



ALCHEMY REDISCOVERED AND RESTORED

With an account of the extraction of the seed of metals and the preparation of the medicinal elixir according to the practice of the hermetic Art and of the Alkahest of the Philosopher

By

Archibald Cockren

To Mrs. Meyer Sassoon

In Two Parts [[PART II](#)]

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There has been a modern myth woven around the author of this out of print and hard to find book. He has been reputed to have been highly successful in the Great Arcanum. For information check [Archibald Cockren's Alchemical Discoveries](#) at Adam McLean's [Virtual Alchemy Site](#) . This book the only one authored by him is well known to be a modern textbook of the Art stripped of its symbolism presented here for the first time in e-text. Scanned and prepared for your benefit by the Hermetics Esoteric and Occult Resources Site. Information on the book and the author can be obtained from Jean-Pascal Ruggiu's fascinating article "Rosicrucian Alchemy and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn" at the [Authentic Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn](#) website. There is a modern myth that Archibald Cockren is still alive immortalized by his elixirs, if this should be the case, and he should step forward, I would willingly remove this book from the website on any claims of copyright. The book in my possession was published by David McKay Company, Philadelphia with no date or mention of copyright (it was first published in 1941). It was very hard to find, I ordered my copy from a bookstore in South Africa after a very thorough search.

The wrap cover of the book contains the following summary: *"This book is almost unique as a study, but it is entirely unique in that it describes remarkable laboratory experiments into Alchemy, which have been carried out over a number of years and which have produced results of a tangible, definite and practical nature. The book begins with a precise historical account of the Great Arcanum, together with particulars of some of those adepts whose names and writings are known to all students of Alchemy. Then the dramatic story is told of how the spagyric art of the extraction of the vital essence or "seed" of metals by the identical processes discovered and perfected by Paracelsus, Basil Valentine, and other adepts, and used by them for curing diseases, was rediscovered. The preparation of medicinal elixirs from the seven metals, and the final crowning discovery of the Alkahest of the Philosophers, are also described. To all students of the occult, and also chemists and medical men, as well as those of an inquiring*

mind, this book will come as a significant revelation".

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PREFACE

The object of this book is to place before the reader in language as simple as possible the story of alchemy. Because the literature on this science has ever been an enigma to both the scientific and the lay mind, it is the earnest desire of the author to present it stripped of its symbolism, and to give some indication of its processes, its achievements, and its possibilities.

He wishes to show that this science is the Law operating behind all Manifestation in Man; Man that is in his entirety, physical, mental, and spiritual, and to demonstrate how it is bound up in the further evolution and unfoldment of the race, for without this understanding the vision of Man made perfect is impossible.

The following history of the alchemist's struggle towards attainment the writer places before his readers in the hope that they may find therein some guiding star to pilot them through the mists and storms of this physical existence and enable them to catch a glimpse of the Divine Plan for the unfolding to Man of the knowledge of his Divine Sonship, on that long journey back to the Divine Realization of his Unity with Life.

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'AUREUS' OR THE GOLDEN TRACTATE

THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION OF HERMES

THE SMARAGDINE TABLES OF HERMES TRISMEGISTUS

said to be found in the Valley of Ebron, after the Flood.

- 1. I speak not fiction, but what is certain and most true.*
- 2. What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below for performing the miracle of one thing.*
- 3. And as all things were produced from One by the Mediation of One, so all things are produced from this One thing by adaptation.*
- 4. Its father is the Sun, its mother was the Moon, the wind carried it in its belly, its nurse is the Earth.*
- 5. It is the cause of all perfection throughout the whole world.*
- 6. Its power is perfect if it be changed into the earth.*
- 7. Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with judgment.*
- 8. It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends again to earth, thus you will possess the glory of the whole World and all obscurity will fly away.*
- 9. This thing is the fortitude of all fortitude, because it overcomes all subtle things, and penetrates every solid thing.*
- 10. Thus were all things created.*
- 11. Thence proceed wonderful adaptations which are produced in this way.*
- 12. Therefore am I called Hermes Trismegistus, possessing the three parts of the philosophy of the whole World.*
- 13. What I had to say concerning the operation of the Sun is complete.*

FOREWORD

BY SIR DUDLEY BORRON MYERS, O.B.E.

Having been intimately associated with Archibald Cockren during the past ten years, and having long since learnt to place implicit confidence in his efficiency and reliability in all matters to which he has

devoted his many remarkable gifts and talents, it affords me real pleasure to write a few words by way of introduction to 'Alchemy Rediscovered and Restored.'

In this book he tells of the sensational work which he has accomplished in once more bringing to light, and to the service of humanity, secrets which baffled the majority of scientists of all ages, and which, for several centuries, have been buried in a grave of doubt and sceptical tradition. That this grave should at last have been opened, and that the real, albeit hidden secrets which it contained should now stand revealed and proclaimed, must undoubtedly be regarded as an epoch-making event.

I do not myself claim to have any scientific knowledge whatever, but seeing is believing, and I have been privileged to keep in close touch with the author's experiments from the very beginning. Not only have I seen the results achieved, but I, among many others, have been able to test and pay grateful tribute to the efficacy of the Elixirs produced by the alchemical process. These, one may venture to assert, cannot fail as they become better known to prove a very valuable addition to the remedies at present available to mankind.

There is no question of the claims which are put forward in this book being taken on trust. On the contrary they are open to the fullest examination. The proofs are there and they can safely be left to speak for themselves, in the light of the outcome of any investigations to which they may be subjected. >

Seeing the far-reaching importance of the author's researches and discoveries it is necessary that some account should be given of his career, and of those qualifications in the wide field of physiology which entitle him to consideration in questions of the treatment of human ailments.

After the necessary period of training he was, in 1904, certificated at the National Hospital for Paralysis and Epilepsy as fully qualified for all purposes of massage, remedial exercises, and electrical treatment. From this hospital he passed on to the staff of the Great Northern Central Hospital, where he remained for several years. From 1908 onwards, however, he was able to devote part of his time to the private practice in which he then for the first time established himself in the West End of London. This practice had necessarily to be given up during the War.

The years 1915 and 1916 found him in complete charge of all electrical, massage, manipulative, and remedial exercises at the Russian Hospital for British Officers in South Audley Street, London. This hospital, it may be stated, was opened by the Russian nobility resident in London, and was wholly maintained by Russian money. From there he passed on in a similar capacity (1917—18) to the Prisoners of War Hospital. He was at the same time attached to the Millbank Military Hospital. In 1918, he was transferred to the Australian Army, and was on the Peace Conference Staff of the Australian Prime Minister in 1919. Since then, that is to say for the past twenty years, he has been in permanent private practice in the West End of London.

For over twenty years he has been a keen student of the sciences of metallurgy, No-chemistry, and bacteriology, and it will thus be seen that in the claims he now advances in this book he writes with that measure of authority which a life devoted to the alleviation of suffering, and to the effective treatment of human ailments, undoubtedly confers on him.

It is given to few men to make such momentous discoveries as have rewarded his persistent work and patience. His work has, indeed, to my knowledge, often been pursued under conditions of great difficulty and disappointment. May what he has accomplished in the interests of science and of the human race bring him the reward which he deserves—the reward of general recognition and appreciation of the results achieved.

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DUDLEY B. MYERS.

PART I

HISTORICAL

CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS OF ALCHEMY

To most of us the word 'alchemy' calls up the picture of a medieval and slightly sinister laboratory in which an aged, black-robed wizard brooded over the crucibles and alembics that were to bring within his reach the Philosophers' Stone, and with that discovery the formula for the elixir of life and the transmutation of metals. But one can scarcely dismiss so lightly the science—or art, if you will—which won to its service the lifelong devotion of men of culture and attainment from every race and clime over a period of hundreds, or, indeed, thousands, of years, for the beginnings of alchemy are hidden in the mists of time. Such a science is something far more than an outlet for a few eccentric old men in their dotage.

What was the motive behind the constant strivings, the never-failing patience in the unravelling of the mysteries, the tenacity of purpose in the face of persecution and ridicule through the countless ages that led the alchemist to pursue undaunted his appointed way? Something far greater, surely, than a mere vainglorious desire to transmute the base metals into gold, or to brew a potion to prolong a little longer this earthly span, for the devotees of alchemy in the main cared little for these things. The accounts of their lives almost without exception lead us to believe that they were concerned with things spiritual rather than with things temporal. Rather were these men inspired by a vision, a vision of man made perfect, of man freed from disease and the limitations of warring faculties both mental and physical, standing as a god in the realization of a power that even at this very moment of time is lying hidden in the deeper strata of his consciousness, a vision of man made truly in the image and likeness of the one Divine Life in all its Perfection, Beauty, and Harmony.

To appreciate and understand these adepts' visions it is necessary to trace to some extent the history of their cult, so let us for a space step back into the past to catch a glimpse of these men, of their work and ideals, and more important still, of the possibilities that their life-work might bring to those who to-day are seeking for fuller knowledge and wider horizons.

