

Adams William Henry Davenport

Witch, Warlock, and Magician



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*Witch, Warlock, and Magician / Historical Sketches of Magic and Witchcraft
in England and Scotland:*

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PREFACE

The following pages may be regarded as a contribution towards that 'History of Human Error' which was undertaken by Mr. Augustine Caxton. I fear that many minds will have to devote all their energies to the work, if it is ever to be brought to completion; and, indeed, it may plausibly be argued that its completion would be an impossibility, since every generation adds something to the melancholy record – 'pulveris exigui parva munera.' However this may be, little more remains to be said on the subjects which I have here considered from the standpoint of a sympathetic though incredulous observer. Alchemy, Magic, Witchcraft – how exhaustively they have been investigated will

appear from the list of authorities which I have drawn up for the reader's convenience. They have been studied by 'adepts,' and by critics, as realities and as delusions; and almost the last word would seem to have been said by Science – though not on the side of the adepts, who still continue to dream of the Hermetic philosophy, to lose themselves in fanciful pictures, theurgic and occult, and to write about the mysteries of magic with a simplicity of faith which we may wonder at, but are bound to respect.

It has not been my purpose, in the present volume, to attempt a general history of magic and alchemy, or a scientific inquiry into their psychological aspects. I have confined myself to a sketch of their progress in England, and to a narrative of the lives of our principal magicians. This occupies the first part. The second is devoted to an historical review of witchcraft in Great Britain, and an examination into the most remarkable Witch-Trials, in which I have endeavoured to bring out their peculiar features, presenting much of the evidence adduced, and in some cases the so-called confessions of the victims, in the original language. I believe that the details, notwithstanding the reticence imposed upon me by considerations of delicacy and decorum, will surprise the reader, and that he will readily admit the profound interest attaching to them, morally and intellectually. I have added a chapter on the 'Literature of Witchcraft,' which, I hope, is tolerably exhaustive, and now offer the whole as an effort to present, in a popular and readable form, the result of careful and

conscientious study extending over many years.

W. H. D. A.

INTRODUCTION

PROGRESS OF ALCHEMY IN EUROPE

The word *χημεία* – from which we derive our English word ‘chemistry’ – first occurs, it is said, in the Lexicon of Suidas, a Greek writer who flourished in the eleventh century. Here is his definition of it:

‘Chemistry is the art of preparing gold and silver. The books concerning it were sought out and burnt by Diocletian, on account of the new plots directed against him by the Egyptians. He behaved towards them with great cruelty in his search after the treatises written by the ancients, his purpose being to prevent them from growing rich by a knowledge of this art, lest, emboldened by measureless wealth, they should be induced to resist the Roman supremacy.’

Some authorities assert, however, that this art, or pretended art, is of much greater antiquity than Suidas knew of; and Scaliger refers to a Greek manuscript by Zozomen, of the fifth century, which is entitled ‘A Faithful Description of the Secret and Divine Art of Making Gold and Silver.’ We may assume that as soon as mankind had begun to set an artificial value upon these metals, and had acquired some knowledge

of chemical elements, their combinations and permutations, they would entertain a desire to multiply them in measureless quantities. Dr. Shaw speaks of no fewer than eighty-nine ancient manuscripts, scattered through the European libraries, which are all occupied with ‘the chemical art,’ or ‘the holy art,’ or, as it is sometimes called, ‘the philosopher’s stone’; and a fair conclusion seems to be that ‘between the fifth century and the taking of Constantinople in the fifteenth, the Greeks believed in the possibility of making gold and silver,’ and called the supposed process, or processes, *chemistry*.

The delusion was taken up by the Arabians when, under their Abasside Khalifs, they entered upon the cultivation of scientific knowledge. The Arabians conveyed it into Spain, whence its diffusion over Christendom was a simple work of time, sure if gradual. From the eleventh to the sixteenth century, alchemy was more or less eagerly studied by the scholars of Germany, Italy, France, and England; and the volumes in which they recorded both their learning and their ignorance, the little they knew and the more they did not know, compose quite a considerable library. One hundred and twenty-two are enumerated in the ‘*Bibliotheca Chemica Curiosa*,’ of Mangetus, a dry-as-dust kind of compilation, in two huge volumes, printed at Geneva in 1702. Any individual who has time and patience to expend *ad libitum*, cannot desire a fairer field of exercise than the ‘*Bibliotheca*.’ One very natural result of all this vain research and profitless inquiry was a keen anxiety on the part of victims to dignify their labours

by claiming for their ‘sciences, falsely so-called,’ a venerable and mysterious origin. They accordingly asserted that the founder or creator was Hermes Trismegistus, whom some of them professed to identify with Chanaan, the son of Ham, whose son Mizraim first occupied and peopled Egypt. Now, it is clear that any person might legitimately devote his nights and days to the pursuit of a science invented, or originally taught, by no less illustrious an ancient than Hermes Trismegistus. But to clothe it with the awe of a still greater antiquity, they affirmed that its principles had been discovered, engraved in Phœnician characters, on an emerald tablet which Alexander the Great exhumed from the philosopher’s tomb. Unfortunately, as is always the case, the tablet was lost; but we are expected to believe that two Latin versions of the inscription had happily been preserved. One of these may be Englished as hereinunder:

1. I speak no frivolous things, but only what is true and most certain.

2. What is below resembles that which is above, and what is above resembles that which is below, to accomplish the one thing of all things most wonderful.

3. And as all things proceeded from the meditation of the One God, so were all things generated from this one thing by the disposition of Nature.

4. Its father is *Sol*, its mother *Luna*; it was engendered in the womb by the air, and nourished by the earth.

5. It is the cause of all the perfection of things throughout the

whole world.

6. It arrives at the highest perfection of powers if it be reduced into earth.

7. Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, acting with great caution.

8. Ascend with the highest wisdom from earth to heaven, and thence descend again to earth, and bind together the powers of things superior and things inferior. So shall you compass the glory of the whole world, and divest yourself of the abjectness of humanity.

9. This thing has more fortitude than fortitude itself, since it will overcome everything subtle and penetrate everything solid.

10. All that the world contains was created by it.

11. Hence proceed things wonderful which in this wise were established.

12. For this reason the name of Hermes Trismegistus was bestowed upon me, because I am master of three parts of the philosophy of the whole world.

13. This is what I had to say concerning the most admirable process of the chemical art.

These oracular utterances are so vague and obscure that an enthusiast may read into them almost any meaning he chooses; but there seems a general consensus of opinion that they refer to the 'universal medicine' of the earlier alchemists. This, however, is of no great importance, since it is certain they were invented by some ingenious hand as late as the fifteenth century. Another

forgery of a similar kind is the ‘Tractatus Aureus de Lapidis Physici Secretis,’ also attributed to Hermes; it professes to describe the process of making this ‘universal medicine,’ or ‘philosopher’s stone,’ and the formulary is thus translated by Thomson:

‘Take of moisture an ounce and a half; of meridional redness – that is, the soul of the sun – a fourth part, that is, half an ounce; of yellow sage likewise half an ounce; and of auripigmentum half an ounce; making in all three ounces.’

Such a recipe does not seem to help forward an enthusiastic student to any material extent.

THE EARLIER ALCHEMISTS

It is in the erudite writings of the great Arabian physician, Gebir – that is, Abu Moussah Djafar, surnamed *Al Sofi*, or The Wise – that the science of alchemy, or chemistry (at first the two were identical), first assumes a definite shape. Gebir flourished in the early part of the eighth century, and wrote, it is said, upwards of five hundred treatises on the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life. In reference to the latter mysterious potion, which possessed the wonderful power of conferring immortal youth on those who drank of it, one may remark that it was the necessary complement of the philosopher’s stone, for what would be the use of an unlimited faculty of making gold and silver unless one could be sure of an immortality in which to enjoy

its exercise? Gebir's principal work, the 'Summæ Perfectionis,' containing instructions for students in search of the two great secrets, has been translated into several European languages; and an English version, by Richard Russell, the alchemist, was published in 1686.

Gebir lays down, as a primary principle, that all metals are compounds of mercury and sulphur. They all labour under disease, he says, except gold, which is the one metal gifted with perfect health. Therefore, a preparation of it would dispel every ill which flesh is heir to, as well as the maladies of plants. We may excuse his extravagances, however, in consideration of the services he rendered to science by his discovery of corrosive sublimate, red oxide of mercury, white oxide of arsenic, nitric acid, oxide of copper, and nitrate of silver, all of which originally issued from Gebir's laboratory.

Briefly speaking, the hypothesis assumed by the alchemists was this: all the metals are compounds, and the baser contain the same elements as gold, contaminated, indeed, with various impurities, but capable, when these have been purged away, of assuming all its properties and characters. The substance which was to effect this purifying process they called the philosopher's stone (*lapis philosophorum*), though, as a matter of fact, it is always described as a *powder*— a powder red-coloured, and smelling strongly. Few of the alchemists, however, venture on a distinct statement that they had discovered or possessed this substance.

The arch-quack Paracelsus makes the assertion, of course; unblushing mendacity was part of his stock-in-trade; and he pretends even to define the methods by which it may be realized. Unfortunately, to ordinary mortals his description is absolutely unintelligible. Others there are who affirm that they had seen it, and seen it in operation, transmuting lead, quicksilver, and other of the inferior metals into ruddy gold. One wonders that they did not claim a share in a process which involved such boundless potentialities of wealth!

Helvetius, the physician, though no believer in the magical art, tells the following wild story in his 'Vitulus Aureus':

On December 26, 1666, a stranger called upon him, and, after discussing the supposed properties of the universal medicine, showed him a yellow powder, which he declared to be the *lapis*, and also five large plates of gold, which, he said, were the product of its action. Naturally enough, Helvetius begged for a few grains of this marvellous powder, or that the stranger would at least exhibit its potency in his presence. He refused, however, but promised that he would return in six weeks. He kept his promise, and then, after much entreaty, gave Helvetius a pinch of the powder – about as much as a rape-seed. The physician expressed his fear that so minute a quantity would not convert as much as four grains of lead; whereupon the stranger broke off one-half, and declared that the remainder was more than sufficient for the purpose. During their first conference, Helvetius had contrived to conceal a little of the powder beneath his thumb-nail. This he

dropped into some molten lead, but it was nearly all exhaled in smoke, and the residue was simply of a vitreous character.

On mentioning this circumstance to his visitor, he explained that the powder should have been enclosed in wax before it was thrown into the molten lead, to prevent the fumes of the lead from affecting it. He added that he would come back next day, and show him how to make the projection; but as he failed to appear, Helvetius, in the presence of his wife and son, put six drachms of lead into a crucible, and as soon as the lead was melted, flung into it the atoms of powder given to him by his mysterious visitor, having first rolled them up in a little ball of wax. At the end of a quarter of an hour he found the lead transmuted (so he avers) into gold. Its colour at first was a deep green; but the mixture, when poured into a conical vessel, turned blood-red, and, after cooling, acquired the true tint of gold. A goldsmith who examined it pronounced it to be genuine. Helvetius requested Purelius, the keeper of the Dutch Mint, to test its value; and two drachms, after being exposed to aquafortis, were found to have increased a couple of scruples in weight – an increase doubtlessly owing to the silver, which still remained enveloped in the gold, despite the action of the aquafortis.

It is obvious that this narrative is a complete mystification, and that either the stranger was a myth or Helvetius was the victim of a deception.

The recipes that the alchemists formulate – those, that is, who profess to have discovered the stone, or to have known somebody

who enjoyed so rare a fortune – are always unintelligible or impracticable. What is to be understood, for example, of the following elaborate process, or series of processes, which are recorded by Mangetus, in his preface to the ponderous ‘*Bibliotheca Chemica*’ (to which reference has already been made)?

1. Prepare a quantity of spirits of wine, so free from water as to be wholly combustible, and so volatile that a drop of it, if let fall, will evaporate before it reaches the ground. This constitutes the first menstruum.

2. Take pure mercury, revived in the usual manner from cinnabar; put it into a glass vessel with common salt and distilled vinegar; shake violently, and when the vinegar turns black, pour it off, and add fresh vinegar. Shake again, and continue these repeated shakings and additions until the mercury no longer turns the vinegar black; the mercury will then be quite pure and very brilliant.

3. Take of this mercury four parts; of sublimed mercury (*mercurii meteoresati* – probably corrosive sublimate), prepared with your own hands, eight parts; triturate them together in a wooden mortar with a wooden pestle, till all the grains of running mercury disappear. (This process is truly described as ‘tedious and rather difficult.’)

4. The mixture thus prepared is to be put into a sand-bath, and exposed to a subliming heat, which is to be gradually increased until the whole sublimes. Collect the sublimed matter, put it again

into the sand-bath, and sublime a second time; this process must be repeated five times. The product is a very sweet crystallized sublimate, constituting the *sal sapientum*, or wise men's salt (probably calomel), and possessing wonderful properties.

5. Grind it in a wooden mortar, reducing it to powder; put this powder into a glass retort, and pour upon it the spirit of wine (see No. 1) till it stands about three finger-breadths above the powder. Seal the retort hermetically, and expose it to a very gentle heat for seventy-four hours, shaking it several times a day; then distil with a gentle heat, and the spirit of wine will pass over, together with spirit of mercury. Keep this liquid in a well-stoppered bottle, lest it should evaporate. More spirit of wine is to be poured upon the residual salt, and after digestion must be distilled off, as before; and this operation must be repeated until all the salt is dissolved and given off with the spirit of wine. A great work will then have been accomplished! For the mercury, having to some extent been rendered volatile, will gradually become fit to receive the tincture of gold and silver. Now return thanks to God, who has hitherto crowned your wonderful work with success. Nor is this wonderful work enveloped in Cimmerian darkness; it is clearer than the sun, though preceding writers have sought to impose upon us with parables, hieroglyphs, fables, and enigmas.

6. Take this mercurial spirit, which contains our magical steel in its belly (*sic*), and put it into a glass retort, to which a receiver must be well and carefully adjusted; draw off the spirit by a very gentle heat, and in the bottom of the retort will remain

the quintessence or soul of mercury. This is to be sublimed by applying a stronger heat to the retort that it may become volatile, as all the philosophers affirm:

‘Si fixum solvas faciesque volare solutum,
Et volucrum figas faciet te vivere tutum.’

This is our *luna*, our fountain, in which ‘the king’ and ‘the queen’ may bathe. Preserve this precious quintessence of mercury, which is exceedingly volatile, in a well-closed vessel for further use.

8. Let us now proceed to the production of common gold, which we shall communicate clearly and distinctly, without digression or obscurity, in order that from this common gold we may obtain our philosophical gold, just as from common mercury we have obtained, by the foregoing processes, philosophical mercury. In the name of God, then, take common gold, purified in the usual way by antimony, and reduce it into small grains, which must be washed with salt and vinegar until they are quite pure. Take one part of this gold, and pour on it three parts of the quintessence of mercury: as philosophers reckon from seven to ten, so do we also reckon our number as philosophical, and begin with three and one. Let them be married together, like husband and wife, to produce children of their own kind, and you will see the common gold sink and plainly dissolve. Now the marriage is consummated; and two things are

converted into one. Thus the philosophical sulphur is at hand, as the philosophers say: 'The sulphur being dissolved, the stone is at hand.' Take then, in the name of God, our philosophical vessel, in which the king and queen embrace each other as in a bedchamber, and leave it till the water is converted into earth, then peace is concluded between the water and the fire – then the elements no longer possess anything contrary to each other – because, when the elements are converted into earth, they cease to be antagonistic; for in earth all elements are at rest. The philosophers say: 'When you shall see the water coagulate, believe that your knowledge is true, and that all your operations are truly philosophical.' Our gold is no longer common, but philosophical, through the processes it has undergone: at first, it was exceedingly 'fixed' (*fixum*); then exceedingly volatile; and again, exceedingly fixed: the entire science depends upon the change of the elements. The gold, at first a metal, is now a sulphur, capable of converting all metals into its own sulphur. And our tincture is wholly converted into sulphur, which possesses the energy of curing every disease; this is our universal medicine against all the most deplorable ills of the human body. Therefore, return infinite thanks to Almighty God for all the good things which He hath bestowed upon us.

9. In this great work of ours, two methods of fermentation and projection are wanting, without which the uninitiated will not readily follow out our process. The mode of fermentation: Of the sulphur already described take one part, and project it upon

three parts of very pure gold fused in a furnace. In a moment you will see the gold, by the force of the sulphur, converted into a red sulphur of an inferior quality to the primary sulphur. Take one part of this, and project it upon three parts of fused gold; the whole will again be converted into a sulphur or a fixable mass, mixing one part of this with three parts of gold, you will have a malleable and extensible metal. If you find it so, it is well; if not, add more sulphur, and it will again pass into a state of sulphur. Now our sulphur will sufficiently be fermented, or our medicine brought into a metallic nature.

10. The method of projection is this: Take of the fermented sulphur one part, and project it upon two parts of mercury, heated in a crucible, and you will have a perfect metal; if its colour be not sufficiently deep, fuse it again, and add more fermented sulphur, and thus it will gain colour. If it become frangible, add a sufficient quantity of mercury, and it will be perfect.

Thus, friend, you have a description of the universal medicine, not only for curing diseases and prolonging life, but also for transmuting all metals into gold. Give thanks, therefore, to Almighty God, who, taking pity on human calamities, hath at last revealed this inestimable treasure, and made it known for the common benefit of all.

