

# A Short Enquiry concerning the Hermetic Art

A Short enquiry concerning the Hermetick art... By a lover of Philalethes. London 1714.

This Art, of bringing all Imperfect Metals to Perfection, hath been asserted for Truth, by Men of almost every Degree, in most Ages of the World; many of whose Books are extant.

They have declared, that they have made and possessed this great Treasure, which not only brings all Imperfect Metals to the Perfection of Sol and Luna (according to the Quality of the Medicine), but healeth all manner of Diseases in Human Bodies, even renewing Youth and prolonging Life.

Those Authors, from Age to Age, have justified one another's Testimony; alledging, as a farther Proof of the Art, that all that have understood it, have written most agreeingly of it, though contemporary, and unknown to one another in Person, or by Writing.

How far these Men's Writings have obtain'd, a very little Enquiry may serve; for most men look upon these (Alchymic) Books only as Cunningly devised Fables, and the Art itself as altogether impossible.

To which the (Alchymic) Authors answer, That it is not Lawful, nor Commendable to reprobate an Art, by Judges who are ignorant of its Laws as well as the Facts; and that the Ignorant Negative of such, is by no means sufficient to set aside the Affirmative Knowledge of so many Men of Unquestionable Credit, Piety, and Virtue, supported by Arguments and Circumstances of Uncontestible Force.

From which, together with the Excellency of the Things themselves (viz., Long Life and Riches, vide the 'Way to Bliss'), many have been induced to believe and seek after this Art.

Tis the Melancholy View that I have taken of these Men, that have occasioned the putting my own Thoughts into the Order you find them, hoping no Master will be offended, nor any Inquirer displeas'd.

When I compare, I say, the variety of these Men's Fortunes, Capacities and other Qualifications, with those the Philosophers have laid down for men like to succeed, it fills me with Pity, and makes me almost tremble to rehearse the words of Norton, viz.:-

"That of a Million hardly three,  
Were e'er ordain'd for Alchymy."

O sad Tidings to such Men! whose impair'd Healths, injured Fortunes and barren Practice, renders them more unfit every day than other, and instead of attaining that which should crown their Labours with success, are at length in danger of denying, if not cursing the Art itself.

I would pretty thoroughly enquire from whence this ill success, which attends the generality of Enquirers, proceeds, and accordingly shall mention a few chief Impediments, in my Opinion.

First; But few of those that seek this Art, are qualified according to the Philosophers for attaining it; for they assert, That to find it requires the whole Man; as well as that, when found, it possesses him: Also that it is never found of any by Chance or by accidental Tryals, and casual Experiments; and that unless the Mind be kindled with a Beam of Divine Light, it will not be able to penetrate this most hidden Science.

These with many more Cautions, are plentifully set down in their Books, on purpose to inform and reform a great many Persons too rashly concern'd in these things; and yet how few take their Advice! undertaking this Study with much less than half the Man; constantly trying Experiments that have no Authority but their own idle Fancy; and consequently have Minds, in respect to this Science, as dark as Midnight.

Then add to these an almost Insurmountable Difficulty, (hard enough to be overcome by those that can spare even the whole Man and are very cautious in their Practice, as having a pretty good Understanding of Natural Things in general, and of the Mineral Kingdom in particular) and that is the Subtilty of Stile so peculiar to Hermetick Philosophers.

Of this they often warn us, telling us also, that if it were not for this, they could not disclose, and at the same time hide their Secret. And though this be a Paradox, that at the same time they give light, they darken, yet they affirm it for Truth, with many other things hard enough to be understood; which yet must be understood before any one can profit by them, witness Geber, Sendivo, &c.

Also Norton has given a hint of this mysterious way of writing, and which indeed sufficiently shews that it will

obscure, whether we can discern its Instruction or not, viz.:-

"If you consider how the Parts of Works  
Be out of Order set by the Old Clerks."

This breaking to pieces of the several Works, makes it almost impossible for a Tyro to make their Writings Tally; any one part not being rightly apply'd, the whole is incomplete.

Another tells us he has done this, by mixing Unusual Candor with Philosophical Subtilties, in such a manner as would render their Secret safe, tho' openly told; Nor is he wanting to admonish his Reader to be cautious in these things, viz.:-

"Yet beware,  
That thou mistake not; for I do aver,  
A mingled Doctrine these Lines do declare;  
For both ways in this Book of mine do claim a share:  
Learn to distinguish every Sentence well,  
And know to what Work it doth appertain.  
This is great Skill, which few, as I can tell,  
By all their Reading, yet could e'er attain;  
And yet of Theory, this is the main."

Wherefore 'tis obvious, there is no possibility of success, 'till it be learned to which Work their Sayings relate; which indeed is not easie, and is the top of Theory; nor can any speed upon any other, tho' never so finely spun, or fondly embraced.

And though Philosophers do sometimes affirm their Matters to be many, and their Works also; yet they very often, with equal Authority and Truth, assert the contrary; Artephius saith:-

"Tho' we say in many places, take this, and take that; yet we mean, that it behoveth thee to take One Thing. For these things are so set down by the envious Philosophers to deceive the Unwary. Do'st thou, Fool, believe, that we do openly teach the Secret of Secrets? And do'st thou take our Words according to the literal Sound? Know assuredly, he that takes the Words of other Philosophers according to the ordinary Signification and Sound of them, he doth already wander in the midst of the Labyrinth, having lost Ariadne's Thread, and hath as good as appointed his money to Perdition."

By means of these seeming Contradictions, bolder steps have been taken by some of them in discovering this Art, than otherwise they would have done, and even some have dared to imitate, nay, so much as to repeat.

From hence I infer, That as much has been communicated to the World as can be expected, or that God will yet suffer to be discover'd by Writing. For this Art is declared, by those that have knowingly written of it, to be under his immediate Protection. Likewise that those that come to the Knowledge of it, shall admirably wonder at its Preservation; and that which will augment their wonder, will be, that so slender a Vail secures it; and which God makes a sufficient Guard against all the Attacks made by the unworthy. Vide Sendivo, etc.

