

LES RECREATIONS HERMETIQUES

(The Hermetic Recreations)



The sciences suffer, like all other things, the vicissitudes of time, and degenerate rather than acquire growth. Men in systems, welcomed on all sides, have sown chaos in the vast field of the imagination, and the most bizarre flowers have been the product: these flowers have finally received such favour that the best books, the most beautiful speeches, are considered worthless if they are not thus decorated.

The science from which all others are derived, that of Nature, has fallen into such disrepute that today we slap with ridicule all those we know that follow it.

By means of the laws of affinity, we claim to resolve all problems. The elements are either multiplied or annihilated, and those who accept them without restriction are placed, along with those who have treated of them, among the ranks of the ignorant, or men without sense.

Without denying the similarities, the chemical basis of the new philosophy, I believe them at least unnecessary for the goal that a true friend of truth proposes to achieve. I intend to speak here of the knowledge of first causes on which all science must be founded, and those who pretend to despise them, as a certain Fox from the Fable, which he did, since he could not take the grapes: moreover these laws of affinity that modern scholars make such claims for, although they never lead at all to the source of our admirable fountain of life, are far from being the subject of new discoveries. I am referring to all those among them which are bona fide, that they were at least recognized by the facts, when they were not yet in words.

The Elements have a Centrum Centri that all eyes can not see, and they have more than one Centrum Commune which the so-called scholars do not dare approach, for fear the light will reveal their turpitude. This caustic heat accompanied by light, that is commonly called 'fire', is not the element of this name, of which the sages have wanted to talk. We take in this circumstance the effects for the cause, and we go further than the rhetoricians, who at least take the part for the whole.

The fire is an eminently subtle fluid, proceeding directly from the light and is called, sometimes electric, sometimes galvanic or magnetic etc., according to its various modifications, or rather, it is the light itself derived from its source and from which it remains detached. It is neither cold nor hot, and heat or cold are not the body, despite what Mr. Azais says, but simple effects of motion or rest.

Movement alone produces the heat with all its consequences, good or bad, each of which is able to make the application, and the fire due to its greater subtlety, is also capable of receiving the impulse and switch to other bodies.

Light, principle of life and motion, can be regarded as a single act of creation, everything else is merely the consequence. This is what Hermes wanted to show, when he said in his Emerald Tablet: "That which is above is similar to what is below and what is below is like that which is above, to make by means of these two things, the miracle of a single thing."

While all of the things of B. V. is merely an abbreviated citation of this proposal, and the truth which it contains, which all the sages of antiquity recognised, the 'Universe' signifying the returned or reversed unity from which it has received its name. I can still quote to support my assertion, the Gospel of St. John, where he says, "the light was in the darkness, and the darkness did not hold it," because its moral application only justifies the fact that it served as the basis.

Gaseous and aeriform substances are of a chaotic nature rather more than the basic elements, and easily reverse the Element to which they are closest. Meteors of all kinds, excepting the fireballs or Air stones, taking their origin from them, but their form is all air, and shows that they are dependent

on this Element; but like everything shining is not GOLD, everything that has the lightness and the appearance of the air is not air: this is the Medium in which these substances hold their form to which this name belongs.

Water, even the rain and Dew is merely a compound of gaseous substances to which the fire and the action of light have given the form of water, but it is the form and not the substance that must be considered here as Element; gold I understand by 'form' that which makes the link and which also makes that of all bodies, even glass.

Air, Water and Earth are only the immediate and subsequent consequences of the training of fire. Light separated from his home, built up by loss of movement and repressed by a new and ongoing emission of its substance, has given itself various forms which we have distinguished. In language, the simplest of these forms were called Elementals.

The Earth that we cultivate not is merely the element that we make to represent it. It is not merely made up of a great pile of debris from the bodies of the three kingdoms on the way to destruction; it is true to say that it contains some portions of the first and elementary earth, because independently of that which the water continually supplies her, she retains her own shape by her daily destruction. So the end of all things resembles its beginning and death becomes the principle of a new life; this is what the ancients recognised and experienced, and they have shown this to us under the form of the snake biting its tail, in order to continue the remembrance.