References are to be found in the myths and legends of China. From a book written by Edward Chalmers Werner, a late member of the Chinese Government's Historiological Bureau, Peking, comes this quotation from old Chinese records:

'Chang Tao-Ling, the first Taoist pope, was born in A.D. 35 in the reign of the Emperor Kuang Wu Ti of the Han dynasty. His birthplace is variously given as the T'ien-mu Shan, "Eye of Heaven Mountain," in Lin-an-Hsien in Chekiang, and Feng-yang Eu in Anhui. He devoted himself wholly to study and meditation, declining all offers to enter the service of the State. He preferred to take up his abode in the mountains of Western China where he persevered in the study of alchemy and in cultivating the virtues of purity and mental abstraction. From the hands of Lao Tzu he received supernaturally a mystic treatise, by following the instructions in which he was successful in his search for the Elixir of Life.'

This reference demonstrates that alchemy was studied in China as early as the commencement of the Christian era, so that its origin must probably lie far back in Chinese history.

From China we must now travel to Egypt, whence alchemy as known in the West seems to have sprung. The great Egyptian adept king, named by the Greeks *Hermes Trismegistus*, is thought to have been the founder of the art. Reputed to have lived about 1900 B.C., he was highly celebrated for his wisdom and skill in the operation of nature, but of the works attributed to him only a few fragments escaped the destroying hand of the Emperor Diocletian in the third century A.D., namely, the Asclepian Dialogues and the Divine Poemanda. If we may judge from these fragments (both preserved in the Latin by Fianus and translated into English by Dr. Everard) it would seem to be of inestimable loss to the world that none of these works have survived in their entirety.

The famous Smaragdine Table of Hermes (Tabula Smaragdina) I have placed at the beginning of this book, for although it would be difficult to prove its origin, yet it still represents a good example of Hermetic phraseology. There have been various stories of the origin of the 'Tract, one being that the original emerald slab upon which the precepts were said to be inscribed in Phoenician characters was discovered in the tomb of Hermes by Alexander the Great. In the Berne edition (1545) of the *Summa Perfectionis* the Latin version is printed under the heading:

'The Emerald Tables of Hermes the Thrice Great concerning Chymistry, Translator unknown. The words of the Secrets of Hermes which were written on the Tablet of Emerald found between his hands in a dark cave wherein his body was discovered buried.'

An Arabic version of the text was discovered in a work ascribed to Jabir, which was probably made about the ninth century. In any case it must be one of the oldest alchemical fragments known, and that it is a piece of Hermetic teaching I have no doubt, as it corresponds to teaching in the Poemanda and 'Fragments of a Faith Forgotten' in relation to the teaching of the thrice-greatest Hermes. It also teaches the unity of matter and the truth that all form is a manifestation from one root, the Aether, which teaching corroborates the theory of our present-day scientists. This table, in conjunction with the *Tractatus Aureus* or Golden Treatise which I have inserted at the end of this book, is well worth reading, particularly in the light of my elucidation of the general alchemical symbolism. Unhappily, it is all that remains to us of the Egyptian sacred art.

The third century A.D. seems to have been a period when the science was widely practised, but it was also during this century, in the year 296, that Diocletian sought out and burnt all the Egyptian books on alchemy and the other occult sciences, and in so doing destroyed all evidence of progress made up to that date. In the fourth century *Zosimus the Panopolite* wrote his express treatise on 'The Divine Art of Making Gold and Silver,' and in the fifth *Morienus*, a hermit of Rome, left his native city and set out to seek the sage *Adfar*, a solitary adept whose fame had reached him from Alexandria. He found him, and after gaining his confidence became his disciple. After the death of his patron *Morienus* came into touch with King Calid, and a very attractive work purporting to be a dialogue between himself and the King is still extant under the name of *Morienus*. In this century *Cedrenus* also appeared, a magician who professed alchemy.

The next name of note, that of *Geber*, occurs in or about A.D. 750. Geber's true name was *Abou Moussah Djfar*—Al Sofi, or The Wise. Born at Houran in Mesopotamia, he is generally esteemed by adepts as the greatest of them all after Hermes. Of the five hundred treatises said to have been composed by him only three remain to posterity—'The Sum of the Perfect Magistry,' 'The Investigation of Perfection,' and his 'Testament.' It is to him, too, that we are indebted for the first mention of corrosive sublimate, red oxide of mercury and nitrate of silver. Skilfully indeed did Geber veil his discovery, for from his mysterious style of writing we derive the word 'geber' or gibberish, but those who have really understood Geber, his adept compeers, declare with one accord that he has declared the truth, albeit disguisedly, with great acuteness and precision.

Rhasis, another Arabian alchemist, became famous for his practical displays in the art of transmutation of base metals into gold.

In the tenth century *Al Farabi* enjoyed the reputation of being the most learned man of his age, and another great alchemist of this century was *Avicenna*, whose real name was Ebu Cinna. Born at Bokara in A.D. 980, he was the last of Egyptian Philosophers of note.

CHAPTER II

EARLY EUROPEAN ALCHEMISTS

About the period of the first Crusades alchemy shifted its centre to Spain, to which country it had been introduced by the Moors. In the twelfth century *Artephius* wrote 'The Art of Prolonging Human Life,' and is reported to have lived throughout a period of one thousand years. He himself affirms this:

'I, Artephius, having learnt all the art in the book of Hermes, was once as others, envious, but having now lived one thousand years or thereabouts (which thousand years have already passed over me since my nativity, by the grace of God alone, and the use of this admirable quintessence), as I have seen, through this long space of time, that men have been unable to perfect the same magistry on account of the obscurity of the words of the philosophers, moved by pity and good conscience, I have resolved, in these my last days, to publish in all sincerity and truly, so that men may have nothing more to desire concerning this work. I except one thing only, which is not lawful that I should write, because it can be revealed truly only by God, or by a master. Nevertheless, this likewise may be learned from this book, provided one be not stiff-necked and have a little experience.'

Of the thirteenth-century literature, a work called 'Tesero' was attributed to *Alphonso*, King of Castile in 1272: *William de Loris* wrote 'Le Roman de Rose' in about 1282, assisted by *Jean de Meung*, who also wrote 'The Remonstrance of Nature to the Wandering Alchemist,' and 'The Reply of the Alchemist to Nature.' *Peter d'Apona*, born near Padua in 1250, wrote several books on 'magic,' and was accused by the Inquisition of possessing seven spirits, each enclosed in a crystal vessel, who taught him the seven liberal arts and sciences. He died upon the rack.

Among other famous names appearing about this period is that of *Arnold de Villeneuve* or Villanova, whose most famous work is found in the 'Theatrum Chemicum.' He studied medicine in Paris, but was also a theologian and alchemist. Like his friend, Peter d'Apona, he was thought to obtain his knowledge from the devil and was charged by many with magical practices. Although he did not himself fall into the hands of the Inquisition, his books were condemned to be burnt in Tarragona by that body on account of their heretical content. For Villanova maintained that works of faith and charity were more acceptable in the eyes of God than the Sacrificial Mass!

The authority of *Albertus Magnns* (1234—1314) is undoubtedly to be respected, since he renounced all material advantages to devote the greater part of a long life to the study of philosophy in the seclusion of a cloister. When Albertus died, his fame descended to his 'sainted pupil' *Aquinas*, who in his 'Thesaurus Alchimae' to his friend the Abbot Reginald, speaks openly of the successes of Albertus and himself in the art of transmutation.

Raymond Lully is one of the alchemists about whose life there is so much conflicting evidence that it is practically certain that his name was used as a cover by a second adept either at the same or a later period. He was probably born in Majorca about 1235, and after a somewhat dissolute youth, he was induced, apparently by the tragic termination of an unsuccessful love affair, to turn his thoughts to religion. He became imbued with a burning desire to spread the gospel among the followers of Mohammed, and to this end devoted years to the study of Mohammedan writings, the better to refute the Moslem teachings. He travelled widely, not only in Europe, but in Africa and Asia, where his religious zeal nearly cost him his life on more than one occasion. He is said to have become acquainted with Arnold de Villanova and the Universal Science somewhat late in life, when his study of alchemy and the discovery of the Philosophers' Stone increased his former fame as a zealous Christian.

According to one story his reputation eventually reached *John Cremer*, Abbot of Westminster at the time, who after working at alchemy for thirty years, had still failed to achieve his aim, the Philosophers' Stone. Cremer therefore sought out Lully in Italy, and having gained his confidence, persuaded him to come to England, where he introduced him to Edward II. Lully, being a great champion of Christendom, agreed to transmute base metals into gold on condition that Edward carried on the Crusades with the money. He was given a room in the Tower for his work, and it is estimated that he transmuted 50,000 pounds worth of gold. After a time, however, Edward became avaricious,

and to compel Lully to carry on the work of transmutation made him prisoner, although with Cremer's aid he was able to escape from the Tower and return to the Continent. Records state that he lived to be one hundred and fifty years of age and was eventually killed by the Saracens in Asia. At that age he is reputed to have been able to run and jump like a young man.

The enormous output of writings attributed to Lully (they total about 486 treatises on a variety of subjects ranging from grammar and rhetoric to medicine and theology) also seems to suggest that the name Lully was merely a pseudonym.