Likewise, that as soon as any one discerns the Intention of the Philosophers, from the seeming Sense of the Letter, the dark Night of Ignorance will fly away, and a glorious Morning of Light and Knowledge will break forth: When Diana will unveil herself, Bathing in that most pleasant Fountain so much sought.

And that he will find himself in the High Road of Nature which is that Secret Way of Philosophers, viz., most easie, delightful and speedy; in which are no Storms, no Heterogeneities, nor any Fire, but the gentle one of Generation. Norton asserts, That there are but few clerks that comprehend this Work, it being truly Philosophical. And he saith, That in this Work you must not begin with Quicksilver and Metals, as if in another Work you might; which other Work, he adds, if it be done in three Years, would be a blessed Chance, and which belongs to great Men; advising poor Men not to meddle with it, for that Errors in it may be committed above a Hundred ways; that it is a Work of Pain and Labour, as well as full of Perils.

That these things are so, we are sorrowfully confirmed, by a Modern Author, as is so well known by many. Intro-  
Apert.

Now as their Works differ, so their Waters or Mercuries differ also; for if you would calcine a perfect Metal, it must be done with Mercury; but if you would dissolve an imperfect Body (which is in the way to Perfection) it must be done with Mercurial Water, which is the Dew or Rain Water of Philosophers.

The perfect Body is calcin'd with a gross Humidity, and by a tedious Labour; but the imperfect Body is dissolved and purified in a much more subtile Mercury, by an easie Fire and little Toil.  
And tho' this subtile Menstruum be the Mercury of the imperfect Body, yet it will (for a certain purpose) dissolve Sol, as warm water dissolves Ice, and will make its Body a mere Spirit.  
This is the Fountain of Chymical or Hermetick Philosophy, concerning which it is said:-

" He that exactly knows the Magistry of this Water, no Words, or Secrets of Philosophers, Sayings, Writings or Enigmas, will be concealed from him. And further, that it is stupendous in its Virtues, and the things out of which it is immediately drawn, are most secret above all others; also the means of extracting it most wonderful. In the Knowledge of which, all their Fires, Weights and Regimens lie hid."

The same Author affirms, that none can imagine its Splendour, except they see it, and then you will think you look upon a certain Celestial Body. Believe me, saith he, I have seen this Snowy Splendor.

Sendivo not only confirms the same in Words to this effect, viz., Believe me, for I beheld it, that that Water was as white as Snow, but adds, from whence it was drawn, viz., From the Beams of the Sun and Moon.

Nor is this said by him only, but by many more; I shall instance a few.

Artephius asserts, That 'tis drawn from the Beams of the Sun and Moon, yea, that this dissolving Water is the Soul of the Sun and Moon, and their moist Fire, and the only Agent in the World for this Art.

The author of Arcanum Hermeticae, saith, "Let thy Mercury draw its Original from both these Lights."

Flamel, speaking of the Sun and Moon, saith, "They are of a Mercurial Source, and Sulphurous Original."

Another, viz., the Author of 'The Way to Bliss', saith: "That as the Sun is the Father of all things, and the Moon his Wife the Mother, (for he sends not down these begetting Beams immediately, but through the Belly of the Moon) and this double Spirit is carry'd in a Wind and Spirit into the Earth, to be made up and nourished."

Which double Spirit or Flame, Geber calls the immediate Matter of Metals.

You very well know, that Hermes himself, as well as most of his Followers, agree in these things; and 'tis our Business to observe wherein they do agree. Arnold says, "In our Imperfect Metal, there are the Sun, and Moon in Virtue and near Power." The Philosophical Work begins with this Heavenly Mercury, and an imperfect Body purified.

"There is a pure Matter" (saith another) "which is the Matter of Gold, containing in itself the Heat that giveth Increase." (Fire of Generation.) This is lock'd under thick Folds in common Gold; nor is it to be extracted, but by a strong and tedious Decoction, which is a Work liable to many Errors, and hath always occasioned those that wrought in it to complain of the length and trouble of it. But in the other Work, the Body is soon dissolved, by a sweet and kindly Bath, or moist Fire.

As the former Path requires much Pain and Patience to effect the Work, so this requires great Skill and Application to find it out, it being deeply concealed. The Masters of these Secrets do also affirm, that these Works (which are all one in the Beginning) may be conjoin'd, and made their grand Medicine. And I have been informed, that the way of making them one is but slenderly hid. For should they but change some Words (which they affect to use in order to conceal it) of one Syllable, and sometimes of two, for others of three, and sometimes of four or more, it would not be difficult for a Tyro, to conceive it. And the Reason given for this slender Covering is, that if any one should discern it and yet be ignorant of the means of both it would be of little avail; and that if he knew the means he could not long remain ignorant of the Practice. So that the Knowledge of the Means seems absolutely necessary in the first place.

These Norton calls his "Means Mineral," which, he saith, are no other than Magnetia and Litharge her Brother. And he asserts that to clarify them is the foulest Work of all.

And though he makes these means two, yet he tells you how they differ, viz., as a Mother from her Child, or as a Male from a Female: Which we see brings his to the general Doctrine of Philosophers, viz., Agent and Patient, which seems to be their one intention, whatever Skill they use to perplex their Sayings.

Litharge, he says, is a subtil Earth, brown, ruddy, and not bright.

"Old Fathers called it a thing of vile price,  
For it is nought Worth by way of Merchandise;  
No man that findeth it would bear it away,  
No more than they would an Ounce of clay."

He likewise saith, it is not to be sold in all Christian Ground, but thou must be fain to make it.  
Magnetia is fair and bright, known by few, and is found in High Places as well as in Low and called by Plato,

Titanos; these are the Materials to make Elixir; and addeth: -

"This Secret never was before this Day  
So truly shewed, take it for your Prey."

Now to apply these things to the Doctrine of Philosophers; Litharge must be their Brass or Philosophical Sol; Magnetia must be understood to be their Subtil Humidity or Philosophical Mercury; which is Living and not only so, but Inlivening; Clean and not only so, but cleansing; Volatile, and not only so, but Volatilizing, even the most fixed Body of Sol; and is the Radical Moisture of Metals.