So when you read some of the ancients tracts on the study of Nature, do not hear for 'element' the raw substances, indigestible and deadly, as I just informed you, but look into the Centrum Centri by some ingenious methods and by your own resources; for thus the wise really want to prevent abuse and the profanation of this science, by means of which society could be disrupted and destroyed. Do not be afraid to engage yourself in the study of our science, and use all the efforts of reason in order to deepen and know the mysteries, because this is the only way out of the maze in which you may be slightly engaged.

You should not really expect any evidence of our claims, because nobody will be tempted to deliver some to you: I am talking about the irrevocable proof which experience gives; but since others have acquired it by the only means which I give you, do not despair of success, I dare assure you, if you decide to follow my advice and not to depart, because I teach you the right way and I want you to get out of the lost steps with which the road is everywhere strewn.

“Turn upside down the elements,” Aristotle says, “and you will find what you are looking for.” This proposal, one of the most important, having put the spirits in motion, each went out of in search of a first matter in order to achieve this goal really thinking that the isolated Elements could lead there, while a body which was just made and still in its state of simplicity, was the only one that could reasonably be implemented to seek the point of perfection. By dint of searching, some have finally found it, but finding nothing in nature capable of dissolving it, despite its simplicity, and unable to extract the elements by any other means, they thought proper to trace to their common source, having drawn from there, they finally came happily to the end of their design.

Be sure that without the igneous water composed of the pure light of the sun and the moon, it will be impossible to overcome the many obstacles that still multiply before your eyes when you attempt this passage of the famous Strait which leads to the sea of wise. This water that some rightly called Universal Spirit and the English Dickinson has sufficiently known, is one of so great virtue and penetration, that all bodies that are affected easily return to their first state.

I have already made known that it was not rain water or Dew that suited this operation. I add here

that it is not at all water in a fungal species commonly called Flos Coeli or 'Flower of Heaven' and which we take very improperly for the Nostoch of the ancients; but an admirable water drawn by artifice from the rays of the sun and from the moon. I will say again that salts and other magnets that are used to draw the moisture of the air are good for nothing in this circumstance and that there is only the one fire of Nature which can be used usefully here.

This fire enclosed at the centre of all bodies needs a certain movement to acquire this attractive and universal property which is so necessary, and there is in the world only one body where it is found with this condition, but it is so common that one encounter it wherever man can go; that is why I think it will not be difficult for you to encounter it.

Mr. Bruno Lansac, author of the commentary on the book entitled The light emerging from darkness, cleverly said that the fire lives of air and that in places where the air is most abundant that we must seek the Sulphur of the wise; because he calls this 'water' interchangeably 'sulphur' or 'mercury', as it contains one and the other and enjoys their properties. This is not quite the letter he must take these words. I recommend only carefully follow this author when reviewing the Reigns of Nature where he accurately demonstrates of the use and usefulness of this element for the maintenance of each of them. This well-thought chapter will be of great help to lovers of science, and I cannot commit any more to this subject which is a special study.

I said the light was the common source, not only of the Elements but also of all that exists, and that it is to her, as its principle, that all must report. The Sun and fixed Stars which we send up with such profusion are like generators, but the Moon, placed intermediately, the tempering of its moisture, to her imparts a generative virtue by means of which all is regenerated down here.

Everyone now knows that the light the moon sends us is merely a loan, as such, from the Sun to which is mingled the light of the other stars. The Moon is therefore the receptacle or common home which you have heard all philosophers speak about: it is their source of living water. So if you want to reduce the rays of the Sun into water, choose the moment when the moon passes us with abundance, that is to say when it is full, or it approaches its fullness: you will have by this means a water ignited from the rays of the Sun and the Moon in its greatest strength.

Many people, misunderstanding the unity of the stone, put in a vessel which they call a philosophical egg, just one subject of their choice, they keep it over a light fire or another of their imagining, and expect dissolution in vain. Others make amalgams, and are not better informed. They make no progress for many reasons but the main ones are:

- 1) - They work on dead matter, and even when it is the real subject of philosophy, the vessel and the fire are not proportionate.
- 2) - They do not know that from the beginning to the end of work, our material is double - I mean it has an agent and a patient - without which there would be no action in the vessel. The action of the agent is male, and of the patient is female, and both these together, although separated by their nature, constitute a single body that is identified for this purpose as 'Rebis' or two things in one.
- 3) - Finally, their work is quite the opposite to that of Nature, for they can neither dissolve nor putrefy, nor distil, nor sublimate, nor do any of our operations. However, they do not leave off this undertaking, saying to themselves: this work is that of Nature, in which we only need to lend a hand, it is up to her to finish. And walking in blind, and with so much confidence, they are bound to crash with every step they take in such a dark maze.