Such is the jargon with which these so-called philosophers imposed upon their dupes, and, to some extent perhaps, upon themselves. As Dr. Thomson points out, the philosopher's stone prepared by this elaborate process could hardly have been

anything else than *an amalgam of gold*. Chloride of gold it could not have contained, because such a preparation, instead of acting medicinally, would have proved a most virulent poison. Of course, amalgam of gold, if projected into melted lead or tin, and afterwards cupellated, would leave a portion of gold – that is, exactly the amount *which existed previously in the amalgam*. Impostors may, therefore, have availed themselves of it to persuade the credulous that it was really the philosopher's stone; but the alchemists who prepared the amalgam must have known that it contained gold.¹

It is well known that the mediæval magicians, necromancers, conjurers – call them by what name you will – who adopted alchemy as an instrument of imposition, and by no means in the spirit of philosophical inquiry and research which had characterized their predecessors, resorted to various ingenious devices in order to maintain their hold upon their victims. Sometimes they made use of crucibles with false bottoms – at the real bottom they concealed a portion of oxide of gold or silver covered with powdered sulphur, which had been rendered adhesive by a little gummed water or wax. When heat was applied the false bottom melted away, and the oxide of gold or silver eventually appeared as the product of the operation at the bottom of the crucible. Sometimes they made a hole in a lump of charcoal, and filling it with oxide of gold or silver, stopped

¹ Cf. Stahl, 'Fundamenta Chimiæ,' cap. 'De Lapide Philosophorum'; and Kircher, 'Mundus Subterraneus.'

up the orifice with wax; or they soaked charcoal in a solution of these metals; or they stirred the mixture in the crucible with hollow rods, containing oxide of gold or silver, closed up at the bottom with wax. A faithful representation of the stratagems to which the pseudo-chemist resorted, that his dupes might not recover too soon from their delusion, is furnished by Ben Jonson in his comedy of 'The Alchemist,' and his masque of 'Mercury vindicated from the Alchemists.' The dramatist was thoroughly conversant with the technicalities of the pretended science, and also with the deceptions of its professors. In the masque he puts into the mouth of Mercury an indignant protest:

'The mischief a secret any of them knows, above the consuming of coals and drawing of usquebagh; howsoever they may pretend, under the specious names of Gebir, Arnold, Lully, or Bombast of Hohenheim, to commit miracles in art, and treason against nature! As if the title of philosopher, that creature of glory, were to be fetched out of a furnace!'

But while the world is full of fools, it is too much to expect there shall be any lack of knaves to prey upon them!

IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The first of the great European alchemists I take to have been *Albertus Magnus* or *Albertus Teutonicus* (*Frater Albertus de Colonia* and *Albertus Grotus*, as he is also called), a man of remarkable intellectual energy and exceptional force of

character, who has sometimes, and not without justice, been termed the founder of the Schoolmen. Neither the place nor the date of his birth is authentically known, but he was still in his young manhood when, about 1222, he was appointed to the chair of theology at Padua, and became a member of the Dominican Order. He did not long retain the professorship, and, departing from Padua, taught with great success in Ratisbon, Köln, Strassburg, and Paris, residing in the last-named city for three years, together with his illustrious disciple, Thomas Aquinas. In 1260 he was appointed to the See of Ratisbon, though he had not previously held any ecclesiastical dignity, but soon resigned, on the ground that its duties interfered vexatiously with his studies. Twenty years later, at a ripe old age, he died, leaving behind him, as monuments of his persistent industry and intellectual subtlety, one-and-twenty ponderous folios, which include commentaries on Aristotle, on the Scriptures, and on Dionysius the Areopagite. Among his minor works occurs a treatise on alchemy, which seems to show that he was a devout believer in the science.

From the marvellous stories of his thaumaturgic exploits which have come down to us, we may infer that he had attained a considerable amount of skill in experimental chemistry. The brazen statue which he animated, and the garrulity of which was so offensive that Thomas Aquinas one day seized a hammer, and, provoked beyond all endurance, smashed it to pieces, may be a reminiscence of his powers as a ventriloquist. And the

following story may hint at an effective manipulation of the *camera obscura*: Count William of Holland and King of the Romans happening to pass through Köln, Albertus invited him and his courtiers to his house to partake of refreshment. It was mid-winter; but on arriving at the philosopher's residence they found the tables spread in the open garden, where snowdrifts lay several feet in depth. Indignant at so frugal a reception, they were on the point of leaving, when Albertus appeared, and by his courtesies induced them to remain. Immediately the scene was lighted up with the sunshine of summer, a warm and balmy air stole through the whispering boughs, the frost and snow vanished, the melodies of the lark dropped from the sky like golden rain. But as soon as the feast came to an end the sunshine faded, the birds ceased their song, clouds gathered darkling over the firmament, an icy blast shrieked through the gibbering branches, and the snow fell in blinding showers, so that the philosopher's guests were glad to fold their cloaks about them and retreat into the kitchen to grow warm before its blazing fire.

Was this some clever scenic deception, or is the whole a fiction?

A knowledge of the secret of the *Elixir Vitæ* was possessed (it is said) by *Alain de l'Isle*, or Alanus de Insulis; but either he did not avail himself of it, or failed to compound a sufficient quantity of the magic potion, for he died under the sacred roof of Citeaux, in 1298, at the advanced age of 110.

Arnold de Villeneuve, who attained, in the thirteenth century,

some distinction as a physician, an astronomer, an astrologer, and an alchemist – and was really a capable man of science, as science was then understood – formulates an elaborate recipe for rejuvenating one's self, which, however, does not seem to have been very successful in his own case, since he died before he was 70. Perhaps he was as disgusted with the compound as (in the well-known epitaph) the infant was with this mundane sphere – he 'liked it not, and died.' I think there are many who would forfeit longevity rather than partake of it.

'Twice or thrice a week you must anoint your body thoroughly with the manna of cassia; and every night, before going to bed, you must place over your heart a plaster, composed of a certain quantity (or, rather, uncertain, for definite and precise proportions are never particularized) of Oriental saffron, red rose-leaves, sandal-wood, aloes, and amber, liquefied in oil of roses and the best white wax. During the day this must be kept in a leaden casket. You must next pen up in a court, where the water is sweet and the air pure, sixteen chickens, if you are of a sanguine temperament; twenty-five, if phlegmatic; and thirty, if melancholic. Of these you are to eat one a day, after they have been fattened in such a manner as to have absorbed into their system the qualities which will ensure your longevity; for which purpose they are first to be kept without food until almost starved, and then gorged with a broth of serpents and vinegar, thickened with wheat and beans, for at least two months. When they are served at your table you will drink a moderate quantity

of white wine or claret to assist digestion.’

I should think it would be needed!

Among the alchemists must be included *Pietro d’Apono*. He was an eminent physician; but, being accused of heresy, was thrown into prison and died there. His ecclesiastical persecutors, however, burned his bones rather than be entirely disappointed of their *auto da fé*. Like most of the mediæval physicians, he indulged in alchemical and astrological speculations; but they proved to Pietro d’Apono neither pleasurable nor profitable. It was reputed of him that he had summoned a number of evil spirits; and, on their obeying his call, had shut them up in seven crystal vases, where he detained them until he had occasion for their services. In his selection of them he seems to have displayed a commendably catholic taste and love of knowledge; for one was an expert in poetry, another in painting, a third in philosophy, a fourth in physic, a fifth in astrology, a sixth in music, and a seventh in alchemy. So that when he required instruction in either of these arts or sciences, he simply tapped the proper crystal vase and laid on a spirit.

The story seems to be a fanciful allusion to the various acquirements of Pietro d’Apono; but if intended at first as a kind of allegory, it came in due time to be accepted literally.

I pass on to the great Spanish alchemist and magician, *Raymond Lully*, or Lulli, who was scarcely inferior in fame, or the qualities which merited fame, even to Albertus Magnus. He was a man, not only of wide, but of accurate scholarship; and

the two or three hundred treatises which proceeded from his pen traversed the entire circle of the learning of his age, dealing with almost every conceivable subject from medicine to morals, from astronomy to theology, and from alchemy to civil and canon law. His life had its romantic aspects, and his death (in 1315?) was invested with something of the glory of martyrdom; for while he was preaching to the Moslems at Bona, the mob fell upon him with a storm of stones, and though he was still alive when rescued by some Genoese merchants, and conveyed on board their vessel, he died of the injuries he had received before it arrived in a Spanish port.

There seems little reason to believe that Lulli visited England about 1312, on the invitation of Edward II. Dickenson, in his work on 'The Quintessences of the Philosophers,' asserts that his laboratory was established in Westminster Abbey – that is, in the cloisters – and that some time after his return to the Continent a large quantity of gold-dust was found in the cell he had occupied. Langlet du Fresnoy contends that it was through the intervention of John Cremer, Abbot of Westminster, a persevering seeker after the *lapis philosophorum*, that he came to England, Cremer having described him to King Edward as a man of extraordinary powers. Robert Constantine, in his 'Nomenclator Scriptorum Medicorum' (1515), professes to have discovered that Lulli resided for some time in London, and made gold in the Tower, and that he had seen some gold pieces of his making, which were known in England as the nobles of Raymond, or rose-nobles. But

the great objections to these very precise statements rests on two facts pointed out by Mr. Waite, that the rose-noble, so called because a rose was stamped on each side of it, was first coined in 1465, in the reign of Edward IV., and that there never was an Abbot Cremer of Westminster.

Jean de Meung is also included among the alchemists; but he bequeathed to posterity in his glorious poem of the 'Roman de la Rose' something very much more precious than would have been any formula for making gold. In one sense he was indeed an alchemist, and possessed the secret of the universal medicine; for in his poem his genius has transmuted into purest gold the base ore of popular traditions and legends.

Some of the stories which Langlet du Fresnoy tells of *Nicholas Flamel* were probably invented long after his death, or else we should have to brand him as a most audacious knave. One of those amazing narratives pretends that he bought for a couple of florins an old and curious volume, the leaves of which – three times seven (this sounds better than twenty-one) in number – were made from the bark of trees. Each seventh leaf bore an allegorical picture – the first representing a serpent swallowing rods, the second a cross with a serpent crucified upon it, and the third a fountain in a desert, surrounded by creeping serpents. Who, think you, was the author of this mysterious volume? No less illustrious a person than Abraham the patriarch, Hebrew, prince, philosopher, priest, Levite, and magian, who, as it was written in Latin, must have miraculously acquired his

foreknowledge of a tongue which, in his time, had no existence. A perusal of its mystic pages convinced Flamel that he had had the good fortune to discover a complete manual on the art of transmutation of metals, in which all the necessary vessels were indicated, and the processes described. But there was one serious difficulty to be overcome: the book assumed, as a matter of course, that the student was already in possession of that all-important agent of transmutation, the philosopher's stone.

Careful study led Flamel to the conclusion that the secret of the stone was hidden in certain allegorical drawings on the fourth and fifth leaves; but, then, to decipher these was beyond his powers. He submitted them to all the learned savants and alchemical adepts he could get hold of: they proved to be no wiser than himself, while some of them actually laughed at Abraham's posthumous publication as worthless gibberish. Flamel, however, clung fast to his conviction of the inestimable value of his 'find,' and daily pondered over the two cryptic illustrations, which may thus be described: On the first page of the fourth leaf Mercury was contending with a figure, which might be either Saturn or Time – probably the latter, as he carried on his head the emblematical hour-glass, and in his hand the not less emblematical scythe. On the second stage a flower upon a mountain-top presented the unusual combination of a blue stalk, with red and white blossoms, and leaves of pure gold. The wind appeared to blow it about very harshly, and a gruesome company of dragons and griffins encompassed it.

Upon the study of these provokingly obscure designs Flamel fruitlessly expended the leisure time of thrice seven years: after which, on the advice of his wife, he repaired to Spain to seek the assistance of some erudite Jewish rabbi. He had been wandering from place to place for a couple of years, when he met, somewhere in Leon, a learned Hebrew physician, named Canches, who agreed to return with him to Paris, and there examine Abraham's volume. Canches was deeply versed in all the lore of the Cabala, and Flamel hung with delight on the words of wisdom that dropped from his eloquent lips. But at Orleans Canches was taken ill with a malady of which he died, and Flamel found his way home, a sadder, if not a wiser, man. He resumed his study of the book, but for two more years could get no clue to its meaning. In the third year, recalling some deliverance of his departed friend, the rabbi, he perceived that all his experiments had hitherto proceeded upon erroneous principles. He repeated them upon a different basis, and in a few months brought them to a successful issue. On January 13, 1382, he converted mercury into silver, and on April 25 into gold. Well might he cry in triumph, 'Eureka!' The great secret, the sublime magistry was his: he had discovered the art of transmuting metals into gold and silver, and, so long as he kept it to himself, had at his command the source of inexhaustible wealth.

At this time Nicholas Flamel, it is said, was about eighty years old. His admirers assert that he also discovered the elixir of immortal life; but, as he died in 1419, at the age (it is alleged)

of 116, he must have been content with the merest sip of it! Why did he not reveal its ingredients for the general benefit of our afflicted humanity? His immense wealth he bequeathed to churches and hospitals, thus making a better use of it after death than he had made of it in his lifetime. For it is said that Flamel was a usurer, and that his philosopher's stone was 'cent per cent.' It is true enough that he dabbled in alchemy, and probably he made his alchemical experiments useful in connection with his usurious transactions.

BOOK I

THE ENGLISH MAGICIANS

CHAPTER I

ROGER BACON: THE TRUE AND THE LEGENDARY

It was in the early years of the fourteenth century that the two pseudo-sciences of alchemy and astrology, the supposititious sisters of chemistry and astronomy, made their way into England. At first their progress was by no means so rapid as it had been on the Continent; for in England, as yet, there was no educated class prepared to give their leisure to the work of experimental investigation. A solitary scholar here and there lighted his torch at the altar-fire which the Continental philosophers kept burning with so much diligence and curiosity, and was generally rewarded for his heterodox enthusiasm by the persecution of the Church and the prejudice of the vulgar. But by degrees the new sciences increased the number of their adherents, and the more active intellects of the time embraced the theory of astral influences, and were fascinated by the delusion of the philosopher's stone. Many a secret furnace blazed day and night with the charmed

flames which were to resolve the metals into their original elements, and place the pale student in possession of the coveted *magisterium*, or 'universal medicine.' At length the alchemists became a sufficiently numerous and important body to draw the attention of the Government, which regarded their proceedings with suspicion, from a fear that the result might injuriously affect the coinage. In 1434 the Legislature enacted that the making of gold or silver should be treated as a felony. But the Parliament was influenced by a very different motive from that of the King and his Council, its patriotic fears being awakened lest the Executive, enabled by the new science to increase without limit the pecuniary resources of the Crown, should be rendered independent of Parliamentary control.

In the course of a few years, however, broader and more enlightened views prevailed; and it came to be acknowledged that scientific research ought to be relieved from legislative interference. In 1455 Henry VI. issued four patents in succession to certain knights, London citizens, chemists, monks, mass-priests, and others, granting them leave and license to undertake the discovery of the philosopher's stone, 'to the great benefit of the realm, and the enabling the King to pay all the debts of the Crown in *real gold and silver*.' On the remarkable fact that these patents were issued to ecclesiastics as well as laymen, Prynne afterwards remarked, with true theological acridity, that they were so included because they were 'such good artists in transubstantiating bread and wine in the Eucharist, and were,

therefore, the more likely to be able to effect the transmutation of base metals into better.’ Nothing came of the patents. The practical common-sense of Englishmen never took very kindly to the alchemical delusion, and Chaucer very faithfully describes the contempt with which it was generally regarded. Enthusiasts there were, no doubt, who firmly believed in it, and knaves who made a profit out of it, and dupes who were preyed upon by the knaves; and so it languished on through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It seems at one time to have amused the shrewd intellect of Queen Elizabeth, and at another to have caught the volatile fancy of the second Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. But alchemy was, in the main, the *modus vivendi* of quacks and cheats, of such impostors as Ben Jonson has drawn so powerfully in his great comedy – a Subtle, a Face, and a Doll Common, who, in the Sir Epicure Mammons of the time, found their appropriate victims. These creatures played on the greed and credulity of their dupes with successful audacity, and excited their imaginations by extravagant promises. Thus, Ben Jonson’s hero runs riot with glowing anticipations of what the alchemical *magisterium* can effect.

‘Do you think I fable with you? I assure you,
He that has once the flower of the sun,
The perfect ruby, which we call *Elixir*,
Not only can do that, but, by its virtue,
Can confer honour, love, respect, long life;
Give safety, valour, yes, and victory,

To whom he will. In eight-and-twenty days
I'll make an old man of fourscore a child...
'Tis the secret
Of nature naturized 'gainst all infections,
Cures all diseases coming of all causes;
A month's grief in a day, a year's in twelve,
And of what age soever in a month.'

The English alchemists, however, with a few exceptions, depended for a livelihood chiefly on their sale of magic charms, love-philters, and even more dangerous potions, and on horoscope-casting, and fortune-telling by the hand or by cards. They acted, also, as agents in many a dark intrigue and unlawful project, being generally at the disposal of the highest bidder, and seldom shrinking from any crime.

The earliest name of note on the roll of the English magicians, necromancers and alchemists is that of

ROGER BACON

This great man has some claim to be considered the father of experimental philosophy, since it was he who first laid down the principles upon which physical investigation should be conducted. Speaking of science, he says, in language far in advance of his times: 'There are two modes of knowing – by argument and by experiment. Argument winds up a question, but does not lead us to acquiesce in, or feel certain of, the

contemplation of truth, unless the truth be proved and confirmed by experience.' To Experimental Science he ascribed three differentiating characters: 'First, she tests by experiment the grand conclusions of all other sciences. Next, she discovers, with reference to the ideas connected with other sciences, splendid truths, to which these sciences without assistance are unable to attain. Her third prerogative is, that, unaided by the other sciences, and of herself, she can investigate the secrets of nature.' These truths, now accepted as trite and self-evident, ranked, in Roger Bacon's day, as novel and important discoveries.