How this is attained, is worthy our Inquiry, and whether they agree in the manner of preparing it, as well as from whence it is to be drawn, viz., From the Sun and Moon; for it seems it must have the Influences of both. But to collect these Virtues requires a Mean, as Ripley hath it, speaking of the Green Lion,

"He is the mean, the Sun and Moon between, etc."

Also the Author of 'Hunting the Green Lion' saith,

"The Lion is the Priest, the Sun and Moon the Wed;  
Yet they were both born in the Priest's Bed."

By which Green Lion another saith, "All Philosophers understand Green Gold, multiplicable, spermatick, and not yet Perfected by Nature; Or Assa Foetida, because in the very first of this Operation or Distillation, a white Fume with a stinking smell exhales." It was by this strong scent that Flammel knew this Subject.

That this Agrees with the rest of the Philosophers, I need not enlarge to shew, it being well known to them who read their Books.

This Distillation, Hermes, as well as many others, declares must be made by a gentle Fire, by little and little, with great Discretion, lest the thick be mixed with the thin, the subtile with the gross, or the foul with that which is clean. Lully is very famous for his witty Description of this Operation, under the Figure of Distilling of Wine, which he sometimes also calls Juice of Lunaria, from which he extracts the Sweat with a gentle Fire, in the form of a white Water.

This is also called by other Names, as Adrop, Saturn, Brass, Leprous Gold, and Imperfect Body; and which they all agree lies in great Obscurity, saturnine and foul, in the making of which there is a great Stink; that 'tis not fixed, a Medium between a Metal, and a Mineral partaking of the Nature of both, and very crude, containing an Argent vive, which is the Basis and Groundwork of their precious Medicine. And thus, saith the Philosopher, you will come to understand how Saturn contains the greatest Secret in this Art. This is "The Golden Branch, so much conceal'd, which all the Groves with Shadows overcast and gloomy Vallies hide, and which will follow none, but him that knows Dame Venus's Birds and him to whom of Doves a lucky Pair," etc. - Arcanum Hermeticae.

The Masters of this Science agree with one Voice in this, viz., That this Matter must be exactly purified, and dissolved into an Argent vive, of such Virtues as are nowhere else possible to be found.

This is performed by a wonderful Cohobation: the Number of which Cohobations are much varied: But in this they all agree, that there must be so many, till a total Dissolution and perfect Purity be known.

The time of doing this; some will have it, is hinted in Arcanum Hermeticae where 'tis said, "Cause the Dragon to Drink Three times the Magical Number Seven, until being drunk, he put off his hideous Garment."

Thus, I say, Three times Seven is Twenty-One, which some will interpret Days, and to which some other Philosophers seem to agree; but whether these are One and Twenty Days or Cohobations, he will rightly determine, who shall be blessed with the Knowledge of their "Light bringing Venus, and Horned Diana." - Arcanum Hermeticae.

Likewise the Philosophers agree in the Virtues of this Water, viz., that as it partakes of the Natures of both Sexes, so it acts the part of both, viz., Dissolving and Congealing. For they assert, That it will Congeal itself into a Lunar or a Solar Nature, (according to the design of the Workman) without any addition whatsoever.

There are also some Cautions given concerning Proportion in Compounding the Imperfect Body, as well as with relation to its Dissolution; for that in case of undue Weight or Measure, the Virtue will be much diminished, if not altogether spoiled. But if a due Proportion be observed, and a proper Fire given, the true Sign will follow.

The true Union between the imperfect Leprous Body, and its Water, they have deeply conceal'd, as the Philosophers own, and Searchers find; because as they say, the rest is so easie in the Work of Generation, that 'tis hardly to be missed, by one that hath attained their wonderful Mercury, so united and purified.

Concerning which, they have declared, they have given such hints as are sufficient to an enlightened Mind; and that none shall ever dare to do it more openly, without a Curse from God.

But all have not done it with the same Candor nor by the same Similes and Enigmas; 'The New Light' under that of Chalib; 'The Way to Bliss', by that of the Witty Fire of Hermes, and so of the rest, Norton says:-

"Bacon did it darkly, in his Three Letters all  
But Raimond better in his Art general."

And since the Readers can expect no better Account from me, concerning the Means and Medium of this Wonderful Union, than the Philosophers have learnt in their Books, I must refer them for more ample Satisfaction and Information therein. For, as Norton saith:-

"Trust not therefore to Reading of one Book;  
But in many Authors' Works ye may look.  
Liber librum aperit, saith Arnold the great Clerk;  
Anaxagoras said the same for his Work,  
Who that slothful is in many Books to see,  
Such one in Practice, prompt shall never be."

The Reason he gives for thus Reading and Comparing many Books, is, that

"Every each of them taught but one point, or twain.  
Whereby his Fellows were made certain,  
How that he was to them a Brother,  
For every of them understood each other."

I have mentioned Norton the more, because it appears to me, that he and his Contemporary Ripley, have written very Learnedly of this Art, and wonderful Agreeingly, through both writ near the same time, and very probably one in England and the other abroad; and for ought I can meet with, were not known to one another at that time. Nor can one suppose that Norton had seen Ripley's 'Compound of Alchimy', since it was written but six years before his 'Ordinal'. Books of that kind especially, did not in those days come abroad quickly: Nor doth Norton, when he reckons up some that had written excellently of Proportion, take any notice of Ripley, who beyond all question hath in that excell'd.

This Harmony in Authors, that have written of the Art at the same time, and unknown one to another, a Modern Adept of the same Nation with the two before mentioned, has brought as a convincing Argument (among others) to prove its Being; and which, with me, has great Weight, and seems to serve his purpose.

This Author has profess'd to have outdone all that went before him, discovering such things, he says, as the World was barren enough before, yet his Disciples have much complain'd of their ill success; notwithstanding they have seem'd to understand him more fully than the other Philosophers, insomuch that many have concluded his way of proceeding in this Art to be different from many of theirs. Nay, at length some have so ill rewarded his Candor, as to charge him with being ignorant of those things he so solemnly professeth to be true, and of which his Accusers are unworthy.

It seems he foresaw his Readers would thus misconstrue his Writings, and therefore he here and there scatters some necessary Cautions for those that would receive them.

