

SPECULUM ALCHYMIÆ;

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THE TRUE

GLASS

OF

ALCHEMY.

WRITTEN

By ROGER BACON.

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**Speculum Alchymiae,  
The true Glass of Alchemy  
by Roger Bacon.**

I Salute or greet unto thee, most dearly beloved, the Glass of Alchemy, which in my heart I have figured or Printed, and out of the Books of wise-Men have drawn, in the which is contained fully all that they have gathered to the Perfection of Alchemy, I do give it unto your Person, and in the which all things which are required to this Art be here gathered together, and those which be in divers places dispersed: I shall thus answer unto your Prudence and Wisdom, all things be created of the four Elements, and they be the Roots and matters of all things, and the diversity of things consists in three, that is to say, Colour, Taste and Smell. There is not to me but three viz. Diversities of Elements, diverse Proportions, diverse Decoctions, and diverse Mixtions. Wherefore if you will one Metalline Body transform into another, you must know the Nature of one contrary and of another in every diversity, and when you know this, then you may by Addition and Substraction, put to more of one Element, and the less of another, and seeth them together well or evil, and also to mix them together well or evil unto your own will and desire. And that may a Man do well in Metals if he might know without error, how to separate the Elements, that is to say, to reduce them to their first Matter and Root, which Root is Brimstone and Quicksilver or Sulphur and Mercury<sup>1</sup>, and then that is the Root or Matter nearest or nearer; but because the separation of Elements in Metals is difficult and hard, the Masters did seek how to get the Roots nearest without any labour, from Brimstone and Quicksilver, and of these they made their Separation of Elements, which they used, and said that only the Elements did cleave in Metals, and that strange Elements of other things, as the blood, Eggs and Hair, do not enter but by Virtue or by Commixtion of them, with the aforesaid Elements, drawn of the Spirits and Metalline Bodies; but because we cannot resolve or separate as Nature doth, for Nature separates without Apposition of any strange thing in the space of a thousand years, and we cannot live a thousand years, therefore if we will make this Separation we must find the cunning or knowledge by the which we may do it sooner; but this we cannot do by no ways except we do put unto them things diverse and contrarious, for by his contraries ought you to separate the Elements by our Knowledge and Mastery, therefore when two contrary things be mixed together one works in

another, and so makes him to give of his Complexion and Virtue, part thereof; for this cause you must first learn to know the Complexion and Properties of all things, before you do enterprise to make commixtion together in their proper Natures, and it is needful that you know the works of Nature which you intend to do, and how much and what everything doth give, of his Nature and Complexion, and how much, and what he lacks of another Complexion and Nature, by the means of the working which you do, and by the Nature of contrary things, which you do commix together, and if you do err in any of these, to know how much and in what; for if you know this, then you do know how to rectify anything of the World, and to reduce anything unto his first Matter or Complexion, or to any other thing according to your desire; then by the contrary, if you know not this you shall not enterprise to meddle, but by means of some things to attempt to make ingression or such like until you do know this, and this is in light or in light things, and the Philosophers do say that

*if any Man do know how to convert one Nature into another he knows all the whole Mastery*

: and Avicenna<sup>2</sup> doth say the same, that so it is, all your desire ought to be to this, for this which I have said be the beginnings or Roots of Alchemy Philosophical and Medicine. And without the Knowledge of these Roots (if you will do any work or Medicine, which is called the *Elixir* in this Art to transmute imperfect Bodies into *Sol* and *Lune*, of whatsoever the Medicine was in his Confection) you must think well of four things which I shall tell you.

The first is, that you do know how to prepare well all your things, and that you do know how to remove that which doth hurt most, and that which doth comfort your Intention, and that you know the sign when you have that which you desire to have, and that you know how to remove that which you ought to remove: For all that Man doth hath an end, and a certain Term, for according to Philosophers when Nature intends to destroy any thing, to generate another thing, worse or better, it intends to seek a certain degree which it doth not pass beyond and so stands, and then another thing prepare, does so provoke another special form which he had not before.

The second is, that your things prepare you do know to commix them well together, and that is of sundry and diverse things to make one Substance to be inseparable forever; for if you know not how to mix your things well and naturally, so that everything be destroyed, and so brought first unto

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<sup>1</sup> Symbol used in original text.

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<sup>2</sup> Avicenna (Abu Ali Sina, or Ibn Sina) (980-1037) author of *The Canon of Medicine (Al Qanun fi Tibb)*'.

their own primary being and proper species, and one new thing to be generated of them, it is worth nothing that you have done, and that you know the sign when your mixtion is completed.