It was about this time that the science fell into grave disrepute, for the alchemist's claim to transmute metals offered great possibilities to any rogue with sufficient plausibility and lack of scruple to exploit the credulity or greed of his fellow-men, and there proved to be no lack either of charlatans or victims. Rich merchants and others greedy for gain were induced to entrust to the alleged alchemists gold, silver, and precious stones—which they lost—in the hope of getting them multiplied, and Acts of Parliament were passed in England and Pope's Bulls issued over Christendom to forbid the practice of alchemy on pain of death, although Pope John XXII is said to have practised the art himself and to have enriched the public treasury by this means.

In the fourteenth century lived the two *Isaacs Hollandus*, father and son, Dutch adepts, who wrote 'De Triplici Ordinari Exiliris et Lapidis Theoria' and 'Mineralia Opera Sue de Lapide Philosophico.' The details of their operations on metals are the most explicit that have been given, and because of this very lucidity have been discounted. John Read, for instance, Professor of Chemistry, in his 'Prelude to Chemistry, an Outline of Alchemy,' dismisses the writing of the Hollandus pair in a few words, possibly because their clarity of detail led him to suspect a blind. Alas, how blind sometimes are our experts themselves

CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF NICHOLAS FLAMEL

In the whole history of alchemy surely one of the most interesting stories is that of Nicholas Flamel (1330-1418), the most successful and most celebrated of France's adepts, and I am accordingly giving in his own words the account of the discovery which proved to be the turning point in his life:

"I, Nicholas Flamel, Scrivener, living in Paris in the year of our Lord 1399 in the Notary Street, near St. James of the Boucherie, though I learned not much Latin, because of the poverty of my parents who, notwithstanding, were even by those who envy me most, accounted honest and good people: yet by the blessing of God I have not wanted an understanding of the books of the philosophers, but learned them and attained to a certain kind of knowledge, even of their hidden secrets. For which cause's sake, there shall not any moment of my life pass wherein, remembering this so vast good, I will not render thanks to this my good and gracious God. After the death of my parents, I Nicholas Flamel, got my living by the art of writing, ingrossing and the like, and in the course of time there fell into my hands a gilded book, very old and large, which cost me only two florins. It was not made of paper or parchment as other books are, but of admirable rinds, as it seemed to me, of young trees; the cover of it was brass, well bound, and graven all over with a strange sort of letters, which I took to be Greek characters, or some such like. This I know, that I could not read them; but as to the matter that was written within, it was engraven, as I suppose, with an iron pencil, or graven upon the said bark leaves; done admirably well, and in fair neat Latin letters, and curiously coloured.

"The book contained thrice seven leaves, so numbered at the top of each folio, every seventh leaf having painted images and figures instead of writing. On the first of these seven leaves there was depicted a virgin who was being swallowed by serpents; on the second a Cross upon which a serpent was crucified; on the last a wilderness watered by many fair fountains, out of which came a number of serpents, running here and there. On the first written leaf the following words were inscribed in great characters of gold "Abraham the Jew, Prince, Priest, Levite, Astrologer and Philosopher, unto the Jewish nation scattered through France by the wrath of God, wishing health in the name of the

God of Israel.”

"Thereafter followed great execrations and maledictions, with the word Maranatha repeated over and over, poured forth against anyone who should glance within, unless he were priest or scribe.

"The person who sold me this book must have known its value as much and as little as I who bought it. My suspicion is that it was either stolen from the miserable Jews or found hidden somewhere in the old place of their abode. On the second leaf the said Abraham consoled his people, praying them to avoid vices and idolatry more than all and await with patience the Messiah to come, who would vanquish all kings of the earth and thereafter reign, with those who were his own, in eternal glory. Without doubt this Abraham was a man of great understanding. On the third and rest of the written leaves he taught them the transmutation of metals in plain words, to help his captive nation in paying tribute to Roman Emperors and for other objects which I shall not disclose. He painted the vessels on the margin, discovered the colours, with all the rest of the work, but concerning the Prime Agent he uttered no word, advising them only that he had figured and emblazoned it with great care in the fourth and fifth leaves. But all his skill notwithstanding, no one could interpret the designs unless he was far advanced in Jewish kabalah and well studied in the book of the Philosophers. It follows that the fourth and fifth leaves were also without writing but full of illuminated figures exquisitely designed. On the obverse of the fourth leaf there was shewn a young man with winged feet having in his hand a caducean rod, encompassed by two serpents, and with this he stroke upon a helmet which covered his head. I took him to represent the Greek God Mercury. Unto him came running and flying with open wings a very old man, having an hour glass set upon his head and a scythe in his hands, like the figure of death, with which scythe he would have struck off the feet of Mercury. On the reverse of the fourth leaf a fair flower was depicted on the summit of a very high mountain, round which the North wind blustered. The plant had a blue stem, white and red flowers, leaves shining like fine gold, while about it the dragons and griffins of the North made their nests and their dwellings. On the obverse side of the fifth leaf there was a rose bush in flowers, in the midst of a fair garden, and growing hard by a hollow oak tree. At the foot bubbled forth a spring of very white water, which ran headlong into the depths below, passing first through the hands of a great concourse of people who were digging up the ground in search of it, save one person only, who paid attention to its weight. On the reverse side appeared a king carrying a great faulchion who caused his soldiers to destroy in his presence a multitude of little children, the mothers weeping at the feet of the murderers. The streams of blood were gathered by other soldiers into a great vessel, wherein the sun and moon bathe. Now, seeing that the history appeared to depict the slaughter of the innocents by Herod, and that I learned the main part of the Art in this book, it came about that I placed in their cemetery these hieroglyphic symbols of the Sacred Science.

"I have now described the content of the first five leaves, but I shall say nothing of all that was written in fair and intelligible Latin on the other pages, lest God should visit me for a greater wickedness than that of him who wished that all mankind had but one head so that he could cut it off at a blow. The precious book being in my possession I did little but study it night and day till I attained a fair understanding of all its processes, knowing nothing, however, respecting the matter of the work. I could therefore make no beginning and the result was that I became very sad and depressed. My wife Peronelle, whom I had married recently and loved as much as myself, was astonished and concerned greatly, endeavouring to comfort me and desiring earnestly to know whether she could not help me in my distress. I was never one who could hold his tongue and not only told her everything but showed her the book itself, for which she conceived the same affection as my own, taking great delight in the beautiful cover, the pictures and inscriptions, all of which she understood as little as I did. There was no small consolation, however, in talking with her about them and in wondering what could be done to discover their meaning. At length I caused the figures on the fourth and fifth leaves to be painted as well as I could and had them put up in my workroom, where I shewed them to many scholars in Paris; but these also could throw no light upon them. I went so far as to tell them that they had been found in a book about the Philosophers' Stone, but most of them made a mock of it and also of me. An exception however was one named Anselm, a licentiate of medicine and a deep student of the Art. He desired earnestly to see my book and would have done anything to have his way in the matter, but I persisted in saying that it was not in my possession, though I gave him a full account of the process described therein.

"He declared that the first figures represented time, which devours all things, while the six written

leaves shewed that a space of six years was required to perfect the Stone, after which there must be no further coction. When I pointed out that according to the book the figures were designed to teach the First Matter he answered that the six years coction was like a second agent; that as regards the first it was certainly shewn forth as a white and heavy water, which was doubtless quicksilver. The feet of this substance could not be cut off, meaning that it could not be fixed and so deprived of volatility except by such long decoction in the pure blood of young children. The quicksilver uniting with gold and silver in this blood would change with them, firstly into a herb like that of the fair flower on the reverse of the fourth leaf, secondly by corruption into serpents, which serpents, being dried and digested by fire, would become Powder of Gold, and of such in truth is the Stone.

"This explanation sent me astray through a labyrinth of innumerable false processes for a period of one and twenty years, it being always understood that I made no experiments with the blood of children, for that I accounted villainous. Moreover, I found in my book that what the philosophers called blood is the mineral spirit in metals, more especially in gold, silver and quicksilver to the admixture of which I tended always. The licentiate's interpretation being more subtle than true, my processes never exhibited the proper signs at the times given in the book, so I was ever to begin again. At last, however, having lost all hope of understanding the figures, I made a vow to God and St. James that I would seek their key of some Jewish priest belonging to one of the Spanish synagogues. Thereupon, with the consent of Peronelle and carrying a copy of the figures, I assumed a pilgrim's weeds and staff, in the same manner as you see me depicted outside the said arch in the said churchyard where I put up the hieroglyphic figures, as also a procession representing on both sides of the wall and successive colours of the Stone which arise and pass off in the work, and the following inscription in French: "A procession is pleasing to God when it is done in devotion." These are the first words, or their equivalent, of a tract on the colours of the Stone by the King Hercules, entitled *Iris*, which opens thus "Operis Processio Multum Naturae Placet." I quote them for the benefit of scholars, who will understand the allusion. Having donned my pilgrim's weeds, I began to fare on the road, reaching Mountjoy and finally my destination at St. James, where I fulfilled my vow with great devotion. On the return journey I met with a merchant of Boulogne in Leon, and to him I was indebted for acquaintance with Master Candies, a doctor of great learning who was Jewish by nation but now a Christian. When I shewed him my copy of the figures he was ravished with wonder and joy, and asked with great earnestness whether I could give him news of the book from which they were taken. He spoke in Latin and I answered in the same language that if anyone could decipher the enigma there was good hope of learning its whereabouts. He began at once to decipher the beginning.

