was to hazard reputation and estate. It seemed more prudent, therefore, to follow the example of old Bishop Synesius of Alexandria, who conformed openly with the prevailing opinions, but remained a philosopher in the private parts of his own mind.

The European adepts, fully aware of the rising tide of social changes, "altered the place of their habitation;" that is, the vehicle for the perpetuation of their several purposes. The mystical-chemical Societies slowly disintegrated as the initiates quietly withdrew their guidance and support. The sciences had been launched in a straight, if narrow, way. A new emergency was inevitable. Human society must be prepared to receive the impact of a vast scientific program of physical accomplishment and its consequences. Skill without sufficient ethics could launch a monster of Frankenstein upon an unregenerate mankind—hence, the press-

ing need for immediate reforms in religion, politics, and economics.

Mr. Boyle had the ease and security provided by an adequate fortune. He further simplified his life by taking residence with his sister, for whom he had a deep attachment and who relieved him of all responsibility for the management of his establishment. This sister, Catherine, Countess of Ranelaugh, was distinguished for her attainments and the generosity of her nature. It is said that she never engaged in any enterprise except for the good of others. Through her ministration, Boyle was able to pursue his researches with no personal interruptions for some forty years. For most scholars, however, the times were difficult and uncertain, and the advancement promised by science could not be generally enjoyed without a broad and deep program of social reformation.

The adept Fraternities, operating secretly both in Europe and in England, set up the machinery of what we shall call the Orders of Universal Reformation. Certain outstanding intellectuals, widely separated geographically, enjoyed a simultaneous change of mind. More correctly, we should say a simultaneous change, not of the substance, but of the direction of their thinking. Most of these ethical reformers had already gained distinction as alchemists and Hermetic philosophers. Many are known to have belonged to earlier Secret Societies. In their writings, the old symbols, emblems, and designs recur, but a new meaning is ascribed to each.

After about 1650, the literature of alchemy consists principally of reprints from earlier works or interpretations by those attempting to penetrate the obscure symbolism. After three hundred years, an interest in alchemical speculation has been revived by the findings of modern physicists and chemists. Sir William Ramsey, writing in 1904 on "Radium and Its Products," said: "If these hypotheses

[concerning the possibility of causing the atoms of ordinary elements to absorb energy] are just, then the transmutation of the elements no longer appears an idle dream. The philosophers' stone will have been discovered, and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that it may lead to that other goal of the philosophers of the dark ages—the *elixir vitae.*"*

The vindication of the Hermetic art is by no means unlikely. When this comes to pass, perhaps there will also be thoughtfulness for that high transmutation in the ethical sphere, which was the purpose of the Universal Reformation. Carl Jung has recognized that the symbols of alchemy are the characters of a language of the human unconscious. Through such figures, deep and abiding instincts and impulses rise to the surface of consciousness.

The opening years of the 17th century brought such an emergence. Deep mystical convictions pertaining to the eternal and internal nobility of man emerged through the ancient figures and emblems. The *Mutus Liber* (The Book Without Words) released a new degree of its secret meaning. The world moves. Men grow. Arts and sciences unfold. But the guardianship of the race must go on. Progress does not deny the old symbolism, nor does it exhaust the hidden meaning. The transmutation of metals prepared the way for the transmutation of man himself and all the institutions which he has devised. While physical chemists seek to bind the universe to the human need, the Hermetic adepts strive unceasingly to fit man to be a wise and faithful steward in the House of the Universal Mystery.

*See *Alchemy, Ancient and Modern*, by H. Stanley Redgrove.

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