He was born at Ilchester, in Somersetshire, in 1214. Of his lineage, parentage, and early education we know nothing, except that he must have been very young when he went to Oxford, for he took orders there before he was twenty. Joining the Franciscan brotherhood, he applied himself to the study of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic; but his genius chiefly inclined towards the pursuit of the natural sciences, in which he obtained such a mastery that his contemporaries accorded to him the flattering title of 'The Admirable Doctor.' His lectures gathered round him a crowd of admiring disciples; until the boldness of their speculations aroused the suspicion of the ecclesiastical authorities, and in 1257 they were prohibited by the General of his Order. Then Pope Innocent IV. interfered, interdicting him from the publication of his writings, and placing him under close supervision. He remained in this state of tutelage until Clement IV., a man of more liberal views, assumed the triple

tiara, who not only released him from his irksome restraints, but desired him to compose a treatise on the sciences. This was the origin of Bacon's 'Opus Majus,' 'Opus Minus' and 'Opus Tertius,' which he completed in a year and a half, and despatched to Rome. In 1267 he was allowed to return to Oxford, where he wrote his 'Compendium Studii Philosophiæ.' His vigorous advocacy of new methods of scientific investigation, or, perhaps, his unsparing exposure of the ignorance and vices of the monks and the clergy, again brought down upon him the heavy arm of the ecclesiastical tyranny. His works were condemned by the General of his Order, and in 1278, during the pontificate of Nicholas III., he was thrown into prison, where he was detained for several years. It is said that he was not released until 1292, the year in which he published his latest production, the 'Compendium Studii Theologiæ.' Two years afterwards he died.

In many respects Bacon was greatly in advance of his contemporaries, but his general repute ignores his real and important services to philosophy, and builds up a glittering fabric upon mechanical discoveries and inventions to which, it is to be feared, he cannot lay claim. As Professor Adamson puts it, he certainly describes a method of constructing a telescope, but not so as to justify the conclusion that he himself was in possession of that instrument. The invention of gunpowder has been attributed to him on the strength of a passage in one of his works, which, if fairly interpreted, disposes at once of the pretension; besides, it was already known to the Arabs. Burning-

glasses were in common use; and there is no proof that he made spectacles, although he was probably acquainted with the principle of their construction. It is not to be denied, however, that in his interesting treatise on ‘The Secrets of Nature and Art,’² he exhibits every sign of a far-seeing and lively intelligence, and foreshadows the possibility of some of our great modern inventions. But, like so many master-minds of the Middle Ages, he was unable wholly to resist the fascinations of alchemy and astrology. He believed that various parts of the human body were influenced by the stars, and that the mind was thus stimulated to particular acts, without any relaxation or interruption of free will. His ‘Mirror of Alchemy,’ of which a translation into French was executed by ‘a Gentleman of Dauphiné,’ and printed in 1507, absolutely bristles with crude and unfounded theories – as, for instance, that Nature, in the formation of metallic veins, tends constantly to the production of gold, but is impeded by various accidents, and in this way creates metals in which impurities mingle with the fundamental substances. The main elements, he says, are quicksilver and sulphur; and from these all metals and minerals are compounded. Gold he describes as a perfect metal, produced from a pure, fixed, clear, and red quicksilver; and from a sulphur also pure, fixed, and red, not incandescent and unalloyed. Iron is unclean and imperfect, because engendered of a quicksilver which is impure, too much congealed, earthy,

² Epistola Fratris Rogerii Baconis de Secretis Operibus Artis et Naturæ et de Nullitate Magiæ.

incandescent, white and red, and of a similar variety of sulphur. The ‘stone,’ or substance, by which the transmutation of the imperfect into the perfect metals was to be effected must be made, in the main, he said, of sulphur and mercury.

It is not easy to determine how soon an atmosphere of legend gathered around the figure of ‘the Admirable Doctor;’ but undoubtedly it originated quite as much in his astrological errors as in his scientific experiments. Some of the myths of which he is the traditional hero belong to a very much earlier period, as, for instance, that of his Brazen Head, which appears in the old romance of ‘Valentine and Orson,’ as well as in the history of Albertus Magnus. Gower, too, in his ‘Confessio Amantis,’ relates how a Brazen Head was fabricated by Bishop Grosseteste. It was customary in those days to ascribe all kinds of marvels to men who obtained a repute for exceptional learning, and Bishop Grosseteste’s Brazen Head was as purely a fiction as Roger Bacon’s. This is Gower’s account:

‘For of the gretè clerk Grostest
I rede how busy that he was
Upon the clergie an head of brass
To forgè; and make it fortelle
Of suchè thingès as befelle.
And seven yerès besinesse
He laidè, but for the lachèsse³
Of half a minute of an hour ...

³ *Laches*, oversight.

He lostè all that he hadde do.'

Stow tells a story of a Head of Clay, made at Oxford in the reign of Edward II., which, at an appointed time, spoke the mysterious words, 'Caput decidetur – caput elevabitur. Pedes elevabuntur supra caput.' Returning to Roger Bacon's supposed invention, we find an ingenious though improbable explanation suggested by Sir Thomas Browne, in his 'Vulgar Errors':

'Every one,' he says, 'is filled with the story of Friar Bacon, that made a Brazen Head to speak these words, "*Time is.*" Which, though there went not the like relations, is surely too literally received, and was but a mystical fable concerning the philosopher's great work, wherein he eminently laboured: implying no more by the copper head, than the vessel wherein it was wrought; and by the words it spake, than the opportunity to be watched, about the *tempus ortus*, or birth of the magical child, or "philosophical King" of Lullius, the rising of the "terra foliata" of Arnoldus; when the earth, sufficiently impregnated with the water, ascendeth white and splendent. Which not observed, the work is irrecoverably lost... Now letting slip the critical opportunity, he missed the intended treasure: which had he obtained, he might have made out the tradition of making a brazen wall about England: that is, the most powerful defence or strongest fortification which gold could have effected.'

An interpretation of the popular myth which is about as

ingenious and far-fetched as Lord Bacon's expositions of the 'Fables of the Ancients,' of which it may be said that they possess every merit but that of probability!

Bacon's Brazen Head, however, took hold of the popular fancy. It survived for centuries, and the allusions to it in our literature are sufficiently numerous. Cob, in Ben Jonson's comedy of 'Every Man in his Humour,' exclaims: 'Oh, an my house were the Brazen Head now! 'Faith, it would e'en speak *Mo'fools yet!*' And we read in Greene's 'Tu Quoque':

'Look to yourself, sir;

The brazen head has spoke, and I must have you.'

Lord Bacon used it happily in his 'Apology to the Queen,' when Elizabeth would have punished the Earl of Essex for his misconduct in Ireland: — 'Whereunto I said (to the end utterly to divert her), "Madam, if you will have me speak to you in this argument, I must speak to you as Friar Bacon's head spake, that said first, '*Time is,*' and then, '*Time was,*' and '*Time would never be,*' for certainly" (said I) "it is now far too late; the matter is cold, and hath taken too much wind.'" Butler introduces it in his 'Hudibras': — 'Quoth he, "My head's not made of brass, as Friar Bacon's noddle was.'" And Pope, in 'The Dunciad,' writes: — 'Bacon trembled for his brazen head.' A William Terite, in 1604, gave to the world some verse, entitled 'A Piece of Friar Bacon's Brazen-head's Prophecie.' And, in our own

time, William Blackworth Praed has written 'The Chaunt of the Brazen Head,' which, in his prose motto, he (in the person of Friar Bacon) addresses as 'the brazen companion of his solitary hours.'

'THE FAMOUS HISTORIE OF FRIAR BACON.'

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the various legends which had taken Friar Bacon as their central figure were brought together in a connected form, and wrought, along with other stories of magic and sorcery, into a continuous narrative, which became immensely popular. It was entitled, 'The Famous Historie of Friar Bacon: Conteyning the Wonderful Thinges that he Did in his Life; also the Manner of his Death; with the Lives and Deaths of the Two Conjurers, Bungye and Vandermast,' and has been reprinted by Mr. Thoms, in his 'Early English Romances.'

According to this entertaining authority, the Friar was 'born in the West part of England, and was sonne to a wealthy farmer, who put him to the schoole to the parson of the towne where he was borne; not with intent that hee should turne fryer (as hee did), but to get so much understanding, that he might manage the better the wealth hee was to leave him. But young Bacon took his learning so fast, that the priest could not teach him any more, which made him desire his master that he would speake to his father to put him to Oxford, that he might not lose that little

learning that he had gained... The father affected to doubt his son's capacity, and designed him still to follow the same calling as himself; but the student had no inclination to drive fat oxen or consort with unlettered hinds, and stole away to "a cloister" some twenty miles off, where the monks cordially welcomed him. Continuing the pursuit of knowledge with great avidity, he attained to such repute that the authorities of Oxford University invited him to repair thither. He accepted the invitation, and grew so excellent in the secrets of Art and Nature, that not England only, but all Christendom, admired him.'

There, in the seclusion of his cell, he made the Brazen Head on which rests his legendary fame.

'Reading one day of the many conquests of England, he bethought himself how he might keepe it hereafter from the like conquests, and so make himself famous hereafter to all posterities. This, after great study, hee found could be no way so well done as one; which was to make a head of brasse, and if he could make this head to speake, and heare it when it speakes, then might hee be able to wall all England about with brasse.⁴ To this purpose he got one Fryer Bungey to assist him, who was a great scholar and a magician, but not to be compared to Fryer Bacon: these two with great study and paines so framed a head of brasse, that in the inward parts thereof there was all things like as in a naturall man's head. This being done, they were as farre

⁴ This patriotic sentiment would seem to show that the book was written or published about the time of the Spanish Armada.

from perfection of the worke as they were before, for they knew not how to give those parts that they had made motion, without which it was impossible that it should speake: many bookes they read, but yet coulde not finde out any hope of what they sought, that at the last they concluded to raise a spirit, and to know of him that which they coulde not attaine to by their owne studies. To do this they prepared all things ready, and went one evening to a wood thereby, and after many ceremonies used, they spake the words of conjuration; which the Devill straight obeyed, and appeared unto them, asking what they would? “Know,” said Fryer Bacon, “that wee have made an artificiall head of brasse, which we would have to speake, to the furtherance of which wee have raised thee; and being raised, wee will here keepe thee, unlesse thou tell to us the way and manner how to make this head to speake.” The Devill told him that he had not that power of himselfe. “Beginner of lyes,” said Fryer Bacon, “I know that thou dost dissemble, and therefore tell it us quickly, or else wee will here bind thee to remaine during our pleasures.” At these threatenings the Devill consented to doe it, and told them, that with a continual fume of the six hottest simples it should have motion, and in one month space speake; the time of the moneth or day hee knew not: also hee told them, that if they heard it not before it had done speaking, all their labour should be lost. They being satisfied, licensed the spirit for to depart.

‘Then went these two learned fryers home againe, and prepared the simples ready, and made the fume, and with continuall watching attended when this Brazen Head would

speake. Thus watched they for three weekes without any rest, so that they were so weary and sleepy that they could not any longer refraine from rest. Then called Fryer Bacon his man Miles, and told him that it was not unknown to him what paines Fryer Bungey and himselfe had taken for three weekes space, onely to make and to heare the Brazen Head speake, which if they did not, then had they lost all their labour, and all England had a great losse thereby; therefore hee intreated Miles that he would watch whilst that they slept, and call them if the head speake. "Fear not, good master," said Miles, "I will not sleepe, but harken and attend upon the head, and if it doe chance to speake, I will call you; therefore I pray take you both your rests and let mee alone for watching this head." After Fryer Bacon had given him a great charge the second time, Fryer Bungey and he went to sleepe, and Miles was lefte alone to watch the Brazen Head. Miles, to keepe him from sleeping, got a tabor and pipe, and being merry disposed, with his owne musicke kept from sleeping at last. After some noyse the head spake these two words, "Time is." Miles, hearing it to speake no more, thought his master would be angry if hee waked him for that, and therefore he let them both sleepe, and began to mocke the head in this manner: "Thou brazen-faced Head, hath my master tooke all these paines about thee, and now dost thou requite him with two words, Time is? Had hee watched with a lawyer so long as hee hath watched with thee, he would have given him more and better words than thou hast yet. If thou canst speake no wiser, they shal sleepe till doomes day for me: Time is! I know Time is, and that

you shall heare, Goodman Brazen-face.

“Time is for some to eate,
Time is for some to sleepe,
Time is for some to laugh,
Time is for some to weepe.

“Time is for some to sing,
Time is for some to pray,
Time is for some to creepe,
That have drunken all the day.

“Do you tell us, copper-nose, when Time is? I hope we schollers know our times, when to drink drunke, when to kiss our hostess, when to goe on her score, and when to pay it – that time comes seldome.” After halfe an houre had passed, the Head did speake againe, two words, which were these, “Time was.” Miles respected these words as little as he did the former, and would not wake them, but still scoffed at the Brazen Head that it had learned no better words, and have such a tutor as his master: and in scorne of it sung this song:

“Time was when thou, a kettle,
wert filled with better matter;
But Fryer Bacon did thee spoyle
when he thy sides did batter.

“Time was when conscience dwelled
with men of occupation;
Time was when lawyers did not thrive
so well by men’s vexation.

“Time was when kings and beggars
of one poore stuff had being;
Time was when office kept no knaves —
that time it was worth seeing.

“Time was a bowle of water
did give the face reflection;
Time was when women knew no paint,
which now they call complexion.

“Time was! I know that, brazen-face, without your telling; I know Time was, and I know what things there was when Time was; and if you speake no wiser, no master shall be waked for mee.” Thus Miles talked and sung till another halfe-houre was gone: then the Brazen Head spake again these words, “Time is past;” and therewith fell downe, and presently followed a terrible noyse, with strange flashes of fire, so that Miles was halfe dead with feare. At this noyse the two Fryers awaked, and wondred to see the whole roome so full of smoake; but that being vanished, they might perceiue the Brazen Head broken and lying on the ground. At this sight they grieved, and called Miles to know how this came. Miles, halfe dead with feare, said that it fell doune of itselfe, and that with the noyse and fire that followed he

was almost frightened out of his wits. Fryer Bacon asked him if hee did not speake? “Yes,” quoth Miles, “it spake, but to no purpose: He have a parret speake better in that time that you have been teaching this Brazen Head.”

“Out on thee, villaine!” said Fryer Bacon; “thou hast undone us both: hadst thou but called us when it did speake, all England had been walled round about with brasse, to its glory and our eternal fames. What were the words it spake?” “Very few,” said Miles, “and those were none of the wisest that I have heard neither. First he said, ‘Time is.’” “Hadst thou called us then,” said Fryer Bacon, “we had been made for ever.” “Then,” said Miles, “half-an-hour after it spake againe, and said, ‘Time was.’” “And wouldst thou not call us then?” said Bungey. “Alas!” said Miles, “I thought hee would have told me some long tale, and then I purposed to have called you: then half-an-houre after he cried, ‘Time is past,’ and made such a noyse that hee hath waked you himselfe, mee thinkes.” At this Fryer Bacon was in such a rage that hee would have beaten his man, but he was restrained by Bungey: but neverthelesse, for his punishment, he with his art struck him dumbe for one whole month’s space. Thus the greate worke of these learned fryers was overthrown, to their great griefes, by this simple fellow.’

The historian goes on to relate many instances of Friar Bacon’s thaumaturgical powers. He captures a town which the king had besieged for three months without success. He puts to shame a German conjuror named Vandermast, and he performs wonders in love affairs; but at length a fatal result to one of his magical

exploits induces him to break to pieces his wonderful glass and doff his conjurer's robe. Then, receiving intelligence of the deaths of Vandermast and Friar Bungey, he falls into a deep grief, so that for three days he refuses to partake of food, and keeps his chamber.

'In the time that Fryer Bacon kept his Chamber, hee fell into divers meditations; sometimes into the vanity of Arts and Sciences; then would he condemne himselfe for studying of those things that were so contrary to his Order soules health; and would say, That magicke made a man a Devill: sometimes would hee meditate on divinity; then would hee cry out upon himselfe for neglecting the study of it, and for studying magicke: sometime would he meditate on the shortnesse of mans life, then would he condemne himself for spending a time so short, so ill as he had done his: so would he goe from one thing to another, and in all condemne his former studies.

'And that the world should know how truly he did repent his wicked life, he caused to be made a great fire; and sending for many of his friends, schollers, and others, he spake to them after this manner: My good friends and fellow students, it is not unknown to you, how that through my Art I have attained to that credit, that few men living ever had: of the wonders that I have done, all England can speak, both King and Commons: I have unlocked the secrets of Art and Nature, and let the world see those things that have layen hid since the death of Hermes,⁵ that rare and

⁵ Hermes Trismegistus ('thrice great'), a fabulous Chaldean philosopher, to whom

profound philosopher: my studies have found the secrets of the Starres; the bookes that I have made of them do serve for precedents to our greatest Doctors, so excellent hath my judgment been therein. I likewise have found out the secrets of Trees, Plants, and Stones, with their severall uses; yet all this knowledge of mine I esteeme so lightly, that I wish that I were ignorant and knew nothing, for the knowledge of these things (as I have truly found) serveth not to better a man in goodnesse, but onely to make him proude and thinke too well of himselfe. What hath all my knowledge of Nature's secrets gained me? Onely this, the losse of a better knowledge, the losse of Divine Studies, which makes the immortal part of man (his soule) blessed. I have found that my knowledge has beene a heavy burden, and has kept downe my good thoughts; but I will remove the cause, which are these Bookes, which I doe purpose here before you all to burne. They all intreated him to spare the bookes, because in them there were those things that after-ages might receive great benefit by. He would not hearken unto them, but threw them all into the fire, and in that flame burnt the greatest learning in the world. Then did he dispose of all his goods; some part he gave to poor schollers, and some he gave to other poore folkes: nothing left he for himselfe: then caused hee to be made in the Church-Wall a Cell, where he locked

I have already made reference. The numerous writings which bear his name were really composed by the Egyptian Platonists; but the mediæval alchemists pretend to recognise in him the founder of their art. Gower, in his 'Confessio Amantis,' says: 'Of whom if I the namè calle, Hermes was one the first of alle, To whom this Art is most applied.' The name of Hermes was chosen because of the supposed magical powers of the god of the caduceus.

himselfe in, and there remained till his Death. His time hee spent in prayer, meditation, and such Divine exercises, and did seeke by all means to perswade men from the study of Magicke. Thus lived hee some two years space in that Cell, never comming forth: his meat and drink he received in at a window, and at that window he had discourse with those that came to him; his grave he digged with his owne nayles, and was there layed when he dyed. Thus was the Life and Death of this famous Fryer, who lived most part of his life a Magician, and dyed a true Penitent Sinner and Anchorite.'