"To shorten this part of the story he had heard much talk of the work but as of a thing that was utterly lost. I resumed my journey in his company, proceeding from Leon to Ovideo and thence to Sareson, at which port we set sail for France and arrived in due time, after a prosperous voyage. On our way to Paris my companion most truly interpreted the major or part of my figures, in which he found great mysteries, even to the points and pricks. But unhappily when we reached Orleans this learned man fell sick and was afflicted with extreme vomitings, a recurrence of those from which he had suffered at sea. He was continually in fear of my leaving him, and though I was ever at his side he would still be calling me. To my great sorrow he died on the seventh day, and to the best of my ability I saw that he was buried in the Church of Holy Cross at Orleans. There he still lies, and may God keep his soul, seeing that he made a good Christian end.

"He who would see the manner of my arrival home and the satisfaction of Peronelle may look on us both as we are painted on the door of the Chapel of St. James of the Boucherie hard by my house. We are shewn on our knees, myself at the feet of St. James of Spain and she at those of St. John, to whom she prayed so often. By the grace of God and the intercession of the Holy and Blessed Virgin, as also of the Saints just mentioned, I had gained that which I desired, being a knowledge of the First Matter, but not as yet of its initial preparation, a thing of all else most difficult in the world. In the end, however, I attained this also, after errors innumerable through the space of some three years, during which I did nothing but study and work as you will see me depicted outside the arch at the Chapel of St. James and St. John, ever praying to God rosary in hand, engrossed in a book, pondering the words of the philosophers and proving various operations suggested by their study. The fact of my success was revealed to me by the strong odour, and thereafter I accomplished the mastery with ease indeed I could scarcely miss the work had I wished, given a knowledge of the prime agents, their preparation and following my book to the letter. On the first occasion projection was made upon Mercury, of which I transmuted a half pound or thereabouts into pure silver, better than that of the mine, as I and

others proved by assaying several times. This was done on a certain Monday, the seventeenth day of January 1392, Peronelle only being present. Thereafter, still following—word for word—the directions of my book, about five o'clock in the evening of the twenty-fifth day of the following April I made projection of the Red stone on the same amount of Mercury, still at my own house, Peronelle and no other with me, and it was duly transmuted into the same quantity of pure gold, much better than that of the ordinary metal, softer and more pliable. I speak in all truth. I have made it three times, with the aid of Peronelle, for she helped me in all my operations and understood the subject as well as myself. She could have done it alone without doubt, had she desired, and would have brought it to the same term. The first occasion gave me all that I needed, but I took great delight in contemplating the wonderful works of Nature within the vessels, and to signify that I made three transmutations you have only to look at the arch and the three furnaces depicted thereupon, answering to those which served in our operations.

"For a considerable time I was in no little anxiety lest Peronelle should prove unable to conceal her happiness and should let fall some words among her kinsfolk concerning our great treasure. I judged of her joy by my own, and great joy, like great sorrow is apt to diminish caution. But the most high God in His Goodness had not only granted me the blessing of the Stone, He had given me a chaste and prudent wife, herself endowed with reason, qualified to act reasonably, and more discreet and secret than other women are for the most part. Above all she was very devout and having no expectations of children, for we were now advanced in years, she began—like myself—to think of God and to occupy herself with works of mercy. Before I wrote this commentary, which was towards the end of the year 1413, after the passing of my faithful companion, whom I shall lament all the days of my life, she and I had already founded and endowed fourteen hospitals, had built three Chapels and provided seven Churches with substantial gifts and revenues, as well as restoring their cemeteries."

Nicholas Flamel died eventually in 1415 at the age of one hundred and sixteen years. Some evidence of his house, dating from 1407, is still to be seen in the building of 51, rue de Montmorency in Paris, and in the Musée de Cluny there is an inscribed tablet from his tomb in the old Church of St. Jacques-la-Boucherie, now demolished. This tablet, which is quite unique, had an interesting and somewhat chequered career. Lost for many years, after the demolition of St. Jacques-la-Boucherie in 1717, it was eventually found in a shop in the rue des Arias, where the owner, a greengrocer and herbalist, had been using the smooth marble back as a chopping block for his herbs.

The tablet itself measures 58 x 45 centimetres, and is four centimetres thick. At the top is a carved representation of Christ, St. Peter, and St. Paul, and the inscription records that Nicholas Flamel, formerly a scrivener, left certain moneys and properties for religious and charitable purposes, including gifts to churches and hospitals in Paris.

I have retailed this account of Flamel's experiences in full as it seems to me to be of no mean interest, despite the fact that certain authorities have doubted its veracity. My own feeling about it is that the history is a true one; that the book of Abraham the Jew to which Flamel refers is evidently an allegorical writing of the whole process, and that the corresponding pictures are, to anyone versed in alchemical language, representative of the different phases of the work. Some writers and critics, certainly, have held these allegories up to ridicule as the outpourings of religious visionaries, but here I think they demonstrate their ignorance of the whole process. One of the greatest proofs of the truth of this history is, in my opinion, the point at which Flamel refers to the attainment of the First Matter. Of this he says 'The fact of my success was revealed to me by the strong odour,' and this fact I myself have demonstrated in the laboratory; the odour is unmistakable, and the gas of such a volatile nature that it pervades the whole house. In the theoretical and practical sections I shall refer to this more fully.

CHAPTER IV

BASIL VALENTINE

RECORDS of the life of Basilius Valentinus, the Benedictine monk who for his achievements in the

chemical sphere has been given the title of Father of Modern Chemistry, are a mass of conflicting evidence. Many and varied are the accounts of his life, and historians seem quite unable to agree as to his exact identity, or even as to the century in which he lived. It is generally believed, however, that 1394 was the year of his birth, and that he did actually join the Benedictine Brotherhood, eventually becoming Canon of the Priory of St. Peter at Erfurt, near Strasburg, although even these facts cannot be proved.

Whatever his identity, Basil Valentine was undoubtedly a great chemist, and the originator of many chemical preparations of the first importance. Amongst these are

the preparation of spirit of salt, or hydrochloric acid from marine salt and oil of vitriol (sulphuric acid)

the extraction of copper from its pyrites (sulphur) by transforming it firstly into copper sulphate, and then plunging a bar of iron in the watery dissolution of this product:

the method of producing sulpho-ether by the distillation of a mixture of spirit of wine and oil of vitriol:

the method of obtaining brandy by the distillation of wine and beer, rectifying the distillation on carbonate of potassium.

In his writings he has placed on record many valuable facts, and whether Basil Valentine is the correct name of the author or an assumed one matters little, since it detracts nothing from the value of his works, or the calibre of his practical experiments. From his writings one gathers that he was indeed a monk, and also the possessor of a mind and understanding superior to that of the average thinker of his day. The ultimate intent and aim of his studies was undoubtedly to prove that perfect health in the human body *is* attainable, and that the perfection of all metallic substance is also possible. He believed that the physician should regard his calling in the nature of a sacred trust, and was appalled by the ignorance of the medical faculty of the day whose members pursued their appointed way in smug complacency, showing little concern for the fate of their patients once they had prescribed their pet panacea.

The following quotation from Basil Valentine's 'Triumphal Chariot of Antimony' is from the Latin version published at Amsterdam in 1685, and translated into English and published by James Elliott & Co., Falcon Court, Fleet Street, E.C., in 1893.

'... this quality of doctor,' he writes, 'cannot prepare his own medicines (such as they are) but must leave that work to another. He does not even know the colour of the remedies which he prescribes. He has not the slightest idea whether they are white or black, red or grey, blue or yellow, or whether the medicament is hot, cold, dry, or humid. He only knows one thing — that he has found the name of that medicine in his books, and pluming himself on the antiquity of his hoary knowledge, he claims the right of prior possession.

'Here again I am tempted to cry woe upon these foolish doctors whose consciences are seared with a hot iron, who do not care in the least for their patients, and will be called to a terrible account for their criminal folly on the day of judgment. Then they will behold Him whom they have pierced by neglecting their

neighbour's welfare, while pocketing his money, and will see at last that they ought to have laboured night and day, in order to acquire greater skill in the healing of disease. Instead of this they complacently go on trusting to chance, prescribing the first medicine they happen to find in their books, and leaving the patient and the disease to fight it out as best they can. They do not even trouble to enquire in what way the medicines they prescribe are prepared. Their laboratory, their furnace, their drugs are at the Apothecary's, to whom they rarely or never go. They inscribe upon a sheet of paper, under the magic word "Recipe," the names of certain medicines, whereupon the Apothecary's assistant takes his mortar and pounds out of the wretched patient whatever health may still be left in him.

'Change these evil times, oh, God! Cut down these trees, lest they grow up to the sky! Overthrow these overweening giants, lest they pile mountain upon mountain and attempt to storm heaven!

Protect the conscientious few who quietly strive to discover the mysteries of Thy creation!

' I will ask all my brothers in our Monastery to unite with me in earnest prayer, by day and by night, that God may enlighten the ignorance of these pseudo-doctors, that they may understand the virtues which he has implanted in created things, and may learn also that they can become manifest and operative only by means of that preparation which removes all harmful and poisonous impurities. I trust that God will answer our prayer, and that some of my brothers at least will survive to witness the blessed change which shall then take place on earth, when the thick veil of ignorance shall have been removed from the eyes of our opponents, and their minds shall have been enlightened to find the lost piece of silver. May God, who overrules the destinies of men, in His goodness and mercy bring about this consummation.'