We read in the Gospel that one does not get Lys on brambles, nor figs instead of raisins. If this is the seed, then this will be the fruit. Now, a bad tree cannot produce good fruits, and for this reason it must be cut and thrown into the fire. But these reasons do not affect them, and they are no less confident of success. But seeing the end of their work going wrong, they should mend their ways and acknowledge their fault; but far from it, they attribute it to some accident they could not foresee, and head off with even more courage to their foolish work. But let these ignorant folk puff vain fumes at their leisure; we will concern ourselves with the choice of proper matter and with its preparation.

It is not just to review all the substances of the three kingdoms, but also to examine their composition, in order to know that of which they have been formed. At first sight, this difficulty seems insurmountable. It is great, indeed, but not as much as you might imagine, because:

- 1) - We do not need for this work neither Alembic, nor Retorts, much less salts, fiery spirits, acids or corrosives etc..
- 2) - We know, moreover, that all things of this world have the same origin, and they differ only by the mixture of elements, as I have outlined above.

It only remains for us in the third place to find the exact point of their formation.

Consider the Heavens and the Earth which first existed - that Heaven, serving as the agent or male, and the Earth, as patient or the female, gave birth to all things. However they were not distinct from one another and they formed first a dark and abominable mass. But the light having been separated, and both having been established, the mass was shaken and gave signs of life. The elements were formed, the universe and everything in it appeared afterwards, and this order of things, so admirable, remains since then and will remain so until it pleases the Supreme Mediator to change it.

Life, as we see it, is a battle of two substances, or a continuous exchange of light and darkness. One of these substances alternately takes the place of the other. It is sometimes based on the male and sometimes the female, so that when it pleases the divine Author, everything changes into a pure light or all returns into the Cimmerian darkness. This shows that light and darkness are one and the same thing, changing shape and value through the development or the strengthening of the substance, that there comes a mutual attraction from which appears, with the movement, the reversal of the primary substance.

Now consider that in the same way and by the same matter out of which the world was created, the work of the wise is revealed, and that is why it has been called the little world or microcosm. So, I told you in a few words all you need to do for this great endeavour.

So take the first earth that is only pure light surrounded by darkness, and reduce it into its principles with the stone snatched from the top of the mountain without hands, in order to recognise in it three distinct substances which are salt, sulphur and mercury, which being skilfully joined with the two of which the matter is composed, namely the Heaven and Earth, they form a wonderful Quintessence whose virtues are infinite and incomprehensible.

This wonderful stone appeared in a dream to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and it came to crush and pulverise a large statue he saw standing before him, whose head was of purest gold; whose chest, shoulders and arms were of silver; its belly and thighs of brass; and its legs of iron and clay. There it was mixed with the human seed, but it was not at all fitting for them, any more than iron cannot be mixed with clay.

Nebuchadnezzar, rightly frightened by this sight, summoned all the wise men of his realm, and demanded from them, under pain of death, that they discern his dream and give a correct interpretation, but none of them could figure it out. There was in the whole realm only one young man named Daniel being filled with the spirit of God, who could satisfy his request (Daniel 2:18).

This dream can be fully applied to the Work of the wise, and serve as a Parabolic figure. It will be seen, for example, in the Magi of Babylon, the crowd of false scholars who strive in vain to understand the science, nevertheless wanting to convince people that possess it, and leading those who rely on them too much down dead end pathways. Put good faith in Daniel, a son of wisdom, to which all the secrets of Nature are known and which can provide a proper explanation.