Upon this popular romance Greene, one of the best of the second-class Elizabethan dramatists, founded his rattling comedy, entitled 'The Historye of Fryer Bacon and Fryer Bungay,' which was written, it would seem, in 1589, first acted about 1592, and published in 1594. He does not servilely follow the old story-book, but introduces an under-plot of his own, in which is shown the love of Prince Edward for Margaret, the 'Fair Maid of Fressingfield,' whom the Prince finally surrenders to the man she loves, his favourite and friend, Lacy, Earl of Lincoln.

GREENE'S COMEDY

In Scene I., which takes place near Framlingham, in Suffolk, we find Prince Edward eloquently expatiating on the charms of the Fair Maid to an audience of his courtiers, one of whom advises him, if he would prove successful in his suit, to seek

the assistance of Friar Bacon, a 'brave necromancer,' who 'can make women of devils, and juggle cats into coster-mongers.'⁶ The Prince acts upon this advice.

Scene II. introduces us to Friar Bacon's cell at Brasenose College, Oxford (an obvious anachronism, as the college was not founded until long after Bacon's time). Enter Bacon and his poor scholar, Miles, with books under his arm; also three doctors of Oxford: Burden, Mason, and Clement.

Bacon. Miles, where are you?

Miles.*Hic sum, doctissime et reverendissime Doctor.*
(Here I am, most learned and reverend Doctor.)

Bacon.*Attulisti nostros libros meos de necromantia?* (Hast thou brought my books of necromancy?)

Miles.*Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare libros in unum!* (See how good and how pleasant it is to dwell among books together!)

Bacon. Now, masters of our academic state
That rule in Oxford, viceroys in your place,
Whose heads contain maps of the liberal arts,
Spending your time in depths of learnèd skill,
Why flock you thus to Bacon's secret cell,
A friar newly stalled in Brazen-nose?
Say what's your mind, that I may make reply.
Burden. Bacon, we hear that long we have suspect,
That thou art read in Magic's mystery:

⁶ That is, costard, or apple, mongers.

In pyromancy,⁷ to divine by flames;
To tell by hydromancy, ebbs and tides;
By aeromancy to discover doubts, —
To plain out questions, as Apollo did.

Bacon. Well, Master Burden, what of all this?

Miles. Marry, sir, he doth but fulfil, by rehearsing of these names, the fable of the 'Fox and the Grapes': that which is above us pertains nothing to us.

Burd. I tell thee, Bacon, Oxford makes report,
Nay, England, and the Court of Henry says
Thou'rt making of a Brazen Head by art,
Which shall unfold strange doubts and aphorisms,
And read a lecture in philosophy:

And, by the help of devils and ghastly fiends,
Thou mean'st, ere many years or days be past,
To compass England with a wall of brass.

Bacon. And what of this?

Miles. What of this, master! why, he doth speak mystically; for he knows, if your skill fail to make a Brazen Head, yet Master Waters' strong ale will fit his time to make him have a copper nose...

Bacon. Seeing you come as friends unto the friar,
Resolve you, doctors, Bacon can by books
Make storming Boreas thunder from his cave,
And dim fair Luna to a dark eclipse.
The great arch-ruler, potentate of hell,
Tumbles when Bacon bids him, or his fiends

⁷ See Appendix to the present chapter, p. 58.

Bow to the force of his pentageron.⁸ . . .
I have contrived and framed a head of brass
(I made Belcephon hammer out the stuff),
And that by art shall read philosophy:
And I will strengthen England by my skill,
That if ten Cæsars lived and reigned in Rome,
With all the legions Europe doth contain,
They should not touch a grass of English ground:
The work that Ninus reared at Babylon,
The brazen walls framed by Semiramis,
Carved out like to the portal of the sun,
Shall not be such as rings the English strand
From Dover to the market-place of Rye.

In this patriotic resolution of the potent friar the reader will trace the influence of the national enthusiasm awakened, only a few years before Greene's comedy was written and produced, by the menace of the Spanish Armada.

It is unnecessary to quote the remainder of this scene, in which Bacon proves his magical skill at the expense of the jealous Burden. Scene III. passes at Harleston Fair, and introduces Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, disguised as a rustic, and the comely Margaret. In Scene IV., at Hampton Court, Henry III. receives Elinor of Castile, who is betrothed to his son, Prince Edward, and

⁸ The pentageron, or pentagramma, is a mystic figure produced by prolonging the sides of a regular pentagon till they intersect one another. It can be drawn without a break in the drawing, and, viewed from five sides, exhibits the form of the letter A (pent-alpha), or the figure of the fifth proposition in Euclid's First Book.

arranges with her father, the Emperor, a competition between the great German magician, Jaques Vandermast, and Friar Bacon, 'England's only flower.' In Scene V. we pass on to Oxford, where some comic incidents occur between Prince Edward (in disguise) and his courtiers; and in Scene VI. to Friar Bacon's cell, where the friar shows the Prince in his 'glass prospective,' or magic mirror, the figures of Margaret, Friar Bungay, and Earl Lacy, and reveals the progress of Lacy's suit to the rustic beauty. Bacon summons Bungay to Oxford – straddling on a devil's back – and the scene then changes to the Regent-house, and degenerates into the rudest farce. At Fressingfield, in Scene VIII., we find Prince Edward threatening to slay Earl Lacy unless he gives up to him the Fair Maid of Fressingfield; but, after a struggle, his better nature prevails, and he retires from his suit, leaving Margaret to become the Countess of Lincoln. Scene IX. carries us back to Oxford, where Henry III., the Emperor, and a goodly company have assembled to witness the trial of skill between the English and the German magicians – the first international competition on record! – in which, of course, Vandermast is put to ridicule.

Passing over Scene X. as unimportant, we return, in Scene XI., to Bacon's cell, where the great magician is lying on his bed, with a white wand in one hand, a book in the other, and beside him a lighted lamp. The Brazen Head is there, with Miles, armed, keeping watch over it. Here the dramatist closely follows the old story. The friar falls asleep; the head speaks once and twice, and Miles fails to wake his master. It speaks the third

time. 'A lightning flashes forth, and a hand appears that breaks down the head with a hammer.' Bacon awakes to lament over the ruin of his work, and load the careless Miles with unavailing reproaches. But the whole scene is characteristic enough to merit transcription:

Scene XI. —*Friar Bacon's Cell*

Friar Bacon is discovered lying on a bed, with a white stick in one hand, a book in the other, and a lamp lighted beside him; and the Brazen Head, and Miles with weapons by him.

Bacon. Miles, where are you?

Miles. Here, sir.

Bacon. How chance you tarry so long?

Miles. Think you that the watching of the Brazen Head craves no furniture? I warrant you, sir, I have so armed myself that if all your devils come, I will not fear them an inch.

Bacon. Miles,

Thou know'st that I have divèd into hell,
And sought the darkest palaces of fiends;
That with my magic spells great Belcephon
Hath left his lodge and kneelèd at my cell;
The rafters of the earth rent from the poles,
And three-form'd Luna hid her silver looks,
Tumbling upon her concave continent,

When Bacon read upon his magic book.
With seven years' tossing necromantic charms,
Poring upon dark Hecat's principles,
I have framed out a monstrous head of brass,
That, by the enchanting forces of the devil,
Shall tell out strange and uncouth aphorisms,
And girt fair England with a wall of brass.
Bungay and I have watch'd these threescore days,
And now our vital spirits crave some rest:
If Argus lived and had his hundred eyes,
They could not over-watch Phobetor's⁹ night.
Now, Miles, in thee rests Friar Bacon's weal:
The honour and renown of all his life
Hangs in the watching of this Brazen Head;
Therefore I charge thee by the immortal God
That holds the souls of men within his fist,
This night thou watch; for ere the morning star
Sends out his glorious glister on the north
The Head will speak. Then, Miles, upon thy life
Wake me; for then by magic art I'll work
To end my seven years' task with excellence.
If that a wink but shut thy watchful eye,
Then farewell Bacon's glory and his fame!
Draw close the curtains, Miles: now, for thy life,
Be watchful, and ... (*Falls asleep.*)

Miles. So; I thought you would talk yourself asleep anon;
and 'tis no marvel, for Bungay on the days, and he on the
nights, have watched just these ten and fifty days: now this

⁹ From the Greek φόβος, fear; φόβητρα, bugbears.

is the night, and 'tis my task, and no more. Now, Jesus bless me, what a goodly head it is! and a nose! You talk of *Nos*¹⁰ *autem glorificare*; but here's a nose that I warrant may be called *Nos autem populare* for the people of the parish. Well, I am furnished with weapons: now, sir, I will set me down by a post, and make it as good as a watchman to wake me, if I chance to slumber. I thought, Goodman Head, I would call you out of your *memento*.¹¹ Passion o' God, I have almost broke my pate! (*A great noise.*) Up, Miles, to your task; take your brown-bill in your hand; here's some of your master's hobgoblins abroad.

The Brazen Head (*speaks*). Time is.

Miles. Time is! Why, Master Brazen-Head, you have such a capital nose, and answer you with syllables, 'Time is'? Is this my master's cunning, to spend seven years' study about 'Time is'? Well, sir, it may be we shall have some better orations of it anon: well, I'll watch you as narrowly as ever you were watched, and I'll play with you as the nightingale with the glow-worm; I'll set a prick against my breast.¹² Now rest there, Miles. Lord have mercy upon me, I have almost killed myself. (*A great noise.*) Up, Miles; list how they rumble.

The Brazen Head (*loquitur*). Time was.

¹⁰ Bad puns were evidently common on the stage before the days of Victorian burlesque.

¹¹ So Shakespeare, '1 Hen. IV.,' iii. Falstaff says: 'I make as good use of it as many a man doth of a death's head, or a memento house.'

¹² So in the 'Passionate Pilgrim': 'Save the nightingale alone: She, poor bird, as all forlorn, Leaned her breast uptill a thorn.'

Miles. Well, Friar Bacon, you have spent your seven years' study well, that can make your Head speak but two words at once, 'Time was.' Yea, marry, time was when my master was a wise man; but that was before he began to make the Brazen Head. You shall lie while you ache, and your head speak no better. Well, I will watch, and walk up and down, and be a peripatetician¹³ and a philosopher of Aristotle's stamp. (*A great noise.*) What, a fresh noise? Take thy pistols in hand, Miles. (*A lightning flashes forth, and a Hand appears that breaks down the Head with a hammer.*) Master, master, up! Hell's broken loose! Your Head speaks; and there's such a thunder and lightning, that I warrant all Oxford is up in arms. Out of your bed, and take a brownbill in your hand; the latter day is come.

Bacon. Miles, I come. (*Rises and comes forward.*)

O, passing warily watched!

Bacon will make thee next himself in love.

When spake the Head?

Miles. When spake the Head? Did you not say that he should tell strange principles of philosophy? Why, sir, it speaks but two words at a time.

Bacon. Why, villain, hath it spoken oft?

Miles. Oft! ay, marry hath it, thrice; but in all those three times it hath uttered but seven words.

Bacon. As how?

Miles. Marry, sir, the first time he said, 'Time is,' as if

¹³ A *peripatetic*, or walking philosopher. Observe the facetiousness in 'Aristotle's stamp.' Aristotle was the founder of the Peripatetics.

Fabius Commentator¹⁴ should have pronounced a sentence; then he said, 'Time was;' and the third time, with thunder and lightning, as in great choler, he said, 'Time is past.'

Bacon. 'Tis past, indeed. Ah, villain! Time is past;
My life, my fame, my glory, are all past.

Bacon,

The turrets of thy hope are ruined down,
Thy seven years' study lieth in the dust:
Thy Brazen Head lies broken through a slave
That watched, and would not when the Head did will.
What said the Head first?

Miles. Even, sir, 'Time is.'

Bacon. Villain, if thou hadst called to Bacon then,
If thou hadst watched, and waked the sleepy friar,
The Brazen Head had uttered aphorisms,
And England had been circled round with brass:
But proud Asmenoth,¹⁵ ruler of the North,
And Demogorgon,¹⁶ master of the Fates,

¹⁴ Fabius *Cunctator*, or the Delayer, so called from the policy of delay which he opposed to the vigorous movements of Hannibal. One would suppose that the humour here, such as it is, would hardly be perceptible to a theatrical audience.

¹⁵ In the old German 'Faustbuch,' the title of 'Prince of the North' is given to Beelzebub.

¹⁶ *Demogorgon*, or *Demiourgos*— the creative principle of evil — figures largely in literature. He is first mentioned by Lactantius, in the fourth century; then by Boccaccio, Boiardo, Tasso ('Gierusalemme Liberata'), and Ariosto ('Orlando Furioso'). Marlowe speaks, in 'Tamburlaine,' of 'Gorgon, prince of Hell.' Spenser, in 'The Faery Queen,' refers to — 'Great Gorgon, prince of darkness and dead night, At which Cocytus quakes, and Styx is put to flight.' Milton, in 'Paradise Lost,' alludes to 'the dreaded name of Demogorgon.' Dryden says: 'When the moon arises, and

Grudge that a mortal man should work so much.
Hell trembled at my deep-commanding spells,
Fiends frowned to see a man their over-match;
Bacon might boast more than a man might boast;
But now the braves¹⁷ of Bacon have an end,
Europe's conceit of Bacon hath an end,
His seven years' practice sorteth to ill end:
And, villain, sith my glory hath an end,
I will appoint thee to some fatal end.¹⁸
Villain, avoid! get thee from Bacon's sight!
Vagrant, go, roam and range about the world,
And perish as a vagabond on earth!

Miles. Why, then, sir, you forbid me your service?

Bacon. My service, villain, with a fatal curse,
That direful plagues and mischief fall on thee.

Miles. 'Tis no matter, I am against you with the old proverb, 'The more the fox is cursed, the better he fares.' God be with you, sir: I'll take but a book in my hand, a wide-sleeved gown on my back, and a crowned cap¹⁹ on my head, and see if I can merit promotion.

Bacon. Some fiend or ghost haunt on thy weary steps,

Demogorgon walks his round.' And he is one of the *dramatis personæ* of Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound': 'Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom... A mighty Darkness, filling the seat of power.'

¹⁷ Boasts. So in Peele's 'Edward I': 'As thou to England brought'st thy Scottish braves.'

¹⁸ This reiteration of the same final word, for the sake of emphasis, is found in Shakespeare.

¹⁹ A corner or college cap.

Until they do transport thee quick to Hell!
For Bacon shall have never any day,
To lose the fame and honour of his Head.

[Exeunt.]

Scene XII. passes in King Henry's Court, and the royal consent is given to Earl Lacy's marriage with the Fair Maid, which is fixed to take place on the same day as Prince Edward's marriage to the Princess Elinor. In Scene XIII. we again go back to Bacon's cell. The friar is bewailing the destruction of his Brazen Head to Friar Bungay, when two young gentlemen, named Lambert and Sealsby, enter, in order to look into the 'glass prospective,' and see how their fathers are faring. Unhappily, at this very moment, the elder Lambert and Sealsby, having quarrelled, are engaged 'in combat hard by Fressingfield,' and stab each other to the death, whereupon their sons immediately come to blows, with a like fatal result. Bacon, deeply affected, breaks the magic crystal which has been the unwitting cause of so sad a catastrophe, expresses his regret that he ever dabbled in the unholy science, and announces his resolve to spend the remainder of his life 'in pure devotion.'

At Fressingfield, in Scene XIV., the opportune arrival of Lacy and his friends prevents Margaret from carrying out her intention of retiring to the nunnery at Framlingham, and with obliging readiness she consents to marry the Earl. Scene XV. shifts to Bacon's cell, where a devil complains that the friar hath raised him from the darkest deep to search about the world for Miles,

his man, and torment him in punishment for his neglect of orders.

Miles makes his appearance, and after some comic dialogue, intended to tickle the ears of the groundlings, mounts astride the demon's back, and goes off to – ! In Scene XVI., and last, we return to the Court, where royalty makes a splendid show, and the two brides – the Princess Elinor and the Countess Margaret – display their rival charms. Of course the redoubtable friar is present, and in his concluding speech leaps over a couple of centuries to make a glowing compliment to Queen Elizabeth, which seems worth quotation:

‘I find by deep prescience of mine art,
Which once I tempered in my secret cell,
That here where Brute did build his Troynovant,²⁰
From forth the royal garden of a King
Shall flourish out so rich and fair a bud,
Whose brightness shall deface proud Phœbus’ flower,
And overshadow Albion with her leaves.
Till then Mars shall be master of the field,
But then the stormy threats of war shall cease:
The horse shall stamp as careless of the pike,
Drums shall be turned to timbrels of delight;
With wealthy favours Plenty shall enrich
The strand that gladdened wandering Brute to see,
And peace from heaven shall harbour in these leaves
That gorgeous beautify this matchless flower:

²⁰ An allusion to the old legend that Brut, or Brutus, great-grandson of Æneas, founded New Troy (Troynovant), or London.