"Nor let any expect," saith he, "Comfortable Doctrine in our Books, who know not the true Keys, by which our Matter is brought forth from Darkness into the Light. For verily tho' we write for the Inlightening a true Son of Art, yet also for the fatal Blinding of all such Owls and Bats, who cannot behold the Light of the Sun, nor can endure the Splendor of our Moon. To such we propound rare Tricks, suiting to their sordid Fancy: To the Covetous, an easie way without Expence: To the Hasty, Rash and Unstable, multiplicity of Distillations.

"In the World our Writings shall prove like a curious edged Knife; to some they shall carve out Dainties, to others they shall serve only to cut their Fingers. 'Tis the sign of an Owl, to be blinder, by how much the Sun shines brighter. - If thou wilt be heedless, thou may'st sooner stumble at our Books, than at any thou didst ever read in thy Life. Take this from one: that knows best the Sense of what he has written; where we speak most plainly, there be most circumspect, (for we do not go about to betray the Secrets of Nature) especially in those places which seem to give Receipts so plain as you would desire, suspect either a Metaphor, or else be sure that something is suppressed

which thou wilt hardly find (without Inspiration) of thyself; yet to a Son of Art, we have written that which never heretofore was by any reveal'd."

I might add many more Cautions of other Authors, as well as of this, concerning the Difficulties which attend the Reading of their Books; and had not mention'd what I have; but that it appear'd the more necessary to mention some of this Author's because almost every Body has taken up an Opinion, that he is more easily understood than the rest I but how profitably, themselves may judge.

We should not be just to ourselves, if we should be ignorant that when any of them have made a Discovery of this or the other Part of the Work, they have not Balanced it with such Obscurities which are not easily discerned; especially by the Unwary.

And therefore if the Students in this Art, and particularly of this Author's Works, did believe the Philosophers had Cunning equal to their Skill and would but take the Advice given by them, they would not have room to Censure the Philosophers but themselves.

For what could anyone have said, more to have deter'd Inquirers from rash Conclusions, either in Theory or Practice, than this Author has done? viz., "Venture not," saith he, "to practice barely upon my Words: For know that what I have only hinted, is far more than what I have discover'd; and what I have declared to thy first Apprehension, most openly, hath yet its lurking Serpent under the green leaves; I mean some hidden thing, which thou oughtest to understand; which thou, being Cocksure at first Blush, wilt neglect."

The fond Notion which Men have entertained, of understanding this Author's Writing more perfectly or easier than the rest of the Masters is to me an Argument of his great skill in that peculiar way of Writing, which the hermetick Philosophers profess and value themselves upon, viz., to be able openly to show the Art to the Sons of it, and yet secure it from the unworthy.

That this is true, all their Writings shew; for some of them have learned the Art from Books as they own; which could not be, if it were not taught in them. These indeed are very few in comparison to those that Learn it not, though they read the same Books, but not the same things in them. As this Author hath again excellently described such men, viz., "Some I know will serve my Book, as they have served others; out of it they will read their own Phantastick Processes, which I never dreamt of, nor yet are they in Nature. Though we write in English, yet our Matter will be as hard as Greek to some, who will think they understand us well, when they misconstrue our Meaning most perversely. Nor is it imaginable, that they who are Fools in Nature, should be wise in our Books, which are Testimonies to Nature."

As this Author hath profess'd an extraordinary esteem for Ripley, and (in many things) has imitated his Candour, yet he has so manifestly compounded it with the Craft of Norton, that it is hard to distinguish them, and which well deserves the Cautions he hath given, and his Readers' Care therein.

He has in his Books led us some part of the way under such Philosophical Vails, as have been pretty easily seen through by most that read them with Application; who no sooner discover some of his Metaphors, but overcome with joy, and exalted with an Opinion of their own Abilities, presently cry out, we have found! we have found! And what have they found? Why their way into a Labyrinth.

For at the end of this short Walk, he hath set up one Metaphor, harder to be understood than all the rest, viz., The Doves of Diana. This stands at the Entrance into a great Labyrinth, in which are abundance of Inquirers rambling at this day; many of them undiscerned by one another.

I have taken several Turns in it myself, wherein one shall meet with very few; for 'tis so large, and almost every one taking a different Path, that they seldom meet.

But finding it a very melancholy Place, I resolv'd to get out of it, and rather content myself to walk in the little Garden before the Entrance, wherein many things, tho' not all, were orderly to be seen. Choosing rather to stay there, and contemplate on the Metaphor set up, than venture again into the Wilderness; in which I heard the Noise and Voices of several strange and devouring Creatures, (some of which I had with difficulty escaped) every one, almost, having a differing Sound.

As this Author seems to have design'd a full stop at the Pillar he hath caused to be erected, and to prevent Travellers running unawares into that dangerous and dark Wilderness, caused this Inscription to be put upon it, viz., "Learn what Diana's Doves are, which doth vanquish the Lion by asswaging him; I say, the green Lion, which is indeed the Babylonian Dragon, Killing all things with his poison. Then at length learn to know the Caducean Rod of Mercury, with which he works wonders;" etc. Therefore I will not step one Step farther without a Guide, for I dread going again into the Labyrinth.

This guide must be a very wise Man, indued with singular Gifts; for he must not only tell me the Interpretation, but the Dream itself; and by this I may judge of his Ability.

For, as Kelly saith, "Let no Man lead, unless he knows the Way."

Therefore let none mistake my Inquiring the Way, for a Teaching of it. If any do, and suffer by it, they must blame themselves, not me; for I am Inquiring, I say, not Teaching the Way. Masters cannot be deceived, but Searchers may.

We do not find this Enigma of Doves so frequently used as many others, and which also art very difficult to be understood. These figures, I conceive, spring from a Root of Knowledge and Learning, far above the Vulgar's Reach: For, is not this Art, saith one, Cabalistical, and full of Mysteries? So one of these Masters, well versed in Rabinical Learning, has told us what the name of a Dove doth signifie, as well as what it doth not, viz.:-

"The Name of a Dove is never apply'd to Metals themselves (which ought to be well observed by Inquirers, many having erred after this manner) but the ministering and preparing Natures. And that he that understands the Nature of the Burnt Offering (for Purification) will not take Turtles themselves, but two young Pigeons (which are the Offspring) or Sons of the Dove."

