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CASTING THE MOLTEN SEA.

There is a strange Qabbalistic legend concerning CHiram to the effect that he was a descendant of Samael, the Spirit of Fire, and that among his ancestors was the immortal Tubalcain, who invented the forge and first tempered metals. According to this legend, the masterpiece of CHiram's handiwork was to be the Molten Sea—a magnificent laver of purification supported upon the backs of twelve oxen. This huge basin, thirty cubits in circumference, was to be made at a single casting and the workmen, the people of Jerusalem, and even King Solomon and Balkis, the Queen of Sheba, were present to behold the great achievement. But three craftsmen, disgruntled because CHiram had refused to promote them, secretly poured water into the mold. When the taps of the furnace were opened and the flaming metal ran into the mold, a great explosion took place. Clouds of steam arose and molten metal, hurled in every direction, spread death and confusion. Though broken-hearted at the failure of his great ambition, CHiram stood courageously in the path of the streaming mass. Suddenly a voice from the midst of the steam and smoke cried out: "I have rendered thee incombustible. Cast thyself into the flames." CHiram thereupon plunged through the Molten Sea into the center of the earth where dwelt his fiery ancestor, the first worker in metals. Albert Steffen's play, *Hiram und Salomo*, is based upon this legend and amplifies the description of the various ingredients composing the flux of which the Molten Sea (the Philosopher's Stone) was to be formed. In addition to the base metals of the planets, CHiram cast into the Molten Sea the golden crown of Melchizedek and the silver sickle of the Queen of Sheba.