Apollo's heliotropian²¹ then shall stoop,
And Venus' hyacinth²² shall veil her top;
Juno shall shut her gilliflowers up,
And Pallas' bay shall 'bash her brightest green;
Ceres' carnation, in consort with those,
Shall stoop and wonder at Diana's rose.'²³

So much for Greene's comedy of 'Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay' – not, on the whole, a bad piece of work.

Among the earlier English alchemists I may next name, in chronological order, George Ripley, canon of Bridlington, who, in 1471, dedicated to King Edward III. his once celebrated 'Compound of Alchemy; or, The Twelve Gates leading to the Discovery of the Philosopher's Stone.' These 'gates,' each of which he describes in detail, but with little enlightenment to the uninitiated reader, are: – 1. Calcination; 2. Solution; 3. Separation; 4. Conjunction; 5. Putrefaction; 6. Congelation; 7. Cibation; 8. Sublimation; 9. Fermentation; 10. Exaltation; 11. Multiplication; and 12. Projection. In his old age Ripley learned wisdom, and frankly acknowledged that he had wasted his life upon an empty pursuit. He requested all men, if they met with any of the five-and-twenty treatises of which he was the author, to consign them to the flames as absolutely vain and worthless.

²¹ Probably the reference is to the sunflower.

²² The classic writers usually identify the hyacinth with Apollo.

²³ The rose, that is, of the Virgin Queen – an English Diana – Elizabeth. In Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream' (Act iv., scene 1) we read of 'Diana's bud.'

Yet there is a wild story that he actually discovered the ‘magisterium,’ and was thereby enabled to send a gift of £100,000 to the Knights of St. John, to assist them in their defence of Rhodes against the Turks.

Thomas Norton, of Bristol, was the author of ‘The Ordinall of Alchemy’ (printed in London in 1652). He is said to have been a pupil of Ripley, under whom (at the age of 28) he studied for forty days, and in that short time acquired a thorough knowledge of ‘the perfection of chemistry.’ Ripley, however, refused to instruct so young a man in the master-secret of the great science, and the process from ‘the white’ to ‘the red powder,’ so that Norton was compelled to rely on his own skill and industry. Twice in his labours a sad disappointment overtook him. On one occasion he had almost completed the tincture, when the servant whom he employed to look after the furnace decamped with it, supposing that it was fit for use. On another it was stolen by the wife of William Canning, Mayor of Bristol, who immediately sprang into immense wealth, and as some amends, I suppose, for his ill-gotten gains, built the beautiful steeple of the church of St. Mary, Redcliffe – the church afterwards connected with the sad story of Chatterton. As for Norton, he seems to have lived in poverty and died in poverty (1477).

The ‘Ordinall of Alchemy’ is a tedious panegyric of the science, interspersed with a good deal of the vague talk about white and red stones and the philosophical magnesia in which ‘the adepts’ delighted.

To Norton we owe our scanty knowledge of Thomas Dalton, who flourished about the middle of the fifteenth century. He had the reputation of being a devout Churchman until he was accused by a certain Debois of possessing the powder of projection. Debois roundly asserted that Norton had made him a thousand pounds of gold (lucky man!) in less than twelve hours. Whereupon Dalton simply said, 'Sir, you are forsworn.' His explanation was that he had received the powder from a canon of Lichfield, on undertaking not to use it until after the canon's death; and that since he had been so troubled by his possession of it, that he had secretly destroyed it. One Thomas Herbert, a squire of King Edward, waylaid the unfortunate man, and shut him up in the castle of Gloucester, putting heavy pressure upon him to make the coveted tincture. But this Dalton would not and could not do; and after a captivity of four years, Herbert ordered him to be brought out and executed in his presence. He obeyed the harsh summons with great delight, exclaiming, 'Blessed art Thou, Lord Jesus! I have been too long absent from Thee. The science Thou gavest me I have kept without ever abusing it; I have found no one fit to be my heir; wherefore, sweet Lord, I will restore Thy gift to Thee again.'

'Then, after some devout prayer, with a smiling countenance he desired the executioner to proceed. Tears gushed from the eyes of Herbert when he beheld him so willing to die, and saw that no ingenuity could wrest his secret from him. He gave orders for his release. His imprisonment and threatened execution were

contrived without the King's knowledge to intimidate him into compliance. The iniquitous devices having failed, Herbert did not dare to take away his life. Dalton rose from the block with a heavy countenance, and returned to his abbey, much grieved at the further prolongation of his earthly sojourn. Herbert died shortly after this atrocious act of tyranny, and Debois also came to an untimely end. His father, Sir John Debois, was slain at the battle of Tewkesbury, May 4, 1471; and two days after, as recorded in Stow's "Annales," he himself (James Debois) was taken, with several others of the Lancastrian party, from a church where they had fled for sanctuary, and was beheaded on the spot.'

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I

The ancient magic included various kinds of divination, of which the principal may here be catalogued:

Aeromancy, or divination from the air. If the wind blew from the east, it signified good fortune (which is certainly not the general opinion!); from the west, evil; from the south, calamity; from the north, disclosure of what was secret; from all quarters simultaneously (!), hail and rain.

Axinomancy, practised by the Greeks, more particularly for the purpose of discovering criminals. An axe poised upon a stake, or an agate on a red-hot axe, was supposed by its movement to indicate the offender. Or the names of suspected persons were called out, and the movement of the axe at a particular name was

understood to certify guilt.

Belomancy, in use among the Arabs, was practised by means of arrows, which were shot off, with written labels attached to them; and the inscription on the arrow first picked up was accepted as prophetic.

Bibliomancy, divining by means of the Bible, survived to a comparatively recent period. The passage which first caught the eye, on a Bible being opened haphazard, was supposed to indicate the future. This was identical with the *Sortes Virgilianæ*, the only difference being that in the latter, Virgil took the place of the Bible. Everybody knows in connection with the *Sortes* the story of Charles I. and Lord Falkland.

Botanomancy, divining by means of plants and flowers, can hardly be said to be extinct even now. In Goethe's 'Faust,' Gretchen seeks to discover whether Faust returns her affection by plucking, one after another, the petals of a star-flower (*sternblume*, perhaps the china-aster), while she utters the alternate refrains, 'He loves me!' 'He loves me not!' as she plucks the last petal, exclaiming rapturously, 'He loves me!' According to Theocritus, the Greeks used the poppy-flower for this purpose.

Capnomancy, divination by smoke, the ancients practised in two ways: they threw seeds of jasmine or poppy in the fire, watching the motion and density of the smoke they emitted, or they observed the sacrificial smoke. If the smoke was thin, and shot up in a straight line, it was a good omen.

Cheiromancy (or Palmistry), divination by the hand, was worked up into an elaborate system by Paracelsus, Cardan, and others. It has long been practised by the gipsies, by itinerant fortune-tellers, and other cheats; and recently an attempt has been made to give it a fashionable character.

Coscinomancy was practised by means of a sieve and a pair of shears or forceps. The forceps or shears were used to suspend a sieve, which moved (like the axe in axinomancy) when the name of a guilty person was mentioned.

Crystallomancy, divining by means of a crystal globe, mirror, or beryl. Of this science of prediction, Dr. Dee was the great English professor; but the reader will doubtless remember the story of the Earl of Surrey and his fair 'Geraldine.'

Geomancy, divination by casting pebbles on the ground.

Hydromancy, divination by water, in which the diviner showed the figure of an absent person. 'In this you conjure the spirits into water; there they are constrained to show themselves, as Marcus Varro testifieth, when he writeth how he had seen a boy in the water, who announced to him in a hundred and fifty verses the end of the Mithridatic war.'

Oneiromancy, divination by dreams, is still credited by old women of both sexes. Absurdly baseless as it is, it found believers in the old time among men of culture and intellectual force. Archbishop Laud attached so much importance to his dreams that he frequently recorded them in his diary; and even Lord Bacon seems to have thought that a prophetic meaning was

occasionally concealed in them.

Onychomancy, or *Onymancy*, divination by means of the nails of an unpolluted boy.

Pyromancy, divination by fire. ‘The wife of Cicero is said, when, after performing sacrifice, she saw a flame suddenly leap forth from the ashes, to have prophesied the consulship to her husband for the same year.’ Others resorted to the blaze of a torch of pitch, which was painted with certain colours. It was a good omen if the flame ran into a point; bad when it divided. A thin-tongued flame announced glory; if it went out, it signified danger; if it hissed, misfortune.

Rabdomancy, divination by the rod or wand, is mentioned by Ezekiel. The use of a hazel-rod to trace the existence of water or of a seam of coal seems a survival of this practice. But enough of these follies:

‘Necro-, pyro-, geo-, hydro-, cheiro-, coscinomancy,
With other vain and superstitious sciences.’

Tomkis, ‘*Albumazar*,’ ii. 3.

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF DR. JOHN DEE

The world must always feel curious to know the exact moment when its great men first drew the breath of life; and it is satisfactory, therefore, to be able to state, on the weighty authority of Dr. Thomas Smith, that Dr. John Dee, the famous magician and ‘philosopher,’ was born at forty minutes past four o’clock on the morning of July 13, 1527. According to the picturesque practice of latter-day biographers, here I ought to describe a glorious summer sunrise, the golden light spreading over hill and pasture, the bland warm air stealing into the chamber where lay the mother and her infant; but I forbear, as, for all I know, this particular July morning may have been cloudy, cold, and wet; besides, John, the son of Rowland Dee, was born in London. From like want of information I refrain from comments on Master Dee’s early bringing-up and education. But it is reported that he gave proof of so exceptional a capacity, and of such a love of letters, that, at the early age of fifteen, he was sent to the University of Cambridge, to study the classics and the old scholastic philosophy. There, for three years, he was so vehemently bent, he says, on the acquisition of learning, that he spent eighteen hours a day on his books, reserving two only for his meals and recreation, and four for sleep – an unhealthy division of time, which probably over-stimulated his

cerebral system and predisposed him to delusions and caprices of the imagination. Having taken his degree of B.A., he crossed the seas in 1547 'to speak and confer' with certain learned men, chiefly mathematicians, such as Gemma Frisius, Gerardus Mercator, Gaspar a Morica, and Antonius Gogara; of whom the only one now remembered is Mercator, as the inventor of a method of laying down hydrographical charts, in which the parallels and meridians intersect each other at right angles. After spending some months in the Low Countries he returned home, bringing with him 'the first astronomer's staff of brass that was made of Gemma Frisius' devising, the two great globes of Gerardus Mercator's making, and the astronomer's ring of brass (as Gemma Frisius had newly framed it).'

Returning to the classic shades of Granta, he began to record his observations of 'the heavenly influences in this elemental portion of the world;' and I suppose it was in recognition of his scientific scholarship that Henry VIII. appointed him to a fellowship at Trinity College, and Greek under-reader. In the latter capacity he superintended, in 1548, the performance of the *Ειρηνη* of Aristophanes, introducing among 'the effects' an artificial scarabæus, which ascended, with a man and his wallet of provisions on its back, to Jupiter's palace. This ingenious bit of mechanism delighted the spectators, but, after the manner of the time, was ascribed to Dee's occultism, and he found it convenient to retire to the Continent (1548), residing for awhile at Louvain, and devoting himself to hermetic researches, and

afterwards at Paris (1580), where he delivered scientific lectures to large and distinguished audiences. 'My auditory in Rhemes Colledge,' he says, 'was so great, and the most part older than my selfe, that the mathematicall schooles could not hold them; for many were faine, without the schooles, at the windowes, to be auditors and spectators, as they best could help themselves thereto. I did also dictate upon every proposition, beside the first exposition. And by the first foure principall definitions representing to the eyes (which by imagination onely are exactly to be conceived), a greater wonder arose among the beholders, than of my Aristophanes Scarabæus mounting up to the top of Trinity-hall in Cambridge.'

The accomplishments of this brilliant scientific mountebank being noised abroad over all Europe, the wonderful story reached the remote Court of the Muscovite, who offered him, if he would take up his residence at Moscow, a stipend of £2,000 per annum, his diet also to be allowed to him free out of 'the Emperor's own kitchen, and his place to be ranked amongst the highest sort of the nobility there, and of his privy councillors.' Was ever scholar so tempted before or since? In those times, the Russian Court seems to have held *savants* and scholars in as much esteem as nowadays it holds *prima-donnas* and *ballerines*. Dee also received advantageous proposals from four successive Emperors of Germany (Charles V., Ferdinand, Maximilian II., and Rudolph II.), but the Muscovite's outbade them all. A residence in the heart of Russia had no attraction, however, for

the Oxford scholar, who, in 1551, returned to England with a halo of fame playing round his head (to speak figuratively, as Dee himself loved to do), which recommended him to the celebrated Greek professor at Cambridge, Sir John Cheke. Cheke introduced him to Mr. Secretary Cecil, as well as to Edward VI., who bestowed upon him a pension of 100 crowns per annum (speedily exchanged, in 1553, for the Rectory of Upton-upon-Severn). At first he met with favour from Queen Mary; but the close correspondence he maintained with the Princess Elizabeth, who appreciated his multifarious scholarship, exposed him to suspicion, and he was accused of practising against the Queen's life by divers enchantments. Arrested and imprisoned (at Hampton Court), he was subjected to rigorous examinations, and as no charge of treason could be proved against him, was remitted to Bishop Bonner as a possible heretic. But his enemies failed again in their malicious intent, and in 1555 he received his liberty. Imprisonment and suffering had not quenched his activity of temper, and almost immediately upon his release he solicited the Queen's assent to a plan for the restoration and preservation of certain precious manuscripts of classical antiquity. He solicited in vain.

When Elizabeth came to the throne, Dee, as a proficient in the occult arts, was consulted by Dudley (afterwards Earl of Leicester) as to the most suitable and auspicious day for her coronation. She testified to her own belief in his skill by employing him, when her image in wax had been discovered in

Lincoln's Inn Fields, to counteract the evil charm. But he owed her favour, we may assume, much more to his learning, which was really extensive, than to his supposed magical powers. He tells us that, shortly before her coronation, she summoned him to Whitehall, remarking to his patrons, Dudley and the Earl of Pembroke, 'Where my brother hath given him a crown, I will give him a noble.' She was certainly more liberal to Dee than to many of her servants who were much more deserving. In December, 1564, she granted him the reversion of the Deanery of Gloucester. Not long afterwards his friends recommended him for the Provostship of Eton College. 'Favourable answers' were returned, but he never received the Provostship. He obtained permission, however, to hold for ten years the two rectories of Upton and Long Ledenham. Later in her reign (July, 1583), when two great nobles invited themselves to dine with him, he was compelled to decline the honour on account of his poverty. The Queen, on being apprised of this incident, sent him a present of forty angels of gold. We shall come upon other proofs of her generosity.

Dee was travelling on the Continent in 1571, and on his way through Lorraine was seized with a dangerous sickness; whereupon the Queen not only sent 'carefully and with great speed' two of her physicians, but also the honourable Lord Sidney 'in a manner to tend on him,' and 'to discern how his health bettered, and to comfort him from her Majesty with divers very pithy speeches and gracious, and also with divers rarities to eat, to

increase his health and strength.' Philosophers and men of letters, when they are ailing, meet with no such pleasant attentions nowadays! But the list of Elizabeth's bounties is not yet ended. The much-travelling scholar, who saw almost as much of cities and men and manners as Odysseus himself, had wandered into the farthest parts of the kingdom of Bohemia; and that no evil might come to him, or his companion, or their families, she sent them her most princely and royal letters of safe-conduct. After his return home, a little before Christmas, 1589, hearing that he was unable to keep house as liberally as became his position and repute, she promised to assist him with the gift of a hundred pounds, and once or twice repeated the promise on his coming into her presence. Fifty pounds he *did* receive, with which to keep his Christmas merrily, but what became of the other moiety he was never able to discover. A malignant influence frequently interposed, it would seem, between the Queen's benevolence in intention and her charity in action; and the unfortunate doctor was sometimes tantalized with promises of good things which failed to be realized. On the whole, however, I do not think he had much to complain of; and the reproach of parsimony so often levelled at great Gloriana would certainly not apply to her treatment of Dr. Dee.

She honoured him with several visits at Mortlake, where he had a pleasant house close by the riverside, and a little to the westward of the church – surrounded by gardens and green fields, with bright prospects of the shining river. Elizabeth always came

down from Whitehall on horseback, attended by a brave retinue of courtiers; and as she passed along, her loyal subjects stood at their doors, or lined the roadside, making respectful bows and curtsseys, and crying, 'God save the Queen!' One of these royal visits was made on March 10, 1575, the Queen desiring to see the doctor's famous library; but learning that he had buried his wife only four hours before, she refused to enter the house. Dee, however, submitted to her inspection his magic crystal, or 'black stone,' and exhibited some of its marvellous properties; her Majesty, for the better examination of the same, being taken down from her horse 'by the Earl of Leicester, by the Church wall of Mortlack.'

She was at Dr. Dee's again on September 17, 1580. This time she came from Richmond in her coach, a wonderfully cumbrous vehicle, drawn by six horses; 'and when she was against my garden in the field,' says the doctor, 'her Majestie staide there a good while, and then came into the street at the great gate of the field, where her Majestie espied me at my dore, making reverent and dutifull obeysance unto her, and with her hand her Majestie beckoned for me to come to her, and I came to her coach side; her Majestie then very speedily pulled off her glove, and gave me her hand to kiss; and to be short, her Majestie wished me to resort oftener to her Court, and by some of her Privy Chamber to give her Majestie to wete (know) when I came there.'