And this Secret Pair he rather appropriates to Nogah (Venus) which is the Fifth amongst the Planets; so the Author of 'Arcanum Hermiticae' calls them the Birds of Venus. Tho' this Cabalist applies the name of Dove to Diana also. In the 'History of Natural Things', saith he:-

"Luna is called the Medicine for the White; because she hath received a Whitening Splendor from the Sun, which, by a like shining, illustrates and converts into her own Nature all the Earth - that is the imperfect Metals: And that place of Isaiah xxx. 26, may be mystically understood of this, because the Work being finished, she hath got a Solar Splendor. But in that state, the place in Canticles vi., 9,25, belongs to her. But by the same Name the Matter of the Work is called; and so indeed, like to the Horned Moon, she is in the first State of Consistence; and like the full Moon in the last state of Fluidity and Purity."

In another Place he hath this Passage, speaking of two Birds, which place, I make no doubt, but the Author of Introit. Apert. had well considered, if not drawn his early Knowledge from, and of Argent vive, which he calls a Leopard, Water not wetting, and Jordan of the Wise Man, etc.

"And he shall have four Wings of a Bird upon his Back; the four Wings are of two Birds, which exasperate this Beast with their feathers, to the intent he may enter and fight the Lion and the Bear. And Power was given him over them, that he may overcome them, and extract their glutinous Blood. Of all these is made one Fourth Beast, which is frightful and terrible and very strong... Eating and breaking to pieces himself and others;...Treading the residue under his Feet."

This Guide I think may be depended upon, having given Demonstration of his Ability, by telling not only the Interpretation, but the Original figure itself.

More I have not met with in my Inquiry, therefore no more can be expected from me concerning this great Stumbling-block, at which so many fall into Error.

From these things 'tis very evident, to me, that this Art cannot be found by never so many casual Tryals, or Experiments, without a real Knowledge, as Sendivo has written, viz.: "Know for certain also, that this Art is not placed in Fortune, or casual Invention, but in real Science; and that there is but this one Matter in the World, by which, and of which, the Philosopher's Stone is made, viz., the Mercury of the Philosophers."

Out of what this is made, he teaches in his 'Treatise of Sulphur', as well as elsewhere. This is that Mercury, saith another, which the returning Sun diffuseth everywhere in the Month of March, or House of Aries; from whence also the Sulphur is to be sought. Which Sulphur, in this Work, saith Sendivo, is indeed instead of the Male; but the Mercury instead of the Female; of the Composition and Acting of these two, are generated the Mercuries of Philosophers. For as they have a double Sulphur, so they have a double Mercury, viz., For the White and for the Red: Which is but seldom, and then very cautiously hinted; and these Mercuries differ, both in Colour and Quality, as may be easily gathered from their Books, by careful Readers.

The Author of Intro. Apert. indeed hath taught, that there are two Mercuries to the White, used in two different Works; Asserting that the Acuation of the Mercury for Sol Vulgar, must differ from that of Philosophical Sol. And further, If (saith he) "you shall in your Decoction of Sol Vulgar, use the same Mercury which is used in our Sol (tho' both flow from the same Root in general) and apply that Regimen of Heat which the Wise Men in their Books have apply'd to our Stone, thou art without all doubt, in an Erroneous Way: And that is the great Labyrinth in which almost all young Practitioners are ensnared. For there is scarce one Philosopher, who in his Writings does not touch both ways."

In this, we may say of him, he hath not fallen short of any of them: For he has so interwoven one Work with another, one Regimen with another (by way of Balance, as I said before, for Discoveries) that little less than the Knowledge of all in Theory, will prevent our falling into constant Error, in some of these particulars; even after the Field in general is known: and which happened to himself as he confesses, and which I shall mention, as it falls in my Inquiry.

These (with many more) are the Difficulties which the Inquirers after this Art have to encounter with; and which, one would think, should rather deter, than encourage, many Men from pursuing it as they do: especially considering the adverse Fortune that attends most Men, who prosecute this Study to their dying day; finishing their Lives in Ignorance and Despair. This Melancholy Prospect, I say, should leave such a deep Impression upon us, as to make us more cautiously meddle with this rare and difficult Philosophy; which without a Master or the special Favour of God, is never attain'd. As the Author of the 'New Light' informs us, viz., that unless God reveal it by a good Wit, or Friend, 'tis hardly known.

By the last most commonly, by the first most rarely. For as he adds, "Tho' Lully was a man of a subtile Wit, yet if he had not received the Art from Arnoldus, certainly he had been like those which find it with difficulty; and Arnoldus also received it from a Friend: Every Art and Science is easie to a Master, but not to a Scholar."

Therefore this Art is easie to none, tho' of never so quick a Wit and Parts, but to those that know it only.

The Cabalist, I have before mentioned, hath lively prefigured, wise and good Men by Elisha; and the foolish Pretenders of this Art, by Gehazi, who was indeed Servant to Elisha; but to what purpose, the History of them, in the Second Book of Kings, sheweth.

Elisha an Example of Natural Wisdom, and a Despiser of Riches: He knew how to correct and make wholesome Poisonous Waters, and to multiply Treasure beyond the common Course of Nature: He could cure the worst Infirmities, nay, even raise the Dead: He knew how and when to blind and open the Eyes of Inquirers, also to punish Mockers, and even make Iron to swim; yea, his very Remains were efficacious after he was dead.

Gehazi labour'd in vain, and remain'd a Servant for ever; never qualified to be a Master, notwithstanding he had the Advantage of conversing with so great a one: He was Covetous, a Lyar and Deceiver; a Prattler, boasting of other Men's Deeds; Conceited and Hasty, thinking he sufficiently understood his Master, when he bids him take his Staff, and lay it upon the Dead Child, presently enterprising, though with an Heterogeneous Matter, and so able to effect nothing not discerning the Law of Nature; but Elisha apply'd a living Homogenous Agent, and then the Dead was raised. And instead of a double Portion of his Master's Knowledge (which Elisha desired and obtained by his Master Elijah) Gehazi got a Leprosie, as the Reward of his Doings.