The statue will be our metallic tree from the top to the root in which are still confused Saturn, Jupiter and Mercury as primary original metals. The iron and clay mixed with semen represent the Work of Nature done with human hands, and the Stone cut from the top of the mountain without hands, that is to crush the foot of the statue and reduce it to fine powder, would be taken either for that lightning which Jupiter launches or for the scythe of Saturn that you must exchange skilfully with the trident of Neptune, (by means of a certain key that I will give you) until Pluto showing jealous and blowing from the bottom of caves, in turn, shows his power by draining the water, and reducing the tree to ashes and dust which you shall sow, and of which will come precious stones.

The ancients, jealous of their secret, discussed the matter in its various aspects, in order to deceive the credulity of greedy and ambitious people who dream only of power and devastation. They were mistaken about the philosophic first matter which one can only obtain after considerable time and long work. By no means sharing their jealousy, I wanted to let you become familiar with this much sought after subject and purposefully make it completely naked before your very eyes in order to provide you with a longer look at it. I hope you will thank me for my openness, and that you'll get the greatest advantage possible, however, I'm advising you to add to my words a little grain of salt, so that you can make them more sensible.

The dissolution is the first thing you need to undertake, because you have to release the bodies in order to make the enemies face each other. So the fire and water will be greatly needed here, especially since these elements are already enemies by their Nature and are just waiting to try out their strength.

The spirit which I mentioned above, is a fire overcome by the water which you will use for this purpose.

You fill the Vessel of Nature and you distil on a slow fire in order to de-phlegm it. You will find at the bottom something that is fixed which you will keep for reaping. You will pour the new spirit on top to the same extent as before, and so continue distilling until the vessel cannot hold any more, and that everything else remains fixed to the bottom. By continuing the fire to the same degree, you will soon see within your vessel some agitation caused by a gentle South-west wind that will be followed by a rain very pleasant to view. As the wind and rain continue to increase, you will no longer see the 'ship'; it's like a sea that will be more and more agitated until the elements are finally pacified, and everything is back in the order of nature. However, the day has given way to night, darkness grows and the 'ship' is a perfect black. This is the fiftieth night, and she appeared to the sailors three times (triple) who have suffered due to fatigue. The day begins to dawn, the horizon is clear and cloudless, the day will be beautiful.

This manner of expression is common to nearly all ancient writers, and it is not uncommon to find readers who take these statements literally. The wind and rain are realities for them, and their credulity extends for them to the smallest details of the allegory. This one, I'll put in the right

direction, so as to facilitate the understanding of others.

The vessel / 'ship' of Nature is the prepared earth which must drink its spirit. It is called a vessel, and indeed it is, since it contains (something). The spirit that is added is not a foreign thing because everything originated from it, and it is that from which our earth is formed, so as it is said 'the child goes back into the womb': which can only be done by tearing the entrails. It is also necessary that our earth be divided into its smallest parts to reveal its great wealth, and for this to happen you should soak it often with the spirit and let it dry out just as often. In this operation, phlegm will evaporate, but the spirit remains and becomes incorporated with that salified earth until such time as the saturation is complete; then the added spirit can no longer be contained. That which was set on the earth reacts and forces it to dissolve. The salt would be [dissolved] as well, and that is why this dissolution is compared to a sea. Now because the spirit which was added is joined to an altering and corrupting moisture, there appears from the fermenting mixture a movement, which is followed by putrefaction, and consequently regeneration, since fermentation changes the bodies of Nature, and in putrefaction, they only exchange their clothes for new ones, and all the more rich and brilliant, because the Spirit of original engine is more elevated.

What the Matter may contain of moisture, without pouring outside, this is the measure to be observed for the imbibitions, and what we call the weight of Nature.

That which is being used as a vessel, also serves as an oven, as the spirit that you introduce is a natural fire which cooks and digests it for further use.

It should not be less than fifty washings because from each ablution until the perfect drying is counted as one natural or philosophical day; so that our 'days' can last one week depending on the season, and the quality and quantity of the matter being subjected to the work. The great secret of the Sages to shorten the time, is to divide the matter, so that the days are shorter in length.

Although we do not use any vulgar fire for our Work, it is nevertheless certain that we need a temperature high enough so that evaporation can take place and that the matter does not languish, and be lost. It is therefore useful and necessary during the winter, and in the workplace, to make a little fire, but not enough so that the matter is overheated, which would be worse than having none - because the spirit would be cast out and could not be replaced. It is not necessary for the temperature to rise above fifteen degrees of Réaumur (18.75 C, 66.75 F).