On the subject of the perfection of metallic bodies, as in his reference to the Spagyric Art, the Grand Magistram, the Universal Medicine, the Tinctures to transmute metals and other mysteries of the alchemist's art, he has completely mystified not only the lay reader, but the learned chemists of his own and later times. In all his works the important key to a laboratory process is apparently omitted. Actually, however, such a key is invariably to be found in some other part of the writings, probably in the midst of one of the mysterious theological discourses which he was wont to insert among his practical instructions, so that it is only by intensive study that the mystery can be unravelled.

His most famous work is his ' *Currus Triumphalis Antimonii*' (' The Triumphal Chariot of Antimony ') It has been translated into German, French, and English, and has done more to establish his reputation as a chemist than any other. The best edition is undoubtedly that published at Amsterdam in 1671 with a commentary by Theodorus Kerckringius. In his preface Kerckringius states that he had actually spoken with Valentine besides studying his works. He speaks of Basil as ' the prince of all chemists, and the most learned, upright, and lucid of all alchemistic writers. He tells the careful student everything that can be known in alchemy ; of this I can most positively assure you.' A perusal of this book makes it quite evident that Valentine had investigated very thoroughly the properties of antimony, and the findings on his experimental work with this metal have been brought forward as recent discoveries by chemists of our day.

His other works are ' The Medicine of Metals,' 'Of Things Natural and Supernatural,' ' Of the First Tincture, Root and Spirit of Metals,' ' The Twelve Keys," and his ' Last Will and Testament.' It is alleged that this last work remained concealed for a number of years within the High Altar of the church belonging to the Priory. Such a story is quite feasible, since alchemists both before and after this era, deeming their works unfit for the age in which they were written, are known to have buried or otherwise secreted their writings for the discovery and benefit, as they doubtless hoped, of a more deserving and more enlightened age. Such manuscripts would very often not be discovered for several generations after the death of the author.

In view of his other outstanding achievements as a chemist of great ability, it seems not illogical to suppose that Valentine's Universal Method of Medicine should be capable of achieving as great a measure of success as his other somewhat more prosaic discoveries.

CHAPTER V

PARACELSUS

Aurolus Phillipus Theophrastur Bobastur von Hohenheim, immortalized as Paracelsus, was born in 1493. He was the son of a physician of repute, who has been described as a Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, and it was from him that Paracelsus took his first instruction.

At the age of sixteen he entered the University at Basle, where he applied himself to the study of alchemy, surgery, and medicine. With the science of alchemy he was already acquainted, having previously studied the works of Isaac Hollandus, whose writings roused in him the ambition to cure disease by medicine superior to the material at that time in use, for apart from his incursions into

alchemy, Paracelsus is credited with the introduction of opium and mercury into medicine, while his works indicate an advanced knowledge of the science and principles of magnetism. These are some of the achievements which would seem to justify Manly Hall's description of him as 'the precursor of chemical pharmacology and therapeutics and the most original medical thinker of the sixteenth century.'

The Abbot Trithemius, an adept of a high order, and the instructor of the illustrious Henry Cornelius Agrippa, was responsible for Paracelsus' initiation into the science of alchemy. In 1516 he was still pursuing his research in mineralogy, medicine, surgery, and chemistry under the guidance of Sigismund Fugger, a wealthy physician of the city, but was forced to leave Basle hurriedly after trouble with the authorities over his studies in necromancy. He started out on a nomad's life, supporting himself by astrological predictions and occult practices of various kinds.

His wanderings took him through Germany, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. In Russia he is reported to have been taken prisoner by the Tartars and brought before the Grand Cham at whose court he became a great favourite. Finally, assuming this story to be true, he accompanied the Cham's son on an embassy from China to Constantinople, the city in which the supreme secret, the universal dissolvent, the alkahest, was imparted to him by an Arabian adept. For Paracelsus, as Manly Hall has said, gained his knowledge 'not from coated pedagogues, but from dervishes in Constantinople, witches, gipsies, and sorcerers, who invoked spirits and captured the rays of the celestial bodies in dew; of whom it is said that he cured the incurable, gave sight to the blind, cleansed the leper, and even raised the dead, and whose memory could turn aside the plague.'

Paracelsus ultimately returned to Europe, passing along the Danube into Italy where he became an army surgeon. It was here apparently that his wonderful cures began. In 1526, at the age of thirty-two, he re-entered Germany, and at the university he had entered as a youth took a professorship of physics, medicine, and surgery. This was a position of some considerable importance, and was offered to him at the instance of Erasmus and Ecolampidus. Perhaps it was his behaviour at this time that eventually led to his title 'the Luther of physicians,' for in his lectures he made so bold as to denounce as antiquated the systems of Galen and his school, whose teachings were held to be so unalterable and inviolable by the authorities of that time, that the slightest deviation from their teachings was regarded as nothing short of heretical. As a crowning insult he actually burnt the works of these masters in a brass pan with sulphur and nitre! This high-handed behaviour, coupled with his original ideas, made him countless enemies. The fact that the cures he performed with his mineral medicines justified his teachings merely served further to antagonize the medical faculty, infuriated at their authority and prestige being undermined by the teachings of a 'heretic' and 'usurper.' Thus Paracelsus did not long retain his professorship at Basle, but was forced once again to leave the city and betake himself to a wanderer's life.

During the course of his second exile we hear of him in 1526 at Colmar, and in 1530 at Nuremberg, once again in conflict with the doctors of medicine, who denounced him as an impostor, although once again he turned the tables on his opponents by his successful treatment of several bad cases of elephantiasis, which he followed up during the next ten years by a series of cures which were amazing at the period.

Franz Hartmann in his 'Paracelsus' says:

'He proceeded to Maehren, Kaernthen, Krain, and Hungary, and finally to Salzburg, to which place he was invited by the Prince Palatine, Duke Ernst of Bavaria, who was a great lover of the secret art. But he was not destined to enjoy a long time the rest he so richly deserved. . .'

He died in 1541 after a short sickness in a small room at the White Horse Inn near the quay, and his body was buried in the graveyard of St. Sebastian. One writer supposes the event to have been accelerated by a scuffle with assassins in the pay of the orthodox medical faculty, but there is no actual foundation for this story.

Not one of his biographers seems to have found anything remarkable in the fact that at sixteen years of age Paracelsus was already well acquainted with alchemical literature. Even allowing for the earlier maturity of a man in those times, he must still have been something of a phenomenon in mental development. Certain it is that few of his contemporaries either could or would grasp his teachings,

and his consequent irritation and arrogance in the face of their stupidity and obstinacy is scarcely to be wondered at. Although he numbered so many enemies among his fellow physicians, he also had his disciples, and for these no praise was too high for him. He was worshipped as their Noble and Beloved Monarch, the German Hermes, the Philosopher Trismegistus, Dear Preceptor and King, Theophrastus of Blessed Memory and Immortal Fame.

I am indebted to Mr. Arthur Edward Waite's translation from the German of the Hermetic and Alchemic Writings of Paracelsus for many of these facts of I life.

CHAPTER VI

ALCHEMY IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

The first man to teach the chemistry of the human body and to declare, as did Paracelsus, that the true purpose of chemistry was the preparation of medicine for the treatment of disease was one *Jean Baptista van Helmont*, a disciple of Paracelsus, sometimes called the Descartes of Medicine.

In his treatise, 'De Natura Vitae Eternae,' he writes

'I have seen and I have touched the Philosophers' Stone more than once. The colour of it was like saffron in powder, but heavy and shining like pounded glass. I had once given me the fourth of a grain—I call a grain that which takes 600 to make an ounce. I made projection with this fourth part of a grain wrapped in paper upon eight ounces of quicksilver heated in a crucible. The result of the projection was eight ounces, lacking eleven grains, of the most pure gold.'

In his early thirties van Helmont retired to an old castle in Belgium near Brussels and remained there, almost unknown to his neighbours until his death in his sixty-seventh year. He never professed to have actually prepared the Philosophers' Stone, but gained his knowledge from alchemists he contacted during his years of research.

Van Helmont also gives particulars of an Irish gentleman named *Butler*, a prisoner in the Castle of Vilvord in Flanders, who during his captivity performed strange cures by means of the Hermetic medicine. The news of his cure of a Breton monk, a fellow-prisoner suffering from severe erysipelas, by the administration of almond milk in which he had merely dipped the Philosophers' Stone brought van Helmont, accompanied by several noblemen, post-haste to the Castle to investigate the case. In their presence Butler cured an aged woman of 'megrim' by dipping the Stone into olive-oil and then anointing her head. There was also an abbess who had suffered for eighteen years with paralysed fingers and a swollen arm. These disabilities were removed by applying the Stone a few times to her tongue.

In 'Lives of the Alchmystical Philosophers,' published in 1815, it is stated that prior to the events at Vilvord, Butler attracted some attention by his transmutations in London during the reign of James I. He is said to have gained his knowledge in Arabia and in this way. When a ship in which he had once taken passage was captured by African pirates, Butler was taken prisoner and sold into slavery in Arabia. His Arab master was an alchemical worker with knowledge of the correct processes. Butler assisted him in some of his operations, and when later he was able to make his escape from captivity, he carried off a large portion of the Red Powder.