A great deal might be observed from this History of Elisha and Gehazi, who are Notable Examples of Wise and Good Men, and their Reverse, viz., Foolish and Profane; the last may talk, as Gehazi did, of procuring the supernatural Son of the Wise Man, but without being able to effect it; no more can his Successors, which are not a few even at this Day, who not only succeed him in Qualifications but Success.

The Philosophers agree with one Voice, that one worthy of this Science must be strictly Virtuous, leading a holy Life, or God will not prosper him: He must have a competent Understanding, or he will not be able to conceive: He must be Diligent and Laborious, or he will not be able to work out what he conceives; and he must be private or he will not quietly enjoy that which he works out. To these must be added Patience and Leisure, together with a Competent Fortune; which is the more necessary in this Study, because it requires, as is already said the whole Man to find out the means, and then a careful Application is absolutely necessary to accomplish the Work.

The Philosophers, you very well know, take the liberty of seemingly contradicting themselves, and one another: Sometimes asserting the Work to be very easie; other times that 'tis very difficult or hard. One while, that 'tis short; then again that 'tis very tedious. Again, that 'tis done with little Expense, and an easie Labour; then complaining of the charge and Toil. Sometimes affirming their Matter to be but one only thing, other times that 'tis compounded of several. One while the Work is to be done with a gentle Fire, another time that 'tis not perform'd without a strong. Then again, that 'tis equal, and of the same degree; and yet that 'tis daily increased.

These are the Difficulties with many more that might be named which Inquirers lie under. And yet the Philosophers affirm, they all vanish when the Key of this Art is once attain'd, which is the Chalibis of Philosophers. No longer will a Tyro relish a false Writer, or be to seek to reconcile the true. For that as soon as the first Gate is opened, all the rest will fly open of themselves.

I fear many will be displeas'd and say, these difficulties are too well known to us already, we want rather to be told how we shall overcome 'em, than have them repeated to us. To these I answer, in the Philosopher's Words, Expound the Philosopher's Writings according to Nature and not to Fancy. Now they say, their stone is nothing else but Gold digested to the highest degree of purity and subtile Fixity. Many consent to this but will plead, that common Gold is not meant. In answer to which I shall add, let them read Sendivo on the Elements of Fire, The Way to Bliss, and others, and consider the Extensibility, Permanency and Purity of the Gold there spoken of. And also let them

consider whether 'tis not such Gold they would produce by this Art, as is called common Gold. Then if it be common Gold you would produce, whether common Gold be not the Natural Body for such a Production; as common Man is of producing its own Kind; common Wheat, of Wheat; and so throughout whole Nature. Common Wheat in a Barn, is as dead as common Gold in a chest; tho' both these have a Life, i.e., of Existence, and Power to increase their Kind; which Life must die, before the Power is brought to Action; and when this is done, they are properly called living Gold, and living Wheat, and not before.

Now, how comes Wheat to be so, we are pretty well appriz'd, viz., tis sown in its proper Vessel, the Earth; it is moistened with its proper Humidity and is digested by its proper Heat, and so it grows and increases.

And if we are to take Nature for our Example, Gold must be proceeded with after the same manner; tho' the Vessel, the Humidity and Heat differ, for a Metal and: for a Vegetable, yet both are liable to the Deficiencies and Excess of these things.

For if Wheat hath not a Matrix duly qualified, or hath too much or too little Humidity, and so of Heat, it will succeed accordingly. And so must the other, if Nature be the same in the one as in the other, as no doubt she is; or to what purpose are we so often recommended to the Consideration of Nature. Sendivo bids us follow Nature; waving the many Subtilties of the Philosophers, written to amuse the Unskilful Inquirers.

To conclude on this Head, if every Multiplication is from Seed; that the Perfection of every thing is its attaining a Seminal Virtue; and that nothing has this, which is imperfect of its Kind: Then it will follow, that if there be a Seminal Virtue in Metals, and that all of them are of the same Nature, the Seminal Virtue (that is the power of Multiplying) can be no where but in the most Perfect, which is Gold; vide 'Ars Metallica'.

As these things are consonant to Nature, Sound Reason and the Doctrine of Philosophers, even the most envious, I, for my part, shall make them my rule in my Inquiry: Others may do as they please,

And as the Author of the 'Way to Bliss' has not only told us (among many others) where the Seed of Gold lies, viz., in Gold; but how it lies, viz., This Seed of Gold is his whole Body loosened and softened in his own Water; there is all your stuff and Preparation. So he hath also, with the same Candor, shewed us the Water in which it dies, and with which 'tis raised. Where speaking of the Affinity that is known between Gold and Quicksilver (in common Uses) which he calls the grand Mother of the Stone, and Spring of all her Goodness: Wherefore, says he, "When this fine and clean Body of Quicksilver is made, by Nature and Art, yet much finer and clearer, and again, as much more piercing and spiritual, and able to perform it; how much more readily will she run to her like, and devour it, the clean, fine and spiritual, that is the Quicksilvery part of the Metal. And if she do devour it, then it cannot be lost, but must needs go into a better Nature, even the Nature we desire."

This, he says, is done by the well-ordering the witty Fire of Hermes, "that here is all the Hardness, here all the World is blinded all the rest is easie. Search then this rare kind of Heat; for here is all the Cunning; this is the Key of all; this makes the Seeds and bringeth forth: Search wisely, and where it is, in the midst of Heaven and Earth for it is in the midst of both these places, and yet but one indeed; it is Earthy, yet Watery, Airy, and very Fiery, etc. He adds, Let the dew of this starry blood beat about the Womb, and your seed shall joy and prosper. Muse and conject well upon my Words, you that are fit and skilled in. Nature, for this is a very Natural Heat; and yet all the World is blinded. Nay indeed, if a Man would read little, and think much upon the ways of Nature, he might easilie hit this Art; and before that, never."

Thus the witty Author, according to the Custom of all Philosophers, brought as to a full stop, and left as to consider Nature, in order to remove the Remora that so often stops Inquirers in their career.