Another visit took place on October 10, 1580: – 'The Queenes Majestie to my great comfort (*horâ quintâ*) came with her train

from the Court, and at my dore graciously calling me unto her, on horseback exhorted me briefly to take my mother's death patiently; and withal told me, that the Lord Treasurer had greatly commended my doings for her title royall, which he had to examine. The which title in two rolls of velome parchment his Honour had some houres before brought home, and delivered to Mr. Hudson for me to receive at my coming from my mother's buriall at church. Her Majestie remembered also then, how at my wives buriall it was her fortune likewise to call upon me at my house, as before is noted.'

Dee's library – as libraries went then – was not unworthy of royal inspection. Its proud possessor computed it to be worth £2,000, which, at the present value of money, would be equal, I suppose, to £10,000. It consisted of about 4,000 volumes, bound and unbound, a fourth part being MSS. He speaks of four 'written books' – one in Greek, two in French, and one in High Dutch – as having cost him £533, and inquires triumphantly what must have been the value of some hundred of the best of all the other written books, some of which were the *autographia* of excellent and seldom-heard-of authors? He adds that he spent upwards of forty years in collecting this library from divers places beyond the seas, and with much research and labour in England.

Of the 'precious books' thus collected, Dee does not mention the titles; but he has recorded the rare and exquisitely made 'instruments mathematical' which belonged to him: An excellent, strong, and fair quadrant, first made by that famous Richard

Chancellor who boldly carried his discovery-ships past the Icy Cape, and anchored them in the White Sea. There was also an excellent *radius astronomicus*, of ten feet in length, the staff and cross very curiously divided into equal parts, after Richard Chancellor's quadrant manner. Item, two globes of Mercator's best making: on the celestial sphere Dee, with his own hand, had set down divers comets, their places and motions, according to his individual observation. Item, divers other instruments, as the theorie of the eighth sphere, the ninth and tenth, with an horizon and meridian of copper, made by Mercator specially for Dr. Dee. Item, sea-compasses of different kinds. Item, a magnet-stone, commonly called a loadstone, of great virtue. Also an excellent watch-clock, made by one Dibbley, 'a notable workman, long since dead,' by which the time might sensibly be measured in the seconds of an hour – that is, not to fail the 360th part of an hour. We need not dwell upon his store of documents relating to Irish and Welsh estates, and of ancient seals of arms; but my curiosity, I confess, is somewhat stirred by his reference to 'a great bladder,' with about four pounds weight of 'a very sweetish thing,' like a brownish gum, in it, artificially prepared by thirty times purifying, which the doctor valued at upwards of a hundred crowns.

While engaged in learned studies and correspondence with learned men, Dee found time to indulge in those wild semi-mystical, transcendental visions which engaged the imagination of so many mediæval students. The secret of 'the philosopher's

stone' led him into fascinating regions of speculation, and the ecstasies of Rosicrucianism dazzled him with the idea of holding communication with the inhabitants of the other world. How far he was sincere in these pursuits, how far he imparted into them a spirit of charlatanry, I think it is impossible to determine. Perhaps one may venture to say that, if to some small extent an impostor, he was, to a much larger extent, a dupe; that if he deceived others, he also deceived himself; nor is he, as biography teaches, the only striking example of the credulous enthusiast who mingles with his enthusiasm, more or less unconsciously, a leaven of hypocrisy. As early as 1571 he complains, in the preface to his 'English Euclid,' that he is jeered at by the populace as a conjurer. By degrees, it is evident, he begins to feel a pride in his magical attainments. He records with the utmost gravity his remarkable dreams, and endeavours to read the future by them. He insists, moreover, on strange noises which he hears in his chamber. In those days a favourite method of summoning the spirits was to bring them into a glass or stone which had been prepared for the purpose; and in his diary, under the date of May 25, 1581, he records – for the first time – that he had held intercourse in this way with supra-mundane beings.

Combining with his hermetico-magical speculations religious exercises of great fervour, he was thus engaged, one day in November, 1582, when suddenly upon his startled vision rose the angel Uriel 'at the west window of his laboratory,' and presented him with a translucent stone, or crystal, of convex

shape, possessing the wonderful property of introducing its owner to the closest possible communication with the world of spirits. It was necessary at times that this so-called mirror should be turned in different positions before the observer could secure the right focus; and then the spirits appeared on its surface, or in different parts of the room by reason of its action. Further, only one person, whom Dee calls the *skryer*, or seer, could discover the spirits, or hear and interpret their voices, just as there can be but one medium, I believe, at a spiritualistic séance of the present day. But, of course, it was requisite that, while the medium was absorbed in his all-important task, some person should be at hand to describe what he saw, or professed to see, and commit to paper what he heard, or professed to hear; and a seer with a lively imagination and a fluent tongue could go very far in both directions. This humbler, secondary position Dee reserved for himself. Probably his invention was not sufficiently fertile for the part of a medium, or else he was too much in earnest to practise an intentional deception. As the crystal showed him nothing, he himself said so, and looked about for someone more sympathetic, or less conscientious. His choice fell at first on a man named Barnabas Saul, and he records in his diary how, on October 9, 1581, this man 'was strangely troubled by a spiritual creature about midnight.' In a MS. preserved in the British Museum, he relates some practices which took place on December 2, beginning his account with this statement: 'I willed the skryer, named Saul, to looke into my great crystalline globe,

if God had sent his holy angel Azrael, or no.' But Saul was a fellow of small account, with a very limited inventive faculty, and on March 6, 1582, he was obliged to confess 'that he neither heard nor saw any spiritual creature any more.' Dee and his inefficient, unintelligent skryer then quarrelled, and the latter was dismissed, leaving behind him an unsavoury reputation.

EDWARD KELLY

Soon afterwards our magician made the acquaintance of a certain Edward Kelly (or Talbot), who was in every way fitted for the mediumistic *rôle*. He was clever, plausible, impudent, unscrupulous, and a most accomplished liar. A native of Worcester, where he was born in 1555, he was bred up, according to one account, as a druggist, according to another as a lawyer; but all accounts agree that he became an adept in every kind of knavery. He was pilloried, and lost his ears (or at least was condemned to lose them) at Lancaster, for the offence of coining, or for forgery; afterwards retired to Wales, assumed the name of Kelly, and practised as a conjurer and alchemist. A story is told of him which illustrates the man's unhesitating audacity, or, at all events, the notoriety of his character: that he carried with him one night into the park of Walton-le-Dale, near Preston, a man who thirsted after a knowledge of the future, and, when certain incantations had been completed, caused his servants to dig up a corpse, interred only the day before, that he might compel it

to answer his questions.

How he got introduced to Dr. Dee I do not profess to know; but I am certainly disinclined to accept the wonderful narrative which Mr. Waite renders in so agreeable a style – that Kelly, during his Welsh sojourn, was shown an old manuscript which his landlord, an innkeeper, had obtained under peculiar circumstances. ‘It had been discovered in the tomb of a bishop who had been buried in a neighbouring church, and whose tomb had been sacrilegiously up-torn by some fanatics,’ in the hope of securing the treasures reported to be concealed within it. They found nothing, however, but the aforesaid manuscript, and two small ivory bottles, respectively containing a ponderous white and red powder. ‘These pearls beyond price were rejected by the pigs of apostasy: one of them was shattered on the spot, and its ruddy, celestine contents for the most part lost. The remnant, together with the remaining bottle and the unintelligible manuscript, were speedily disposed of to the innkeeper in exchange for a skinful of wine.’ The innkeeper, in his turn, parted with them for one pound sterling to Master Edward Kelly, who, believing he had obtained a hermetic treasure, hastened to London to submit it to Dr. Dee.

This accomplished and daring knave was engaged by the credulous doctor as his skryer, at a salary of £50 per annum, with ‘board and lodging,’ and all expenses paid. These were liberal terms; but it must be admitted that Kelly earned them. Now, indeed, the crystal began to justify its reputation! Spirits

came as thick as blackberries, and voices as numerous as those of rumour! Kelly's amazing fertility of fancy never failed his employer, upon whose confidence he established an extraordinary hold, by judiciously hinting doubts as to the propriety of the work he had undertaken. How could a man be other than trustworthy, when he frankly expressed his suspicions of the *mala fides* of the spirits who responded to the summons of the crystal? It was impossible – so the doctor argued – that so candid a medium could be an impostor, and while resenting the imputations cast upon the 'spiritual creatures,' he came to believe all the more strongly in the man who slandered them. The difference of opinion gave rise, of course, to an occasional quarrel. On one occasion (in April, 1582) Kelly specially provoked his employer by roundly asserting that the spirits were demons sent to lure them to their destruction; and by complaining that he was confined in Dee's house as in a prison, and that it would be better for him to be near Cotsall Plain, where he might walk abroad without danger.

Some time in 1583 a certain 'Lord Lasky,' that is, Albert Laski or Alasco, prince or waiwode of Siradia in Poland, and a guest at Elizabeth's Court, made frequent visits to Dee's house, and was admitted to the spirit exhibitions of the crystal. It has been suggested that Kelly had conceived some ambitious projects, which he hoped to realize through the agency of this Polish noble, and that he made use of the crystal to work upon his imagination. Thenceforward the spirits were continually hinting

at great European revolutions, and uttering vague predictions of some extraordinary good fortune which was in preparation for Alasco. On May 28 Dee and Kelly were sitting in the doctor's study, discussing the prince's affairs, when suddenly appeared – perhaps it was an optical trick of the ingenious Kelly – ‘a spiritual creature, like a pretty girl of seven or nine years of age, attired on her head, with her hair rowled up before, and hanging down very long behind, with a gown of soy, changeable green and red, and with a train; she seemed to play up and down, and seemed to go in and out behind my books, lying in heaps; and as she should ever go between them, the books seemed to give place sufficiently, dividing one heap from the other while she passed between them. And so I considered, and heard the diverse reports which E. K. made unto this pretty maid, and I said, “Whose maiden are you?”’ Here follows the conversation – inane and purposeless enough, and yet deemed worthy of preservation by the credulous doctor:

DOCTOR DEE'S CONVERSATION WITH THE SPIRITUAL CREATURE.

She. Whose man are you?

Dee. I am the servant of God, both by my bound duty, and also (I hope) by His adoption.

A Voice. You shall be beaten if you tell.

She. Am not I a fine maiden? give me leave to play in your house; my mother told me she would come and dwell here.

(She went up and down with most lively gestures of a young girl playing by herself, and divers times another spake

to her from the corner of my study by a great perspective glasse, but none was seen beside herself.)

She. Shall I? I will. (*Now she seemed to answer me in the foresaid corner of my study.*) I pray you let me tarry a little? (*Speaking to me in the foresaid corner.*)

Dee. Tell me what you are.

She. I pray you let me play with you a little, and I will tell you who I am.

Dee. In the name of Jesus then, tell me.

She. I rejoice in the name of Jesus, and I am a poor little maiden; I am the last but one of my mother's children; I have little baby children at home.

Dee. Where is your home?

She. I dare not tell you where I dwell, I shall be beaten.

Dee. You shall not be beaten for telling the truth to them that love the truth; to the Eternal Truth all creatures must be obedient.

She. I warrant you I will be obedient; my sisters say they must all come and dwell with you.

Dee. I desire that they who love God should dwell with me, and I with them.

She. I love you now you talk of God.

Dee. Your eldest sister – her name is Esiměli.

She. My sister is not so short as you make her.

Dee. O, I cry you mercy! she is to be pronounced Esimīli!

Kelly. She smileth; one calls her, saying, Come away, maiden.

She. I will read over my gentlewomen first; my master

Dee will teach me if I say amiss.

Dee. Read over your gentlewomen, as it pleaseth you.

She. I have gentlemen and gentlewomen; look you here.

Kelly. She bringeth a little book out of her pocket. She pointeth to a picture in the book.

She. Is not this a pretty man?

Dee. What is his name?

She. My (mother) saith his name is Edward: look you, he hath a crown upon his head; my mother saith that this man was Duke of York.

And so on.

The question here suggests itself, Was this passage of nonsense Dr. Dee's own invention? And has he compiled it for the deception of posterity? I do not believe it. It is my firm conviction that he recorded in perfect good faith – though I own my opinion is not very complimentary to his intelligence – the extravagant rigmarole dictated to him by the arch-knave Kelly, who, very possibly, added to his many ingenuities some skill in the practices of the ventriloquist. No great amount of artifice can have been necessary for successfully deceiving so admirable a subject for deception as the credulous Dee. It is probable that Dee may sometimes have suspected he was being imposed upon; but we may be sure he was very unwilling to admit it, and that he did his best to banish from his mind so unwelcome a suspicion. As for Kelly, it seems clear that he had conceived some widely ambitious and daring scheme, which, as I have said, he hoped to carry out through the instrumentality of

Alasco, whose interest he endeavoured to stimulate by flattering his vanity, and representing the spiritual creature as in possession of a pedigree which traced his descent from the old Norman family of the Lacys.

With an easy invention which would have done credit to the most prolific of romancists, he daily developed the characters of his pretended visions.²⁴ Consulting the crystal on June 2, he professed to see a spirit in the garb of a husbandman, and this spirit rhodomontaded in mystical language about the great work Alasco was predestined to accomplish in the conversion and regeneration of the world. Before this invisible fictionist retired into his former obscurity, Dee petitioned him to use his influence on behalf of a woman who had committed suicide, and of another who had dreamed of a treasure hidden in a cellar. Other interviews succeeded, in the course of which much more was said about the coming purification of humanity, and it was announced that a new code of laws, moral and religious, would be entrusted to Dee and his companions. What a pity that this code was never forthcoming! A third spirit, a maiden named Galerah, made her appearance, all whose revelations bore upon Alasco,

²⁴ 'Adeo viro præ credulo errore jam factus sui impos et mente captus, et Dæmones, quo arctius horrendis hisce Sacris adhærescent illius ambitioni vanæ summæ potestatis in Patria adipiscendæ spe et expectatione lene euntis illum non solius Poloniæ sed alterius quoque regni, id est primo Poloniæ, deinde alterius, viz. Moldaviæ Regem fore, et sub quo magnæ universi mundi mutationes incepturas esse, Judæos convertendos, et ab illo Saræmos et Ethnicos vexillo crucis superandos, facili ludificarentur.' – Dr. Thomas Smith, 'Vitæ Eruditissimorum ac Illustrium Virorum,' London, 1707. 'Vita Joannis Dee,' p. 25.

and the greatness for which he was reserved: 'I say unto thee, his name is in the Book of Life. The sun shall not passe his course before he be a king. His counsel shall breed alteration of his State, yea, of the whole world. What wouldst thou know of him?'

'If his kingdom shall be of Poland,' answered Dee, 'in what land else?'

'Of two kingdoms,' answered Galerah.

'Which? I beseech you.'

'The one thou hast repeated, and the other he seeketh as his right.'

'God grant him,' exclaimed the pious doctor, 'sufficient direction to do all things so as may please the highest of his calling.'

'He shall want no direction,' replied Galerah, 'in anything he desireth.'

Whether Kelly's invention began to fail him, or whether it was a desire to increase his influence over his dupe, I will not decide; but at this time he revived his pretended conscientious scruples against dealing with spirits, whom he calumniously declared to be ministers of Satan, and intimated his intention of departing from the unhallowed precincts of Mortlake. But the doctor could not bear with equanimity the loss of a skryer who rendered such valuable service, and watched his movements with the vigilance of alarm. It was towards the end of June, the month made memorable by such important revelations, that Kelly announced, one day, his design of riding from Mortlake to Islington, on some

private business. The doctor's fears were at once awakened, and he fell into a condition of nervous excitement, which, no doubt, was exactly what Kelly had hoped to provoke. 'I asked him,' says Dee, 'why he so hasted to ride thither, and I said if it were to ride to Mr. Henry Lee, I would go thither also, to be acquainted with him, seeing now I had so good leisure, being eased of the book writing. Then he said, that one told him, the other day, that the Duke (Alasco) did but flatter him, and told him other things, both against the Duke and me. I answered for the Duke and myself, and also said that if the forty pounds' annuity which Mr. Lee did offer him was the chief cause of his minde setting that way (contrary to many of his former promises to me), that then I would assure him of fifty pounds yearly, and would do my best, by following of my suit, to bring it to pass as soon as I possibly could, and thereupon did make him promise upon the Bible. Then Edward Kelly again upon the same Bible did swear unto me constant friendship, and never to forsake me; and, moreover, said that unless this had so fallen out, he would have gone beyond the seas, taking ship at Newcastle within eight days next. And so we plight our faith each to other, taking each other by the hand upon these points of brotherly and friendly fidelity during life, which covenant I beseech God to turn to His honour, glory, and service, and the comfort of our brethren (His children) here on earth.'

This concordat, however, was of brief duration. Kelly, who

seems to have been in fear of arrest,²⁵ still threatened to quit Dee's service; and by adroit pressure of this kind, and by unlimited promises to Alasco, succeeded in persuading his two confederates to leave England clandestinely, and seek an asylum on Alasco's Polish estates. Dee took with him his second wife, Jane Fromond, to whom he had been married in February, 1578, his son Arthur (then about four years old), and his children by his first wife. Kelly was also accompanied by his wife and family.