Denys Zachare in his memoirs gives an interesting account of his pursuit of the Philosophers' Stone. At the age of twenty he set out to Bordeaux to undertake a college curriculum, and hence to Toulouse for a course of law. In this town he made the acquaintance of some students in possession of a number of alchemical books. It seems that at this time there was a craze for alchemical experiments among the students of Paris and other French towns, and this craze caught Zachare's imagination. His law studies were forsaken and his experiments in alchemy began. On his parents' death, having expended all his money on this new love of his he returned home and from their estate raised further

money to continue his research. For ten years, according to his own statement, after experiments of all sorts and meetings with countless men with a method to sell, he sat down to study carefully the writings of the philosophers on the subject, and states that it was Raymond Lully's 'Testament, Codicil, and Epistle' addressed to King Robert that gave him the key to the secret. From the study of this book and 'The Grand Rosary' of Arnold de Villeneuve, he formulated a plan entirely different from any he had previously followed. After another fifteen months of toil he says:

'I beheld with transport the evolution of the three successive colours which testify to the True Work. It came finally at Eastertide; I made a projection of my divine Powder on quicksilver, and in less than an hour it was converted into fine gold. God knows how joyful I was, how I thanked him for this great grace and favour, and prayed for His Holy Spirit to pour yet more light upon me that I might use what I had attained only to His praise and honour.'

In his one writing entitled 'Opusculum Chemicum' he gives his own personal narrative and states that the Art is the gift of God alone. The methods and possibilities of the transmutation of metals and the Tincture as a Medicine are also considered.

There is also the evidence of *John Frederick Helvetius*, as testified in 1666. He made claim to be an adept, but received the powder of transmutation from another. He writes:

'On December 27th, 1666, and in the forenoon, there came a certain man to my house who was unto me a complete stranger, but of an honest, grave and authoritative mien, clothed in a simple garb like that of a Memnonite. He was of middle height, his face was long and slightly pock-marked, his hair was black and straight, his chin close-shaven, his age about forty-three or forty-four, and his native place North Holland, so far as I could make out. After we had exchanged salutations, he inquired whether he might have some conversation with me. It was his idea to speak of the Pyrotechnic Art, as he had read one of my tracts, being that directed against the Sympathetic Powder of Sir Kenelm Digby, in which I implied a suspicion whether the Great Arcanum of the Sages was not after all a gigantic hoax. He took therefore this opportunity of asking if indeed I could not believe that such a Grand Mystery might exist in the nature of things, being that by which a physician could restore any patient whose vitals were not irreparably destroyed. My answer allowed that such a Medicine would be a most desirable acquisition for any doctor and that none might tell how many secrets there may be hidden in Nature, but that as for me—though I had read much on the truth of this Art—it had never been my fortune to meet with a Master of Alchemical Science. I inquired further whether he was himself a medical man since he spoke so learnedly about the Universal Medicine, but he disclaimed my suggestion modestly, describing himself as a brass-founder, who had always taken great interest in the extraction of medicines from metals by means of fire. After some further talk the Artist Elias—for he it was—addressed me thus:

' "Seeing that you have read so much in the writings of the alchemists concerning the Stone, its substance, colour and wonderful effects, may I be allowed to question whether you have yourself prepared it."

'On my answering him in the negative he took from his bag an ivory box of cunning workmanship in which there were three large pieces of a substance resembling glass or pale sulphur and informed me that here was enough of the Tincture to produce twenty tons of gold.

'When I held the treasure in my hands for some fifteen minutes listening to an account of its curative properties, I was compelled to return it, not without a certain degree of reluctance. After thanking him for his kindness I asked why it was that his Tincture did not display that ruby colour which I had been taught to regard as characteristic of the Philosophers' Stone. He replied that the colour made no difference and that the substance was sufficiently mature for all practical purposes. He refused somewhat brusquely my request for a piece of his substance, were it no larger than a coriander seed, adding in a milder tone that he could not do so for all the wealth which I possessed; not indeed on account of its preciousness but for another reason that it was not lawful to divulge. Indeed, if fire could be destroyed by fire he would cast it rather into the flames. Then after a little consideration he asked whether I could not shew him into a room at the back of the house, where we should be less liable to observation. Having led him into the state parlour, he requested me to produce a gold coin, and while I was finding it he took from his breast pocket a green silk handkerchief wrapped about five medals, the gold of which was infinitely superior to that of my own money. Being

filled with admiration, I asked my visitor how he had attained this most wonderful knowledge in the world, to which he replied that it was a gift bestowed upon him freely by a friend who had stayed a few days at his house, who had taught him also how to change common flints and crystals into stones more precious than rubies, chrysolites and sapphires.

' "He made known to me further," said the artist, "the preparation of crocus of iron, an infallible cure for dysentery; of a metallic liquor, which was an efficacious remedy for dropsy, and of other medicines."

'To this, however, I paid no great heed as I, Helvetius, was impatient to hear about the Great Secret of all. The artist said further that his master caused him to bring a glass full of warm water to which he added a little white powder and then an ounce of silver, which melted like ice therein.

"Of this he emptied one half and gave the rest to me. Its taste resembled that of fresh milk, and the effect was most exhilarating."

'I asked my visitor whether the potion was a preparation of the Philosophers' Stone, but he replied that I must not be curious. He added presently that at the bidding of his master he took down a piece of lead water-pipe and melted it in a pot, when the master removed some sulphurous powder on the point of a knife from a little box, cast it into the molten lead, and after exposing the compound for a short time to a fierce fire he poured forth a great mass of liquid gold upon the brick floor of the kitchen.

The Master bade me take one-sixteenth of this gold as a keepsake for myself and distribute the rest among the poor, which I did by making over a large sum in trust for the Church of Sparrendaur. In fine, before bidding me farewell, my friend taught me this Divine Art."

'When my strange visitor had concluded his narrative, I besought him in proof of his statement to perform a transmutation in my presence. He answered that he could not do so on that occasion but that he would return in three weeks and if then at liberty to do so he would shew me something that would make me open my eyes. He returned punctually on the promised day and invited me to a walk, in the course of which we spoke profoundly on the secrets of Nature in fire, though I noticed that my companion was exceedingly reserved on the subject of the Great Secret. When I prayed him, however, to entrust me with a morsel of his precious Stone, were it no larger than a rape seed he delivered it like a princely donation. When I expressed a doubt whether it would be sufficient to tinge more than four grains of lead he eagerly demanded it back. I complied, hoping that he would exchange it for a larger fragment, instead of which he divided it with his thumb, threw half in the fire and returned the rest, saying

' " It is yet sufficient for you."

The narrative goes on to state that on the morrow Helvetius prepared six drachms of lead, melted it in a crucible, and cast on the Tincture. There was a hissing sound and a slight effervescence, and after fifteen minutes Helvetius found that the lead had been transformed into the finest gold, which on cooling glittered and shone as gold indeed. A goldsmith to whom he took this declared it to be the purest gold that he had ever seen and offered to buy it at fifty forms the ounce. Amongst others the Master of the Mint came to examine the gold and asked that a small part might be placed at his disposal for examination. Being put through the tests with aqua-fortis and antimony it was pronounced pure gold of the finest quality. Helvetius adds in a later part of his writing that there was left in his heart by the Artist a deeply seated conviction that "through metals and out of metals, purified by highly refined and spiritualized metals, there may be prepared the Living Gold and Quicksilver of the Sages, which bring both metals and human bodies to perfection.'

In the Helvetius tract is also testimony of *Kuffle* and of his conversion to a belief in alchemy as the result of an experiment which he had been able to perform himself, although no indication is given of the source from which he obtained his powder of projection.

Secondly, there is an account of a silversmith named *Gril*, who in the year 1664 at the city of the Hague, converted a pound of lead partly into gold and partly into silver, using a tincture received from a certain John Caspar Knoettner. This projection was made in the presence of many witnesses and

Helvetius himself examined the precious metals obtained from the operation.

In 1710 *Sigmund Richter* published his 'Perfect and True Preparation of the Philosophical Stone' under the auspices of the Rosicrucians. Another representative of the Rosy Cross was the mysterious *Lascaris*, a descendant of the royal house of Lascaris, an old Byzantine family, who spread the knowledge of the Hermetic art in Germany during the eighteenth century. Lascaris affirmed that when unbelievers beheld the amazing virtues of the Stone they would no longer be able to regard alchemy as a delusive art. He appears to have performed transmutation in different parts of Germany and then to have disappeared into the blue and so out of history.

CHAPTER VII

ENGLISH ALCHEMISTS

In England the first known alchemist was *Roger Bacon*, a scholar of outstanding attainment, who was born in Somersetshire in 1214. He made extraordinary progress even in his boyhood studies, and on reaching the required age joined the Franciscan Order. From Oxford he passed on to Paris where he studied medicine and mathematics. On his return to England he applied himself to the study of philosophy and languages, with such success that he wrote grammars of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew tongues.