'Twas from the Excellency and Virtue of this Fire, no doubt, that the Cabalist I have before mentioned intituled his wonderful Book, 'Aesch Mezareph', or 'Purifying Fire'. This Fire has lain hid from many, a long time after they knew the Field in general, where the Seed was to be Sown. The fiery Furnace of Philosophers, says one of them, lay hid from me long; but after I Knew this, and how it was fitted to its proper Vessel, after a few days I beheld the admirable Brightness of our Water, which being seen, I could not but be amazed.

So Pontanus seems surpris'd at the wonderful Effects of this Fire, for want of the Knowledge of which he had erred so long and often; and tells us who inform'd him of it, viz., Artephius, whose Book is extant, and read by most Inquirers, tho' not with the same success; some interpreting his Sayings one way, and some another; but few according to the true Sense and Meaning. Whence they have erred and will always err, unless they learn it better; the way to learn it, is but just told above, by the Author of 'The Way to Bliss', which agrees with the Way Pontanus prescribes, viz., They that should read Geber, and all other Philosophers, never so long, could not comprehend it, because that Fire is found by deep and profound Meditation only; and then it may be gather'd from Books, and not before.

We must not only have the Knowledge of this Fire; but, as we are often told, the true Measure of it to its Furnace; both which seem to be remote from the Eyes of the Vulgar: When this is known, the Difficulties that attend the Radical Dissolution of the close and fixed Body of Gold vanish. And before this can be done, this stout fixed Body

must be Calcined, and reduced into as fine a Calx as possible, which is often hinted by Philosophers, but with a design to conceal it. Geber witnesses, that everything Calcined is of easier Solution, because the Parts of the Calcined Body, more subtilated by Fire, are more easily mixed with Water, and turned into Water. Without this previous Calcination, no Solution is found.

Therefore no wonder so many fail in their Attempts, to dissolve Gold in a Generative Way, by working on its Compact and Gross Body; For as the gross Bodies of Sol and Luna are not fit for Dissolution, but only their altered and unctuous Calxes; so Mercury, in its gross Body is not able to do this, but in its altered more subtile and spiritual Nature; and drawn from its Vitriolick Caverns, acuated with its pure salt and piercing Sulphur, which then overcomes all things, even itself. For it not only dissolves Sol and Luna into its own Nature, but coagulates itself into theirs, true and fixed, by a proper Heat only.

Some may say, All these are so fully taught already, that a bare repeating of them is of no use.

That they are taught already, by the Masters of this Science themselves, is my warrant for repeating of 'em; and if you have already Learn'd these things, you have no Reason to be uneasie; if you have not, tis your advantage to be put in mind of them, even by an Inquirer.

Sad experience sheweth, that but very few of the past or present Searchers, learn those things which they often brag the Philosophers have taught: But at length to cover their own Ignorance, they fall into Arrogance, and blame the Philosophers for hiding of them; as is observed by (the never too much to be admired) Candid Ripley; who, in return, only modestly reproves them, Thus:-

"All Philosophers record and say the same;  
But simple Searchers putteth them in blame,  
Saying, they hide it; But they are Blameworthy,  
Who are no Clerks and meddle with Philosophy."

Here this good Man, in few words, justifies the true Philosophers, and lays the blame where it ought, viz. on the Unskilful Medlers with Philosophy.

What tho' he has conceal'd the Key of the Art under his green Lion, as others have done under the Doves, Chalibs, secret Fire, etc., some under one figure, some under another, which best answered their purpose, viz., Concealing the Art from the Unworthy. What they have done towards Discovering of it to the Deserving, merits the greatest Acknowledgements, not Censure from Inquirers to whom they declare they are not indebted.

Nor do I affirm, that all these different Terms are synonymous, that behoves the Inquirer to satisfy himself in, from their Writing, whether they are or can be deemed so.

I have ventur'd to call the Green Lion of Ripley the Key of the Work, because his Expositor has as good as called it so. "Learn then," says he, "to know this Green Lion, and its Preparation, which is all in all the Art; it's the only Knot; untye it, and you are as good as Master: For whatever then remains, is but to know the outward Regimen of the Fire, for to help on Nature's Internal Work."

And the same Author has expressly called the Chalibs so, viz., I will tell thee (if thou wilt conceive) it is called Chalibs, by the Author of the 'New Light'; and it is the true Principle of the Work, the true Key (as it may be handled) of unlocking the most hidden Secrets of Philosophers.

Again our Chalibs is the true Key of our work, without which the Fire of the Lamp could not be, by any Art, kindled. Which he further describes thus, viz., It is the Minera of Gold, a Spirit very pure, beyond others, etc. Sendivogius calls this Matter, as well by the Name of Magnet, as Chalibs, viz., To speak more plainly, says he, 'tis our Magnet, which, in our foregoing Treatises, I called Chalibs, or Steel. The Air generates this Magnet, and the Magnet generates or makes out Air to appear and come forth: I have here intirely shewed thee the Truth.

This Author has comprized in few Words what the Author of 'Intro. Apert.' has divided into Three Chapters, viz., Chalibs, Magnet, and Air; all which he has Concentrated in a Fourth, viz., Chaos; The Earth, says he, is a heavy Body, the Matrix of Minerals, because it keeps them occultly in itself; altho' it brings to light Trees and animals. The Heaven is that wherein the great Lights, together with the Stars, are rowled about; and it sends down its Virtues through the Air into inferior things.

When he has gone thus far, he, in Imitation of Sendivogius's Skill and Candor, adds, But in the Beginning, all being confounded together, made a Chaos.

Behold ! I have faithfully opened to you the Truth; for our Chaos, etc.

O the Harmony and Skill, as well as Candor of these two great Masters! Beg of God that he would make you Discerners and Partakers of these things. Nor let me forget most candid Ripley, who exactly corresponds with these, viz.:

"For as of one Mass was made all thing  
Right; so must in our Practice be.  
In Philosophers Books therefore, who lifts to see,  
Our Stone is called the less World One and Three:  
Magnesia also of Sulphur, and Mercury,  
Proportionate by Nature most perfectly."