On the night of September 21, 1583, in a storm of rain and wind, they left Mortlake by water, and dropped down the river to a point four or five miles below Gravesend, where they embarked on board a Danish ship, which they had hired to take them to Holland. But the violence of the gale was such that they were glad to transfer themselves, after a narrow escape from shipwreck, to some fishing-smacks, which landed them at Queenborough, in the Isle of Sheppey, in safety. There they remained until the gale abated, and then crossed the Channel to Brill on the 30th. Proceeding through Holland and Friesland to Embden and Bremen, they thence made their way to Stettin, in Pomerania, arriving on Christmas Day, and remaining until the middle of January.

Meanwhile, Kelly was careful not to intermit those revelations from the crystal which kept alive the flame of credulous hope in the bosom of his two dupes, and he was especially careful to

²⁵ He was suspected of coining false money, but Dr. Dee declares he was innocent. (June, 1583.)

stimulate the ambition of Alasco, whose impoverished finances could ill bear the burden imposed upon them of supporting so considerable a company. They reached Siradia on February 3, 1584, and there the spirits suddenly changed the tone of their communications; for Kelly, having unexpectedly discovered that Alasco's resources were on the brink of exhaustion, was accordingly prepared to fling him aside without remorse. The first spiritual communication was to the effect that, on account of his sins, he would no longer be charged with the regeneration of the world, but he was promised possession of the Kingdom of Moldavia. The next was an order to Dee and his companions to leave Siradia, and repair to Cracow, where Kelly hoped, no doubt, to get rid of the Polish prince more easily. Then the spirits began to speak at shorter intervals, their messages varying greatly in tone and purport, according, I suppose, as Alasco's pecuniary supplies increased or diminished; but eventually, when all had suffered severely from want of money, for it would seem that their tinctures and powders never yielded them as much as an ounce of gold, the spirits summarily dismissed the unfortunate Alasco, ordered Dee and Kelly to repair to Prague, and entrusted Dee with a Divine communication to Rudolph II., the Emperor of Germany.

Quarrels often occurred between the two adepts during the Cracow period. In these Kelly was invariably the prime mover, and his object was always the same: to confirm his influence over the man he had so egregiously duped. At Prague, Dee

was received by the Imperial Court with the distinction due to his well-known scholarship; but no credence was given to his mission from the spirits, and his pretensions as a magician were politely ignored. Nor was he assisted with any pecuniary benevolences; and the man who through his crystal and his skryer had apparently unlimited control over the inhabitants of the spiritual world could not count with any degree of certainty upon his daily bread. He failed, moreover, to obtain a second interview with the Emperor. On attending at the palace, he was informed that the Emperor had gone to his country seat, or else that he had just ridden forth to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, or that his imperfect acquaintance with the Latin tongue prevented him from conferring with Dee personally; and eventually, at the instigation of the Papal nuncio, Dee was ordered to depart from the Imperial territories (May, 1586).

The discredited magician then betook himself to Erfurt, and afterwards to Cassel. He would fain have visited Italy, where he anticipated a cordial welcome at those Courts which patronized letters and the arts, but he was privately warned that at Rome an accusation of heresy and magic had been preferred against him, and he had no desire to fall into the fangs of the Inquisition. In the autumn of 1586, the Imperial prohibition having apparently been withdrawn, he followed Kelly into Bohemia; and in the following year we find both of them installed as guests of a wealthy nobleman, named Rosenberg, at his castle of Trebona. Here they renewed their intercourse with the spirit world, and

their operations in the transmutation of metals. Dee records how, on December 9, he reached the point of projection! Cutting a piece out of a brass warming-pan, he converted it – by merely heating it in the fire, and pouring on it a few drops of the magical elixir – a kind of red oil, according to some authorities – into solid, shining silver. And there goes an idle story that he sent both the pan and the piece of silver to Queen Elizabeth, so that, with her own eyes, she might see how exactly they tallied, and that the piece had really been cut out of the pan! About the same time, it is said, the two magicians launched into a profuse expenditure, – Kelly, on one of his maid-servants getting married, giving away gold rings to the value of £4,000. Yet, meanwhile, Dee and Kelly were engaged in sharp contentions, because the spirits fulfilled none of the promises made by the latter, who, his invention (I suppose) being exhausted, resolved, in April, 1587, to resign his office of ‘skryer,’ and young Arthur Dee then made an attempt to act in his stead.

The conclusion I have arrived at, after studying the careers and characters of our two worthies, is that they were wholly unfitted for each other’s society; a barrier of ‘incompatibility’ rose straitly between them. Dee was in earnest; Kelly was practising a sham. Dee pursued a shadow which he believed to be a substance; Kelly knew that the shadow was nothing more than a shadow. Dee was a man of rare scholarship and considerable intellectual power, though of a credulous and superstitious temper; Kelly was superficial and ignorant, but clever, astute, and ingenious, and

by no means prone to fall into delusions. The last experiment which he made on Dee's simple-mindedness stamps the man as the rogue and knave he was; while it illustrates the truth of the preacher's complaint that there is nothing new under the sun. The doctrine of free marriage propounded by American enthusiasts was a *remanet* from the ethical system of Mr. Edward Kelly.

Kelly had long been on bad terms with his wife, and had conceived a passionate attachment towards Mrs. Dee, who was young and charming, graceful in person, and attractive in manner. To gratify his desires, he resorted to his old machinery of the crystal and the spirits, and soon obtained a revelation that it was the Divine pleasure he and Dr. Dee should exchange partners. Demoralized and abased as Dee had become through his intercourse with Kelly, he shrank at first from a proposal so contrary to the teaching and tenor of the religion he professed, and suggested that the revelation could mean nothing more than that they ought to live on a footing of cordial friendship. But the spirits insisted on a literal interpretation of their command. Dee yielded, comparing himself with much unction to Abraham, who, in obedience to the Divine will, consented to the sacrifice of Isaac. The parallel, however, did not hold good, for Abraham saved his son, whereas Dr. Dee lost his wife!

It was then Kelly's turn to affect a superior morality, and he earnestly protested that the spirits could not be messengers from heaven, but were servants of Satan. Whereupon they then declared that he was no longer worthy to act as their interpreter.

But why dwell longer on this unpleasant farce? By various means of cajolery and trickery, Kelly contrived to accomplish his design.

This communistic arrangement, however, did not long work satisfactorily – at least, so far as the ladies were concerned; and one can easily understand that Mrs. Dee would object to the inferior position she occupied as Kelly's paramour. However this may be, Dee and Kelly parted company in January, 1589; the former, according to his own account, delivering up to the latter the mysterious elixir and other substances which they had made use of in the transmutation of metals. Dee had begun to turn his eyes wistfully towards his native country, and welcomed with unfeigned delight a gracious message from Queen Elizabeth, assuring him of a friendly reception. In the spring he took his departure from Trebona; and it is said that he travelled with a pomp and circumstance worthy of an ambassador, though it is difficult to reconcile this statement with his constant complaints of poverty. Perhaps, after all, his three coaches, with four horses to each coach, his two or three waggons loaded with baggage and stores, and his hired escort of six to twenty-four soldiers, whose business it was to protect him from the enemies he supposed to be lying in wait for him, existed only, like the philosopher's stone, in the imagination! He landed at Gravesend on December 2, was kindly received by the Queen at Richmond a day or two afterwards, and before the year had run out was once more quietly settled in his house 'near the riverside' at Mortlake.

Kelly, whom the Emperor Maximilian II. had knighted and created Marshal of Bohemia, so strong a conviction of his hermetic abilities had he impressed on the Imperial mind, remained in Germany. But the ingenious, plausible rogue was kept under such rigid restraint, in order that he might prepare an adequate quantity of the transmuting stone or powder, that he wearied of it, and one night endeavoured to escape. Tearing up the sheets of his bed, he twisted them into a rope, with which to lower himself from the tower where he was confined. But he was a man of some bulk; the rope gave way beneath his weight, and falling to the ground, he received such severe injuries that in a few days he expired (1593).

Dee's later life was, as Godwin remarks, 'bound in shallows and miseries.' He had forfeited the respect of serious-minded men by his unworthy confederacy with an unscrupulous adventurer. The Queen still treated him with some degree of consideration, though she had lost all faith in his magical powers, and occasionally sent him assistance. The unfortunate man never ceased to weary her with the repetition of his trials and troubles, and strongly complained that he had been deprived of the income of his two small benefices during his six years' residence on the Continent. He related the sad tale of the destruction of his library and apparatus by an ignorant mob, which had broken into his house immediately after his departure from England, excited by the rumours of his strange magical practices. He enumerated the expenses of his homeward journey, arguing that,

as it had been undertaken by the Queen's command, she ought to reimburse him. At last (in 1592) the Queen appointed two members of her Privy Council to inquire into the particulars of his allegations. These particulars he accordingly put together in a curious narrative, which bore the long-winded title of:

'The Compendious Rehearsall of John Dee, his dutiful Declaracion and Proof of the Course and Race of his Studious Lyfe, for the Space of Halfe an Hundred Yeares, now (by God's Favour and Helpe) fully spent, and of the very great Injuries, Damages, and Indignities, which for those last nyne Years he hath in England sustained (contrary to Her Majesties very gracious Will and express Commandment), made unto the Two Honourable Commissioners, by Her Most Excellent Majesty thereto assigned, according to the intent of the most humble Supplication of the said John, exhibited to Her Most Gracious Majestie at Hampton Court, Anno 1592, November 9.'

It has been remarked that in this 'Compendious Rehearsal' he alludes neither to his magic crystal, with its spiritualistic properties, nor to the wonderful powder or elixir of transmutation. He founds his claim to the Queen's patronage solely upon his intellectual eminence and acknowledged scholarship. Nor does he allude to his Continental experiences, except so far as relates to his homeward journey. But he is careful to recapitulate all his services, and the encomiastic notices they had drawn from various quarters, while he details his losses

with the most elaborate minuteness. The quaintest part of his lamentable and most fervent petition is, however, its conclusion. Having shown that he has tried and exhausted every means of raising money for the support of his family, he concludes:

‘Therefore, seeing the blinded lady, Fortune, doth not governe in this commonwealth, but *justitia* and *prudencia*, and that in better order than in Tullie’s “*Republica*,” or bookes of offices, they are laied forth to be followed and performed, most reverently and earnestly (yea, in manner with bloody teares of heart), I and my wife, our seaven children, and our servants (seaventeene of us in all) do this day make our petition unto your Honors, that upon all godly, charitable, and just respects had of all that, which this day you have seene, heard, and perceived, you will make such report unto her Most Excellent Majestie (with humble request for speedy reliefes) that we be not constrained to do or suffer otherwise than becometh Christians, and true, and faithfull, and obedient subjects to doe or suffer; and all for want of due mainteynance.’

The main object Dee had in view was the mastership of St. Cross’s Hospital, which Elizabeth had formerly promised him. This he never received; but in December, 1594, he was appointed to the Chancellorship of St. Paul’s Cathedral, which in the following year he exchanged for the wardenship of the Colledge at Manchester. He still continued his researches into supernatural mysteries, employing several persons in succession as ‘skryers’; but he found no one so fertile in invention as Kelly, and the crystal

uttered nothing more oracular than answers to questions about lovers' quarrels, hidden treasures, and petty thefts – the common stock-in-trade of the conjurer. In 1602 or 1604, he retired from his Manchester appointment, and sought the quiet and seclusion of his favourite Mortlake. His renown as 'a magician' had greatly increased – not a little, it would seem, to his annoyance; for on June 5, 1604, we find that he presented a petition to James I. at Greenwich, soliciting his royal protection against the wrong done to him by enemies who mocked him as 'a conjurer, or caller, or invocator of devils,' and solemnly asserting that 'of all the great number of the very strange and frivolous fables or histories reported and told of him (as to have been of his doing) none were true.' It is said that the treatment Dee experienced at this time was the primary cause of the Act passed against personal slander (1604) – a proof of legislative wisdom which drew from Dee a versified expression of gratitude – in which, let us hope, the sincerity of the gratitude is not to be measured by the quality of the verse. It is addressed to 'the Honorable Members of the Commons in the Present Parliament,' and here is a specimen of it, which will show that, though Dee's crystal might summon the spirits, it had no control over the Muses:

The honour, due unto you all,
And reverence, to you each one
I do first yield most spe-ci-all;
Grant me this time to heare my mone.

‘Now (if you will) full well you may
Fowle sclaundrous tongues for ever tame;
And helpe the truth to beare some sway
In just defence of a good name.’

Thenceforward Dee sinks into almost total obscurity. His last years were probably spent in great tribulation; and the man who had dreamed of converting, Midas-like, all he touched into gold, seems frequently to have wanted bread. It was a melancholy ending to a career which might have been both useful and brilliant, if his various scholarship and mental energy had not been expended upon a delusion. Unfortunately for himself, Dee, with all his excellent gifts, wanted that greatest gift of all, a sound judgment. His excitable fancy and credulous temper made him the dupe of his own wishes, and eventually the tool of a knave far inferior to himself in intellectual power, but surpassing him in strength of will, in force of character, in audacity and inventiveness. Both knave and dupe made but sorry work of their lives. Kelly, as we have seen, broke his neck in attempting to escape from a German prison, and Dee expired in want and dishonour, without a friend to receive his last sigh.

He died at Mortlake in 1608, and was buried in the chancel of Mortlake Church, where, long afterwards, Aubrey, the gossiping antiquary, was shown an old marble slab as belonging to his tomb.

His son Arthur, after acting as physician to the Czar of Russia and to our own Charles I., established himself in practice at Norwich, where he died. Anthony Wood solemnly records that

this Arthur, in his boyhood, had frequently played with quoits of gold, which his father had cast at Prague by means of his ‘stone philosophical.’ How often Dee must have longed for some of those ‘quoits’ in his last sad days at Mortlake, when he sold his books, one by one, to keep himself from starvation!

After Dee’s death, his fame as a magician underwent an extraordinary revival; and in 1659, when the country was looking forward to the immediate restoration of its Stuart line of kings, the learned Dr. Meric Casaubon thought proper to publish, in a formidable folio volume, the doctor’s elaborate report of his – or rather Kelly’s – supposed conferences with the spirits – a notable book, as being the initial product of spiritualism in English literature. In his preface Casaubon remarks that, though Dee’s ‘carriage in certain respects seemed to lay in works of darkness, yet all was tendered by him to kings and princes, and by all (England alone excepted) was listened to for a good while with good respect, and by some for a long time embraced and entertained.’ And he adds that ‘the fame of it made the Pope bestir himself, and filled all, both learned and unlearned, with great wonder and astonishment... As a whole, it is undoubtedly not to be paralleled in its kind in any age or country.’

NOTE

In the curious ‘Apologia’ published by Dee, in 1595, in the form of a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury,

‘containing a most briefe Discourse Apologeticall, with a plaine Demonstration and formal Protestation, for the lawfull, sincere, very faithfull and Christian course of the Philosophicall studies and exercises of a certaine studious Gentleman, an ancient Servant to her most excellent Maiesty Royall,’ he furnishes a list of ‘sundry Bookes and Treatises’ of which he was the author. The best known of his printed works is the ‘*Monas Hieroglyphica, Mathematicè, Anagogicè que explicata*’ (1564), dedicated to the Emperor Maximilian. Then there are ‘*Propæ deumata Aphoristica*,’ ‘The British Monarchy,’ otherwise called the ‘Petty Navy Royall: for the politique security, abundant wealth, and the triumphant state of this kingdom (with God’s favour) procuring’ (1576); and ‘*Paralaticæ Commentationis, Praxcosque Nucleus quidam*’ (1573). His unpublished manuscripts range over a wide field of astronomical, philosophical, and logical inquiry. The most important seem to be ‘The first great volume of famous and rich Discoveries,’ containing a good deal of speculation about Solomon and his Ophirian voyage; ‘Prester John, and the first great Cham;’ ‘The Brytish Complement of the perfect Art of Navigation;’ ‘The Art of Logicke, in English;’ and ‘*De Hominis Corpore, Spiritu, et Anima: sive Microcosmicum totius Philosophiæ Naturalis Compendium.*’

The character drawn of Dr. Dee by his learned biographer, Dr. Thomas Smith, by no means confirms the traditional notion of him as a crafty and credulous practiser in the Black Art. It is, on the contrary, the portrait of a just and upright man, grave in

his demeanour, modest in his manners, abstemious in his habits; a man of studious disposition and benevolent temper; a man held in such high esteem by his neighbours that he was called upon to arbitrate when any differences arose between them; a fervent Christian, attentive to all the offices of the Church, and zealous in the defence of her faith.

Here is the original: ‘*Si mores exterioremque vitæ cultum contemplemur, non quicquam ipsi in probrum et ignominium verti possit; ut pote sobrius, probus, affectibus sedatis, compositisque moribus, ab omni luxu et gulâ liber, justus et æqui studiosissimus, erga pauperes beneficus, vicinis facilis et benignus, quorum lites, atrisque partibus contendendum ad illum tanquam ad sapientum arbitrum appellantis, moderari et desidere solebat: in publicis sacris cœtibus et in orationibus frequens, articulorum Christianæ fidei, in quibus omnes Orthodoxi conveniunt, strenuus assertor, zelo in hæreses, à primitiva Ecclesia damnatas, flagrans, iniqui Peccatorum, qui virginitatem B. Mariæ ante partum Christi in dubium vocavit, accerimè invectus: licet de controversiis inter Romanenses et Reformatos circa reliqua doctrinæ capita non adeo semperosè sollicitus, quin sibi in Polonia et Bohemia, ubi religio ista dominatur, Missæ interesse et communicare licere putaverit, in Anglia, uti antea, post redditum, omnibus Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ ritibus conformis.*’ It must be admitted that Dr. Smith’s Latin is not exactly ‘conformed’ to the Ciceronian model.