Although Bacon has been described as a physician rather than a chemist, we are indebted to him for many scientific discoveries. He was almost the only astronomer of his time and in this capacity rectified the Julian calendar which, although submitted to Pope Clement IV in 1267, was not put into practice until a later Papacy. He was responsible also for the physical analysis of convex glasses and lenses, the invention of spectacles and achromatic lenses, and if not for the actual construction, at any rate for the theory of the telescope. As a student of chemistry he called attention to the chemical role played by air in combustion, and having carefully studied the properties of saltpetre, taught its purification by dissolution in water and by crystallisation.

From certain of his letters we may learn that Bacon anticipated most of the achievements of modern science. He maintained that vessels might be constructed which would be capable of navigation without rowers, and which, under the direction of a single man, could travel through the water at a speed hitherto undreamt of. He also predicted that it would be equally possible to construct cars which 'might be set in motion with marvellous rapidity, independently of horses and other animals,' and flying machines which would beat the air with artificial wings

It is scarcely surprising that in the atmosphere of superstition and ignorance which reigned in Europe during the middle ages Bacon's achievements were attributed to his communication with devils, and that his fame spread through Western Europe not as a savant, but as a great magician! His great services to humanity were met with censure, not gratitude, and to the Church his teachings seemed particularly pernicious. She accordingly took her place as one of his foremost adversaries, and even the friars of his own order refused his writings a place in their library. His persecutions culminated in 1279 in imprisonment and a forced repentance of his labours in the cause of art and science.

Amongst his many writings there are extant two or three works on alchemy from which it is quite evident that not only did he study and practise the science, but that he obtained his final objective, the Philosophers' Stone. Doubtless during his lifetime his persecutions led him to conceal carefully his practice of the Hermetic art and to consider the revelation of such matters unfit for the uninitiated. 'Truth, ' he writes, ' ought not to be shown to every ribald, for then that would become most vile which, in the hand of a philosopher, is the most precious of all things.'

Sir George Ripley, Canon of Bridlington Cathedral, Yorkshire, placed alchemy on a higher level than many of his contemporaries by dealing with it as a spiritual and not merely a physical manifestation. He maintained that alchemy is concerned with the mode of our spirit's return to God who gave it. He wrote in 1471 his 'Compound of Alchemy' with its dedicatory epistle to Edward IV. It is also reported of this Canon of Bridlington that he provided funds for the Knights of St. John by

means of the Philosophers' Stone.

In the sixteenth century *Pierce*, the Black Monk, wrote on the Elixir the following:

'Take earth of Earth, Earth's Mother, Water of Earth, Fire of Earth and Water of the Wood. These are to lie together and then be parted. Alchemical gold is made of three pure souls, purged as crystal. Body, soul, and spirit grown into a Stone, wherein there is no corruption : this is to be cast on Mercury and it shall become most worthy gold.'

Other works of the sixteenth century include *Thomas Charnock's* 'Breviary of Philosophy' and the *additamenta* thereto, and 'Enigma' in 1572. He also wrote a memorandum in which he states that he attained the transmuting powder when his hairs were white.

In the sixteenth century also lived *Edward Kelly*, born 1555. He seems to have been an adventurer, and is reputed to have lost his ears at Lancaster on an accusation of producing forged title deeds. Whether this is true or not, the fact remains that *Dr. Dee*, a learned man of the Elizabethan era, was very interested in Kelly's clairvoyant visions, although it is difficult to determine whether Kelly really was a genuine seer since his life was such an extraordinary mixture of good and bad.

In some way or other Kelly does appear to have come into possession of the Red and White Tinctures, since Elias Ashmole printed at the end of 'Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum' a tract entitled 'Sir Edward Kelly's Work' and says:

"'Tis generally reported that Doctor Dee and Sir Edward Kelly were so strangely fortunate as to find a very large quantity of the Elixir in some part of the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, which was so incredibly rich in virtue (being one upon 272,330), that they lost much in making projection by way of trial before they found out the true height of the Medicine.'

How true that may be is a moot point, but it is a fact that in March 1583 the Count Palatine of Siradia, Prince of Poland, Adalbert Alask, while visiting the Court of Queen Elizabeth, sought an acquaintance with Dr. Dee to discuss his experiments, in which he became so interested that he was accompanied by Dee and Kelly and their families on his return to Cracow. The Prince took them from Cracow to Prague in anticipation of favours at the hand of the Emperor, Rudolph II, but their attempt to get into touch with Rudolph was unsuccessful. In Prague at that time a great interest was evinced in alchemy by all and sundry, but in 1586, by reason of an edict of Pope Sixtus V, Dee and Kelly were forced to flee the city.

They finally found peace and plenty at the Castle of Trebona in Bohemia as guests of Count Rosenberg, the Emperor's Viceroy in that country. During that time Kelly made projection of one minim on an ounce and a quarter of mercury and produced nearly an ounce of best gold, which gold was afterwards distributed from the crucible.

In February 1588, following a breach between them, the two men parted, Dee making for England and Kelly for Prague, where Rosenberg had persuaded the Emperor to quash the Papal decree. Through the introduction of Rosenberg, Kelly was received and honoured by Rudolph as one in possession of the Great Secret of Alchemy. From him he received besides a grant of land and the freedom of the city, a councillorship of state and apparently a title, since he was known from that time forward as Sir Edward Kelly. These honours are evidence that Kelly had undoubtedly demonstrated to the Emperor his knowledge of transmutation, but the powder of projection had now diminished, and to the Emperor's command to produce it in ample quantities, he failed to accede, being either unable or unwilling to do so. As a result he was cast into prison at the Castle of Purglitz near Prague where he remained until 1591, when he was restored to favour. He was interned a second time, however, and in 1595, according to chronicles, whilst attempting to escape from his prison, fell from a considerable height and was killed at the age of forty.

In the seventeenth century lived *Eugenius Philalethes* or Thomas Vaughan. Vaughan came from Wales and his writings were regarded as an illustration of the purely spiritual mystery within the science of alchemy, but whatever the various interpretations put upon his work, Vaughan was undoubtedly endeavouring to show that alchemy was demonstrable in every phase of consciousness, physical, mental, and spiritual. His work, 'Lumen de Lumine,' is an alchemical discourse and deals

with his subject in the phases I have mentioned. His medicine is a spiritual substance inasmuch as it is the Quintessence or the Divine Life manifesting through all form, both *physical* and spiritual. His gold is the philosophic gold of the physical world as well as the wisdom of the spiritual. His stone is the touchstone which transmutes everything and is again spiritual and physical, and the statement that the Medicine can only be contained in a glass vessel signifies a tangible glass container as well as the purified body of the adept.

Thomas Vaughan was a Magus of the Rosicrucian Order and he knew and understood that the science of alchemy as such must manifest throughout all planes of consciousness.

Eirenaeus Philalethes, by reason of his very numerous writings, must be mentioned. There has been much discussion as to whether this was the name of another adept, or merely another pen name for Vaughan. Mr. Waite has attempted to prove to his satisfaction that they were two different men. 'Personally, I should attribute both names to Thomas Vaughan, but although the question of these authors' identity may make interesting debating material, it is of negligible importance from the standpoint adopted in this book.

In his preface to the *Open Entrance* from the 'Collectanea Chymica,' published by William Cooper in 1684, he gives testimony:

'I being an adept anonymous, a lover of learning, and a philosopher, decreed to write this little treatise of medicinal, chemical and physical secrets in the year of the world's redemption 1645, in the three and twentieth year of my age, that I may pay my duty to the Sons of Art, that I might appear to other adepts as their brother and equal. Now therefore I presage that not a few will be enlightened by these my labours. These are no fables, but real experiments which I have made and know, as every other adept will conclude by these lines. In truth, many times I laid aside my pen, designing to forbear from writing, being rather willing to have concealed the truth under a mask of envy, but God compelled me to write and Him I could in no wise resist, who alone knows the heart and unto Whom be glory for ever. I believe that many in this last age of the world shall be rejoiced with the Great Secret because I have written so faithfully, leaving of my own will nothing in doubt for a young beginner. I know many already who possess it in common with myself, and am persuaded that 17 shall yet be acquainted in the immediate time to come. May God's most holy will be done therein. I acknowledge myself all unworthy of bringing those things about, but in such matters I submit in adoration to Him, to Whom all creation is subject, Who created all to this end, and having created, preserves them.'

He then goes on to give an account of the transmutation of metals into silver and gold, and also of the fact that the medicine administered to some at the point of death affected their miraculous recovery.

Of one occasion he writes:

'On a time in a foreign country I would have sold so much pure silver worth £ 600, but although I was dressed like a merchant they said unto me presently that the said metal was made by Art. When I asked their reasons it was answered "We know the silver that comes from England, Spain, and other places, but this is none of these kinds." On hearing this I withdrew suddenly, leaving the silver behind me as well as its price and never returning."

Again he remarks:

'I have made the Stone: I do not possess it by theft but by the gift of God. I have made it and daily have it in my power, having formed it often with my own hands. I write the things that I know.'