Thus we see Ripley's One Mass, Philalethes's Chaos, and Sendivogius's Matter of the Antient Philosophers, are the same; containing Three, viz., Magnet, Chalibs, Air, or Magnesia, Sulphur and Mercury: which also are called by abundance of other Names in Philosophers' Books, e.g., Artephius speaking of the Compound, Magnesia, says, That 'tis compounded, like a Man of Body, Soul and Spirit; which he thus expounds, viz.,

"For the Body is the fixed Earth of the Sun, which is more than most fine, ponderously lifted up by the force of our Divine Water: The Soul is the Tincture of the Sun and Moon, proceeding from the Conjunction or Communication of these two: But the Spirit is the Mineral Virtue of the Two Bodies and the Water, which carries the Soul, etc. Again, the Spirit therefore pierceth, the Body fixeth, the Soul coupleth, coloureth and whiteneth. Of these three united together, is our Stone made; that is, of the Sun, and Moon, and Mercury. Flammel says he could easily give very clear Comparisons and Expositions of this Body, Soul and Spirit: But then he must of necessity speak things which God reserves to reveal unto them that fear and love him, and consequently ought not to be written";

yet he is not wanting to concur with Artephius, in calling them the Sun, Moon and Mercury, and agreeing exactly with him in his Exposition.

It would be as it were endless, and indeed needless, to recite all the different Expressions used by Philosophers, who confirm and constantly maintain this Doctrine of Trinity in Unity, under various Modes of Speech, and hard-to-be-understood Similes.

But to keep a little to that of the Green Lion, which is worth our Enquiry: Ripley speaking of its Blood, asserts this Secret to be hid by all Philosophers, viz.:

"The said Menstrual is (I say to thee in counsel)  
The Blood of our Green Lion, and not of Vitriol:  
Dame Venus can the Truth of this thee tell  
At the beginning, to Counsel if thou her call.  
This Secret is hid by Philosophers great and small.  
Which blood drawn out of the Green Lion,  
For lack of Heat, had not perfect Digestion."

So the Author of 'Arcanum Hermeticae' saith, the most precious Substance is Venus, the Hermaphrodite of the Antients, glorious (or powerful) in both Sexes.

The Author of 'Aesch Mezareph', speaking of Venus, under the Names Nogah and Hod, which is a necessary Instrument to promote the Metalick Splendor, says, It has more a part of a Male, than Female; and speaking of the Green Lion, he saith, Which, I pray thee, do not think is called so from any other Cause but its Colour: For unless thy Matter shall be green, not only in that immediate State before 'tis reduced into Water, but also after the Water of Gold is made of it. Why 'tis called a Lion, is hinted by another, viz., Having Power to overcome, and reduce Bodies to their first Matter, and to make fixed things volatile and spiritual; whence 'tis fitly called a Lion.

Some are who derive the Name Green from the Rawness or Unripeness of the Subject, and not from the Colour, viz.:-

"Whose Colour doubtless is not so,  
And that your Wisdom do well know;  
But our Lion wanting Maturity,  
Is called Green, from Unripeness, trust me."  
- The Hunting of the Green Lion.

Another says:-

" For it is because of its transcendent Force

It hath, and for the Rawness of its Source,  
Of which the liice is no where to be seen,  
That it of them is named their Lion green.  
Our subject is no ways malleable;  
It is metalline, and its Colour sable."  
- Sophic Feast.

These are some more of the seeming Contradictions, which Philosophers warn us not to be deceived with, but to learn to Reconcile. These Difficulties are to be overcome by Meditation only.

Now, let us try whether, or how far, 'tis possible to Reconcile these Contradictions concerning the Green Lion. The Cabalist (much admired by me) says, the Matter is actually green, both before 'tis dissolved and afterwards also: This doth not deny, but confirm, that 'tis Spoke of, and considered, in divers States; and then it may not be absurd to suppose, that it may be, and is, described by one in one state and degree of Perfection, and by others in another: By one in its Impurity; by another in its Passage from thence to its Purity (for Ripley says 'tis unclean); and by a third when 'tis Purified. For as Matters, when more or less pure or mature, are of a different Texture, so they also differ in Colour. And 'tis in this Sense, I make no doubt the Philosophers are to be understood not only with relation to this Subject, but 'Tis not therefore every Matter which is foul or, green (as vitriol is, which Ripley says, Fools take to be their Green Lion) that intitles it to this wonderful Name; no, but it must have all the other Virtues and Powers in it, that are assigned by Philosophers: Which thing lies very obscure, and seemingly base, but it is, in its Purity and exalted Virtue, their Subject of Wonders. To Produce which, this fond Minera, they tell us, must be dissolved and exactly purified, in a pure Homogeneous Water, which is its own Blood, as White as Milk; which Name some have rather imposed. This Leprous Body, Sendivo and others have called Saturn, and Saturn's Child and what some have called flood and Milk, he calls Urine.

Thus the Masters of this Science take the liberty to express themselves by different Similes, in order to disguise their Secret, which a mental man will discover and improve by, as soon as he shall discern any one of their Intentions; the rest follow in course, tho' varied ever so many ways, as they themselves testify.

What some have called Blood, Wine, etc., the Author of the Learned 'Sophic Feast' calls fiery Water, etc., viz.:

"Their Lion green they suffer'd him to prey  
On Cadmus Sociates; and when the Fray  
Was over, they with Dian's charms him ty'd  
And made him under Waters to abide,  
And washed him clean; and after gave him Wings  
To fly, much like a Dragon, whose sharp springs  
Of fiery Water, the only way was found  
To cause Apollo his Harp-strings to sound.  
This is the true Nymph's Bath, which we did try,  
And proved to be the Wise Men's Mercury."

Here all Doubts and Difficulties end, when this is attain'd; so with it I shall finish this Inquiry: Having shewed my Fellow Inquirers, in what manner I have been enchain'd in it; concluding in the Words of the aforesaid Author, viz.:

"Happy are they, who shall not miss to find  
The new uprising Sun:  
More happy they, who, with renewed Mind,  
In God find Rest alone."