The third is, that you know the certain proportion, that is, the certain quantity of such things as thou ought to mix together, and also to know by reason why it should be so, that thereby you may be sure to find the thing that you look for: By the quantities that you know to have mixed upon your melted Bodies, it will away at the last slowly or quickly how well so ever the things were prepared, without they were mixed together according to Knowledge and Nature you have lost all your Labour as much as the final complement doth contain, and that shall be well perceived in the Examination thereof, when the Body transmuted is put to Examination in Ashes or the Test, for there he will consume and waste away according as there was too much or too little of his Proportion at the first; but if the Proportions were rightly mixed according to Knowledge and Reason, then it shall not do so. Rasis<sup>3</sup> said,

*if thou know how to convert Lune into Sol, thou know the contrary,*

that is to say, *Sol* into *Lune*. But to know to do this, there is a certain Term and quantity hidden, which for to know you ought not a little to study, that is to say, you ought thereabout greatly to study, for Rasis said,

*that the wise-Men did never hide anything but quantity and weight,*

and we care not whether People do know it or no, for we have made and written our Books unto you that understand what we mean, and to our Sons and Children. And when you know that then may you well perceive that no Author or Book doth agree or accord with other in Weight and quantity, and therefore for lack of the Knowledge thereof rises a great error, and it is hidden for this Cause, that none but a wise-Man and learned may compass to accomplish the same, which doth all his things with Knowledge and Reason, of the subtle Knowledge of Natural things; for if it might be had otherwise, Men which do meddle without Knowledge and reason; but only through Foolish boldness might have come to the end, they would no more have cared for the Learning and Wisdom of wise-Men, than for Dogs, if that their own proper Industry and Wit could have helped them to have found or gotten it.

The fourth thing which you ought to consider, is the greatest Secret of all and mighty Wisdom, that is, that you know how to fortify your

Medicine and multiply his Virtue, and this is a work of great Prudence and Wisdom, and if you understand this last, one part of your Medicine will not only convert ten parts of any Body melted but a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, ten thousand thousand, and much more without end, according to the several Circulations you shall make. And this which I have now said if you do understand, it suffices you, and I have touched all things that is needful, and they which do understand those things, they know the Art and none other, and to speak of this Art is to speak by means as we have spoken, and to work the Art of Alchemy is to work as we have said, and to teach the Art is to teach as we have taught, and he that teaches any other teaches nothing, and he that works any otherwise works nothing. For who so desires this Art, if he do err in any of the aforesaid Articles he shall never come to good end, until he knows the foresaid Articles, and the wise-Man said that

*Glass purges Metalline Bodies Corrupt, and cleanses them*

: For Glass makes the Metalline Bodies of hard Fusion, soft in fusion, and this is a Secret. With salt Bodies are calcined and dryed, for salt doth cleanse the Bodies in as much as he dries up the Sulphur which is in them, by the which humidity they stink and be black and burnable, for the Bodies calcined is clean suffering the Fire without stinking, and this is a great Secret; but know you that it is spoken for another Secret, which I will not show here, nor yet will write of it, for it is the Secret of all Secrets; for by that Secret, when it is well and perfectly known, a Man may come to the Secrets of all other kinds, and of this Secret, I have shown you part, and if you know not that which rests, I will declare no more neither by Tongue nor Pen. Now is ended the Glass of Alchemy which I have given for his Name worthy the same, for in that you may when you will, behold, and see as in a Glass contained all the Articles pertaining to this Art, which you should desire of wise-Men, I believe that the Roots were never so gathered together as they be here, for the which, understand you, and bear it in Memory according to knowledge, and that you do both hide and open according to reason, and as it ought to be, and not to show it to every Rybald according to the lightness of the Mind, for then that shall be vile which now is precious. In all the aforesaid Articles I will make you Answer, if I have Life and Health, either by Mouth, Writing or Words, so that you shall understand it if God will, and thus ends the true Glass of Alchemy.

Unum continet in se Masculinum & Femininum ergò Hermophroditum. Duo continet Masculinum, Femininum & Spiritum, tres Corpus, Sol and Luna.

FINIS.

<sup>3</sup> Rhazes (Rasis, Latin. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya' al-Razi), 865-932, Persian physician. Author of '*Almansor*', '*The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*' and '*Liber continens*'.