In the last chapter of the *Open Entrance* is his message to those who have attained the goal:

'He who hath once, by the blessing of God, perfectly attained this Art, I know not what in the world he can wish but that he may be free from all snares of wicked men so as to serve God without distraction. But it would be a vain thing by outward pomp to seek for vulgar applause. Such trifles are not esteemed by those who have this Art, nay, rather they despise them. He therefore whom God hath blessed with this talent has this field of content. First, if he should live a thousand years and every day

provide for a thousand men, he could not want, for he may increase his Stone at his pleasure, both in weight and virtue so that if a man would, one man might transmute into perfect gold and silver all the imperfect metals that are in the whole world. Secondly, he may by this Art make precious stones and gems, such as cannot be paralleled in Nature for goodness and greatness. Thirdly and lastly, he hath a Medicine Universal, both for prolonging life and curing of all diseases, so that one true adeptist can easily cure all the sick people in the world I mean his medicine is sufficient.

‘Now to the King, Eternal, Immortal and sole Almighty, be everlasting praise for these His unspeakable gifts and invaluable treasures. Whosoever enjoyeth this talent, let him be sure to employ it to the glory of God and the good of his neighbours, lest he be found ungrateful to God his Creditor—who has blessed him with so great a talent—and so be in the last day found guilty of misproving it and so condemned.’

His principal works are ‘An Open Entrance to the Shut Palace of the King,’ ‘Ripley Revived,’ ‘The Marrow of Alchemy’ in verse, ‘Metallorum Metamorphosis,’ ‘Brevis Manuductio ad Rubinem Coelestum,’ ‘Fone Chemicæ Veritatis,’ and a few others in the ‘Musaeum Hermiticum’ and in Manget’s collection. There is also the story of a transmutation before Gustavus Adolphus in 1620, the gold of which was coined into medals, bearing the King’s effigy with the reverse Mercury and Venus; and of another at Berlin, before the King of Prussia.

Sir Isaac Newton, the famous seventeenth-century mathematician and scientist, though not generally known as an alchemist, was undoubtedly an experimenter in that particular branch of science. If one follows carefully, in the light of alchemical knowledge, the biography of Sir Isaac Newton by J. W. V. Sullivan, I think it is quite easy to realize the experimental theories on which he was working. Sir Arthur Eddington, in reviewing this book, says:

‘The science in which Newton seems to have been chiefly interested, and on which he spent most of his time was chemistry. He read widely and made innumerable experiments, entirely without fruit so far as we know.’

His amanuensis records:

‘He very rarely went to bed until two or three of the clock, sometimes not till five or six, lying about four or five hours, especially at spring or the fall of the leaf, at which time he used to employ about six weeks in his laboratory, the fire scarce going out night or day. What his aim might be I was unable to penetrate into.’

I think the answer to this might certainly be that Newton’s experiments were concerned with nothing more or less than alchemy.

In the same century *Alexander Seton*, a Scot, suffered indescribable torments for his knowledge of the art of transmutation. After practising in his own country he went abroad, where he demonstrated his transmutations before men of good repute and integrity in Holland, Hamburg, Italy, Basle, Strasbourg, Cologne, and Munich. He was finally summoned to appear before the young Elector of Saxony, to whose court he went somewhat reluctantly. The Elector, on receiving proof of the authenticity of his projections, treated him with distinction, convinced that Seton held the secret of boundless wealth. But Seton refused to initiate the Elector into his secret, and was imprisoned in Dresden. As his imprisonment would not shake his purpose he was put to the torture. He was pierced, racked, beaten, seared with fire and molten lead, but still he held his peace. At length he was left in solitary confinement until his release was finally engineered by the adept Sendivogius. Even to his friend he refused to reveal the secret until shortly before his death, two years after his escape from prison, when he presented Sendivogius with his transmuting powder.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMTE DE ST. GERMAIN

It is rather remarkable that in the history of alchemy the Comte de St. Germain has not been mentioned. There is no doubt that he was an expert in the art, but of the many stories related about this remarkable man, his achievements in this particular sphere seem to play no part.

St. Germain was a baffling personality. As far as can be ascertained he was the son of Prince Racozy of Transylvania, but, in any case, there can be no doubt that he was of noble birth, a man of great culture and refinement. His history as far as it is known is well worth reading, but does not come within the scope of this book, which is solely concerned with his interest in the alchemic art. To those of my readers interested in dietetics, it may be a point of interest that most of his biographers have noted his habits with regard to food. It was diet, he declared, combined with his marvellous elixir, which constituted the true secret of his longevity, for it may be remembered that records of St. Germain's various appearances in Europe extend over a period of 110 years, during which time his appearance never altered. Always he appeared as a well-preserved man of middle age. Madame la Comtesse d'Adhemar, for example, in 'Souvenirs de Marie Antoinette,' gives an excellent description of the Comte, whom Frederick the Great referred to as 'the man who does not die,' and Mrs. Cooper Oakley in her monograph, 'The Comte de St. Germain, the Secret of Kings,' traces him under his various names between the years 1710 and 1822.

The Italian adventurer, Jacques de Casanova de Seingalt, grudgingly admits that the Comte was an adept of the magical arts and a skilled chemist. Upon his telling St. Germain that he was suffering from an acute disease, the Comte invited Casanova to remain for treatment, saying that he would prepare fifteen pills which in three days would restore him to perfect health.

Of St. Germain's athoeter Casanova writes:

'Then he showed me his magistrum. which he called Athoeter. It was a white liquid contained in a well stoppered phial. He told me that this liquid was the universal spirit of Nature and that if the wax of the stopper was pricked ever so slightly, the whole contents would disappear. I begged him to make the experiment. He thereupon gave me the phial and the pin and I myself pricked the wax, when, lo, the phial was empty.'

Casanova further records an incident in which St. Germain changed a twelve sous piece into a pure gold coin. There is other evidence that the celebrated Count possessed the alchemical powder by which it is possible to transmute base metals into gold. He actually performed this feat on at least two occasions as stated by the writings of contemporaries. The Marquis de Valbelle, visiting St. Germain in his laboratory, found the alchemist busy with his furnaces. He asked the Marquis for a silver six-franc piece, and covering it with a black substance, exposed it to the heat of a small flame or furnace. M. de Valbelle saw the coin change colour until it became a bright red. Some minutes after, when it had cooled a little, the adept took it out of the cooling vessel and returned it to the Marquis. The piece was no longer silver but of the purest gold. Transmutation had been complete. The Comtesse d'Adhemar had possession of this coin until 1766, when it was stolen from her secretary.

One author tells us that St. Germain always attributed his knowledge of occult chemistry to his sojourn in Asia. In 1755 he went to the East for the second time, and writing to Count von Lamberg he said: 'I am indebted for my knowledge of melting jewels to my second journey to India.'

There are too many authentic cases of metallic transmutations to condemn St. Germain as a charlatan for such a feat. The Leopold Hoffman medal, still in the possession of that family, is the most outstanding example of the transmutation of metals ever recorded. Two-thirds of this medal was transformed into gold by the monk *Wenzel-Seiler*, leaving the balance silver, which was its original state. In the circumstances fraud was impossible as there was but one copy of the medal extant.

For these notes on incidents in St. Germain's life I am indebted to Mr. Manly Hall's introductory material and commentary to the 'Most Holy Trinosophia' (Comte de St. Germain).

The 'Most Holy Trinosophia,' or 'The Most Holy Threefold Wisdom,' is composed of twelve sections. It is at the same time a picture of the process of Initiation and an Alchemical treatise, a fact which careful perusal will establish. Let me quote from Section XII:

'The hall into which I had just entered was perfectly round it resembled the interior of a globe

composed of hard transparent matter, as crystals, so that the light entered from all sides. Its lower part rested upon a vast basin filled with red sand. A gentle and equable warmth reigned in this circular enclosure. With astonishment I gazed around this crystal globe when a new phenomenon excited my admiration. From the floor of the hall ascended a gentle vapour, moist and saffron yellow. It enveloped me, raised me gently and within thirty-six days it bore me up to the upper part of the globe. Thereafter the vapour thinned. Little by little I descended and finally found myself again on the floor. My robe had changed its colour. It had been green when I entered the hail, but now changed to a brilliant red.'

Here is a picture of the pelican in its sand bath, the process of the sublimation of the contents, and the change of colour which takes place in one of the laboratory processes in the preparation of the Philosophers' Stone. That this preparation is a physical process carried out in a laboratory with water, retorts, sandbath, and furnaces, there is no doubt. That alchemy is purely a psychic and spiritual science has no basis in fact. A science to be a science must be capable of —“manifestation on every plane of consciousness; in other words it must be capable of demonstrating the axiom ‘as above, so below.’ Alchemy can withstand this test, for it is, physically, spiritually, and psychically, a science manifesting throughout all form and all life.

The various foregoing records should in some measure bear testimony to the claim of alchemy to be a physical science based on an inner knowledge of the properties of metals. Casanova's description of St. Germain alone is evidence that as recently as the latter part of the eighteenth century, at any rate, a method of preparing a physical 'Stone,' capable of transmuting metals and curing disease was in practice.

Modern science knows of no substance that can change lead or quicksilver into the likeness of solid gold by the mere addition of a grain of red powder, and may therefore choose to scoff at the alchemists' assertions as products of a too-fertile imagination, at their writings as 'gibberish.' But the fact must be borne in mind that the 'assertions' were corroborated by impartial observers, and that the 'gibberish' of the Hermetic tracts is scarcely less intelligible to the layman than is modern chemical phraseology.

[PART II]

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