CHAPTER III

DR. DEE'S DIARY

I am not prepared to say, with its modern editor, that Dr. Dee's Diary²⁶ sets the scholar magician's character in its true light more clearly than anything that has yet been printed; but I concede that it reveals in a very striking and interesting manner the peculiar features of his character – his superstitious credulity, and his combination of shrewdness and simplicity – as well as his interesting habits. I shall therefore extract a few passages to assist the reader in forming his opinion of a man who was certainly in many respects remarkable.

(i.) I begin with the entries for 1577:

'1577, January 16th. – The Erle of Leicester, Mr. Philip Sidney, Mr. Dyer,²⁷ etc., came to my house (at Mortlake).

'1577, January 22nd. – The Erle of Bedford came to my house.

'1577, March 11th. – My fall uppon my right nuckel bone, *hora 9 fere mane*, wyth oyle of Hypericon (*Hypericum*, or St. John's Wort) in twenty-four howers eased above all hope: God be thanked for such His goodness

²⁶ 'The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee,' edited by J. O. Halliwell (Phillipps) for the Camden Society, 1842.

²⁷ This was Sir Edward Dyer, the friend of Spenser and Sidney, remembered by his poem 'My Mind to me a Kingdom is.'

of (to?) His creatures.

‘1577, March 24th. – Alexander Simon, the Ninevite, came to me, and promised me his service into Persia.

‘1577, May 1st. – I received from Mr. William Harbut of St. Gillian his notes uppon my “Monas.”²⁸

‘1577, May 2nd. – I understode of one Vincent Murfryn his abominable misusing me behinde my back; Mr. Thomas Besbich told me his father is one of the cokes of the Court.

‘1577, May 20th. – I hyred the barber of Cheswik, Walter Hooper, to kepe my hedges and knots in as good order as he saw them then, and that to be done with twice cutting in the yere at the least, and he to have yerely five shillings, meat and drink.

‘1577, June 26th. – Elen Lyne gave me a quarter’s warning.

‘1577, August 19. – The “Hexameron Brytanicum” put to printing. (Published in 1577 with the title of “General and Rare Memorials pertayning to the perfect Art of Navigation.”)

‘1577, November 3rd. – William Rogers of Mortlak about 7 of the clok in the morning, cut his own throte, *by the fiende his instigator*.

‘1577, November 6th. – Sir Umfrey Gilbert²⁹ cam to me to Mortlak.

‘1577, November 22nd. – I rod to Windsor to the Q. Majestie.

²⁸ The ‘Monas Hieroglyphica.’

²⁹ The celebrated navigator, whose heroic death is one of our worthiest traditions.

‘1577, November 25th. – I spake with the Quene *hora quinta*; I spoke with Mr. Secretary Walsingham.³⁰ I declared to the Quene her title to Greenland, Estotiland, and Friesland.

‘1577, December 1st. – I spoke with Sir Christopher Hatton; he was made Knight that day.

‘1577, December – th. – I went from the Courte at Wyndsore.

‘1577, December 30th. – *Inexplissima illa calumnia de R. Edwardo, iniquissima aliqua ex parte in me denunciebatur: ante aliquos elapsos diros, sed ... sua sapientia me innocentem.*’

I cannot ascertain of what calumny against Edward VI. Dee had been accused; but it is to be hoped that his wish was fulfilled, and that he was acquitted of it before many days had elapsed.

I have omitted some items relating to moneys borrowed. It is sufficiently plain, however, that Dee never intended his Diary for the curious eyes of the public, and that it mainly consists of such memoranda as a man jots down for his private and personal use. Assuredly, many of these would never have been recorded if Dee had known or conjectured that an inquisitive antiquarian, some three centuries later, would exhume the confidential pages, print them in imperishable type, and expose them to the world’s cold gaze. It seems rather hard upon Dr. Dee that his private affairs should thus have become everybody’s property! Perhaps, after all, the best thing a man can do who keeps a diary is to commit

³⁰ A warm and steady friend to Dr. Dee.

it to the flames before he shuffles off his mortal coil, lest some laborious editor should eventually lay hands upon it, and publish it to the housetops with all its sins upon it! But as in Dr. Dee's case the offence has been committed, I will not debar my readers from profiting by it.

(ii.) 1578-1581.

'1578, June 30th. – I told Mr. Daniel Rogers, Mr. Hackluyt of the Middle Temple being by, that Kyng Arthur and King Maty, both of them, did conquer Gelindia, lately called Friseland, which he so noted presently in his written copy of Mon ... thensis (?), for he had no printed boke thereof.'

What a pity Dr. Dee has not recorded his authority for King Arthur's Northern conquests! The Mr. Hackluyt here mentioned is the industrious compiler of the well-known collection of early voyages.

Occasionally Dee relates his dreams, as on September 10, 1579: 'My dream of being naked, and my skyn all overwrought with work, like some kinde of tuft mockado, with crosses blue and red; and on my left arme, about the arme, in a wreath, this word I red —*sine me nihil potestis facere.*'

Sometimes he resorts to Greek characters while using English words:

'1579, December 9th. – Θεις νιγτ μι υνιφ δρεμιδ θατ ονε καμ το 'ερ ανδ τουχεδ 'ερ, σαινγ, "Μιστρές Δεε, γου αρ κονκεινεδ οφ χιλδ, ύος ναμε μυστ βε Ζαχαριας; βε

οφ γοδ χερε, ε σαλ δο υυελ ας θις δοθ!”

‘1579, December 28th. – I reveled to Roger Coke the gret secret of the elixir of the salt οφ ακετελς, ονε υππον α υνδρεδ.’

Other entries refer to this Mr. Roger Coke, or Cooke, who seems to have been Dee’s pupil or apprentice, and at one time to have enjoyed his confidence. They quarrelled seriously in 1581.

‘1581, September 5th. – Roger Cook, who had byn with me from his 14 years of age till 28, of a melancholik nature, pycking and devising occasions of just cause to depart on the suddayn, about 4 of the clok in the afternone requested of me lycense to depart, wheruppon rose whott words between us; and he, imagining with himself that he had, the 12 of July, deserved my great displeasure, and finding himself barred from view of my philosophicall dealing with Mr. Henrik, thought that he was utterly recast from intended goodness toward him. Notwithstanding Roger Cook his unseamely dealing, I promised him, if he used himself toward me now in his absens, one hundred pounds as sone as of my own clene hability I myght spare so much; and moreover, if he used himself well in life toward God and the world, I promised him some pretty alchimicall experiments, whereuppon he might honestly live.

‘1581, September 7th. – Roger Cook went for altogether from me.’

In February, 1601, however, this quarrel was made up.

(iii.) Of the learned doctor’s colossal credulity the Diary

supplies some curious proofs:

‘1581, March 8th. – It was the 8 day, being Wensday, hora noctis 10-11, the strange noyse in my chamber of knocking; and the voyce, ten times repeted, somewhat like the shriek of an owle, but more longly drawn, and more softly, as it were in my chamber.

‘1581, August 3rd. – All the night very strange knocking and rapping in my chamber. August 4th, and this night likewise.

‘1581, October 9th. – Barnabas Saul, lying in the ... hall, was strangely trubled by a spirituall creature about mydnight.

‘1582, May 20th. – Robertus Gardinerus Salopiensis lactum mihi attulit minimum de materia lapidis, divinitus sibi revelatus de qua.

‘1582, May 23rd. – Robert Gardiner declared unto me hora 4½ a certeyn great philosophicall secret, as he had termed it, of a spirituall creature, and was this day willed to come to me and declare it, which was solemnly done, and with common prayer.

‘1590, August 22nd. – Ann, my nurse, had long been tempted by a wycked spirit: but this day it was evident how she was possessed of him. God is, hath byn, and shall be her protector and deliverer! Amen.

‘1590, August 25th. – Anne Frank was sorowful, well comforted, and stayed in God’s mercyes acknowledging.

‘1590, August 26th. – At night I anoynted (in the name of Jesus) her brest with the holy oyle.

‘1590, August 30th. – In the morning she required to be

anoynted, and I did very devoutly prepare myself, and pray for virtue and powr, and Christ his blessing of the oyle to the expulsion of the wycked, and then twyce anoynted, the wycked one did rest a while.’

The holy oil, however, proved of no effect. The poor creature was insane. On September 8 she made an attempt to drown herself, but was prevented. On the 29th she eluded the dexterity of her keeper, and cut her throat.

(iv.) Occasionally we meet with references to historic events and names, but, unfortunately, they are few:

‘1581, February 23rd. – I made acquayntance with Joannes Bodonius, in the Chamber of Presence at Westminster, the ambassador being by from Monsieur.’

Bodonius, or Bodin, was the well-known writer upon witchcraft.

‘1581, March 23rd. – At Mortlak came to me Hugh Smyth, who had returned from Magellan strayghts and Vaygatz.

‘1581, July 12th. – The Erle of Leicester fell fowly out with the Erle of Sussex, Lord Chamberlayn, calling each other trayter, whereuppon both were commanded to kepe theyr chamber at Greenwich, wher the court was.’

This was the historic quarrel, of which Sir Walter Scott has made such effective use in his ‘Kenilworth.’

‘1583, January 13th. – On Sunday, the stage at Paris Garden fell down all at once, being full of people beholding

the bear-baying. Many being killed thereby, more hurt, and all amased. The godly expownd it as a due plague of God for the wickedness ther used, and the Sabath day so profanely spent.’

This popular Sabbatarian argument, which occasionally crops up even in our own days, had been humorously anticipated, half a century before, by Sir Thomas More, in his ‘Dyalogue’ (1529): ‘At Beverley late, much of the people being at a bear-baiting, the church fell suddenly down at evening-time, and overwhelmed some that were in it. A good fellow that after heard the tale told – “So,” quoth he, “now you may see what it is to be at evening prayers when you should be at the bear-baiting!”’

The Paris Garden Theatre at Bankside had been erected expressly for exhibitions of bear-baiting. The charge for admission was a penny at the gate, a penny at the entry of the scaffold or platform, and a penny for ‘quiet standing.’ During the Commonwealth this cruel sport was prohibited; but it was revived at the Restoration, and not finally suppressed until 1835.

‘1583, January 23rd. – The Ryght Honorable Mr. Secretary Walsingham came to my howse, where by good luk he found Mr. Adrian Gilbert (of the famous Devonshire family of seamen), and so talk was begonne of North West Straights discovery.

‘1583, February 11th. – The Quene lying at Richmond went to Mr. Secretary Walsingham to dinner; she coming by my dore, graciously called me to her, and so I went by her horse side, as far as where Mr. Hudson dwelt. Ep

μαιεστι αξεδ με οβυσκυρελι οφ μουνσιευρις στατε: διξε
βισθανατος εριτ.

‘1583, March 6th. – I, and Mr. Adrian Gilbert and John Davis (the Arctic discoverer), did mete with Mr. Alderman Barnes, Mr. Tounson, Mr. Young and Mr. Hudson, about the N. W. voyage.

‘1583, April 18th. – The Quene went from Richmond toward Greenwich, and at her going on horsbak, being new up, she called for me by Mr. Rawly (Sir Walter Raleigh) his putting her in mynde, and she sayd, “quod defertur non aufertur,” and gave me her right hand to kiss.

‘1590, May 18th. – The two gentlemen, the unckle Mr. Richard Candish (Cavendish), and his nephew, the most famous Mr. Thomas Candish, who had sayled round about the world, did visit me at Mortlake.

‘1590, December 4th. – The Quene’s Majestie called for me at my dore, circa 3½ a meridie as she passed by, and I met her at Est Shene gate, where she graciously, putting down her mask, did say with mery chere, “I thank thee, Dee; there wus never promise made, but it was broken or kept.” I understode her Majesty to mean of the hundred angels she promised to have sent me this day, as she yesternight told Mr. Richard Candish.

‘1595, October 9th. – I dynded with Sir Walter Rawlegh at Durham House.’

(v.) Some of the entries which refer to Dee’s connection with Lasco and Kelly are interesting:

‘1583, March 18th. – Mr. North from Poland, after he

had byn with the Quene he came to me. I received salutation from Alaski, Palatine in Poland.

‘1583, May 13th. – I became acquaynted with Albertus Laski at 7½ at night, in the Erle of Leicester his chamber, in the court at Greenwich.

‘1583, May 18th. – The Prince Albertus Laski came to me at Mortlake, with onely two men. He came at afternone, and tarryed supper, and after sone set.

‘1583, June 15th. – About 5 of the klok cum the Polonian prince, Lord Albert Lasky, down from Bisham, where he had lodged the night before, being returned from Oxford, whither he had gon of purpose to see the universityes, wher he was very honorably used and enterteined. He had in his company Lord Russell, Sir Philip Sydney, and other gentlemen: he was rowed by the Quene’s men, he had the barge covered with the Quene’s cloth, the Quene’s trumpeters, etc. He came of purpose to do me honour, for which God be prayed!

‘1583, September 21st. – We went from Mortlake, and so the Lord Albert Lasky, I, Mr. E. Kelly, our wives, my children and familie, we went toward our two ships attending for us, seven or eight myle below Gravesende.

‘1586, September 14th. – Trebonam venimus.

‘1586, October 18th. – E. K. recessit a Trebona versus Pragam curru delatus; mansit hic per tres hebdomadas.

‘1586, December 19th. – Ad gratificandam Domino Edouardo Garlando, et Francisco suo fratri, qui Edouardus nuncius mihi missus erat ab Imperatore Moschoriæ ut ad illum venirem, E. K. fecit proleolem (?) lapidis in

proportione unius ... gravi arenæ super quod vulgaris oz. et $\frac{1}{2}$ et producta est optimè auri oz. fere: quod aurum post distribuimus a crucibolo una dedimus Edouardo.

‘1587, January 18th. – Rediit E. K. a Praga. E. K. brought with him from the Lord Rosenberg to my wyfe a chayne and juell estemed at 300 duckettes; 200 the juell stones, and 100 the gold.

‘1587, September 28th. – I delivered to Mr. Ed. Kelley (earnestly requiring it as his part) the half of all the animall which was made. It is to weigh 20 oz.; he wayed it himself in my chamber: he bowght his waights purposely for it. My lord had spoken to me before for some, but Mr. Kelly had not spoken.

‘1587, October 28th and 29th. – John Carp did begyn to make furnaces over the gate, and he used of my rownd bricks, and for the yron pot was contented now to use the lesser bricks, 60 to make a furnace.

‘1587, November 8th. – E. K. *terribilis expostulatio, accusatio, etc., hora tertia a meridie.*

‘1587, December 12th. – Afternone somewhat, Mr. Ed. Kelly [did] his lamp overthrow, the spirit of wyne long spent to nere, and the glas being not stayed with buks about it, as it was wont to be; and the same glass so flitting on one side, the spirit was spilled out, and burnt all that was on the table where it stode, lynnenn and written bokes, – as the bok of Zacharias, with the “Alkanor” that I translated out of French, for some by [boy?] spirituall could not; “Rowlaschy,” his third boke of waters philosophicall; the boke called “Angelicum Opus;” all in pictures of the work

from the beginning to the end; the copy of the man of Badwise “Conclusions for the Transmutation of Metalls;” and 40 leaves in 4to., entitled “Extractiones Dunstat,” which he himself extracted and noted out of Dunstan his boke, and the very boke of Dunstan was but cast on the bed hard by from the table.’

This so-called ‘Book of St. Dunstan’ was one which Kelly professed to have bought from a Welsh innkeeper, who, it was alleged, had found it among the ruins of Glastonbury.

‘1588, February 8th. – Mr. E. K., at nine of the clock, afternone, sent for me to his laboratory over the gate to see how he distilled sericon, according as in tyme past and of late he heard of me out of Ripley. God lend his heart to all charity and virtue!

‘1588, August 24th. – Vidi divinam aquam demonstratione magnifici domini et amici mei incomparabilis D[omini] Ed. Kelii ante meridiem tertia hora.

‘1588, December 7th. – γρεατ φρενδκιρ προμισιδ φορ μανι, ανδ τυσο ουνκες φορ θε θινγ.³¹

³¹ This Diary, written in a very small and illegible hand on the margins of old almanacs, was discovered by Mr. W. H. Black in the Ashmolean Library at Oxford.

CHAPTER IV

MAGIC AND IMPOSTURE

– A COUPLE OF KNAVES

The secrecy, the mystery, and the supernatural pretensions associated with the so-called occult sciences necessarily recommended them to the knave and the cheat as instruments of imposition. If some of the earlier professors of Hermeticism, the first seekers after the philosophical stone, were sincere in their convictions, and actuated by pure and lofty motives, it is certain that their successors were mostly dishonest adventurers, bent upon turning to their personal advantage the credulous weakness of their fellow-creatures. With some of these the chief object was money; others may have craved distinction and influence; others may have sought the gratification of passions more degrading even than avarice or ambition. At all events, alchemy became a synonym for fraud: a magician was accepted as, by right of his vocation, an impostor; and the poet and the dramatist pursued him with the whips of satire, invective, and ridicule, while the law prepared for him the penalties usually inflicted upon criminals. These penalties, it is true, he very frequently contrived to elude; in many instances, by the exercise of craft and cunning; in others, by the protection of powerful personages, to whom he had rendered questionable services; and again in

others, because the agent of the law did not care to hunt him down so long as he forbore to bring upon himself the glare of publicity. Thus it came to pass that generation after generation saw the alchemist still practising his unwholesome trade, and probably he retained a good deal of his old notoriety down to as late a date as the beginning of the eighteenth century. It must be admitted, however, that his alchemical pursuits gradually sank into obscurity, and that it was more in the character of an astrologer, and as a manufacturer of love-potions and philtres, of charms and waxen images – not to say as a pimp and a bawd – that he looked for clients. In the *Spectator*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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