When one has done the work well and the matter dissolves, it turns black by degrees. We did add in at various times the spirit to maintain its fermentative fire, and when the matter begins to ferment, it must abandon its own fire until perfectly white, where it happens by itself.

The matter is not a liquid like broth, but thick and black as pitch or boot-black polish; it swells, rises in the bowl, and produces bubbles which may be compared with fish eyes which we should not burst because they contain the animating spirit.

After fermentation, the matter collapses and is at this point shining like pitch, and this most beautiful black is the sign of putrefaction known as raven's head. It then dries slowly and goes to a grey ash. Soon a halo (circular hair) of the most dazzling whiteness appears on the circumference of the vessel. This circle will widen more and more until everything is perfectly white.

Before the whiteness comes, there appear some colours on the matter, of which the green dominates, but they are not very pronounced and are only transient and of short duration. They may be compared to Iris or rainbow trout. Only in subsequent operations do they have a very strong character.

You have reviewed, without noticing, our different kinds of fire; the first, up until the fermentation, is called a Bain-marie, or sea, because it operates in some way, like a saline solution. The second is called the heat of manure, and you now know why. The third is called the fire of ashes, and finally the fourth the reverberatory fire. We have other kinds of fires, but the one who knows the first certainly knows all the others. In fact, we will mention them in passing.

Notice here that this work resembles that of gardeners who water their gardens. What happens in this instance? Topsoil, as I have already observed from the beginning, is formed as remnants of the body, altered, broken down by drought and damp recessive conditions, provides a salt and a spirit which feeds Plants by the means of the water it absorbs, and that is the driver.

Let us return to the whitened matter, which is still far from the end to which you have to lead it. However, the main lock is open, and you just have to enter the sanctuary, but always proceed with caution in order not to fail and be forced to stop half-way.

This white powder or regenerated matter is Mercury, though still a child, and to whom we must give the wings of an eagle at head and heel, that is to say, from head to foot, so that she can fly and soar to the highest region which is heaven. We must sublimate it many times so that, in its dissolution in the astral spirit, it will leave behind an earth which will precipitate which you must collect that with great care. Philalethes calls these sublimations 'eagles', especially since each time the mercury acquires greater subtlety; it is like comparing the earth that the Mercury casts back to the tail left behind by the common mercury, until it is sufficiently purified. "Wash, he says your mercury and purified by salt and vinegar until it leaves no tail behind him, running on a flat surface." We will soon know what he meant by salt and vinegar, though we have an idea already.

When one dissolves the mercury in the astral spirit, and one has separated the earth by decantation and washing, in order to lose nothing, we put the solution in a cool place, and it makes a deposit of three salts namely: a fluffy one, which floats on the surface and is mercury; the second which is needle and nature of Nitre, and that is between two waters; and the third is a fixed salt and mineral that is deposited in the bottom.

In the state shown here the Mercury would extract the tincture of plants, and would make a medicine. It is itself a medicine, because if we put the value of a grain at the foot of a tree almost dead and watered it, it would have a renewed vigour - but it would eat its 'seed corn' and stop there, but we must continue the work.

As for the other two salts, they are reduced into mercury similar to the first, continuing the operation. To this end, while the salts are separated, dissolve the second species in the astral spirit in order to irrigate the fixed salt, then dissolve it, do fermenting and putrefaction: and since it would not be in sufficient quantity to complete the operation, we complete the imbibitions with the Mercury dissolved, and we proceed as before, by the weight of nature.

The weight, if we pay attention, here is different from the first, for the earth needed only to be watered, but here it is necessary that salt be dissolved and fixed until it can no longer receive any moisture; it ferments, it putrefies and gives the same results as above, that is to say, a Mercury that you wash and from which you separate the earth in order to join it with the first.

To sublimate the Mercury, you separate it into two, you dissolve one half by the astral spirit, and you will do this by using its ablutions on the fixed part - as I have just taught you. You will continue your ablutions until perfectly dissolved, and then you will leave to ferment and putrefy as before.

You have here the mercury of the second eagle. If you go up to the seventh, inclusive, the mercury will be very clean [suitable] and able to dissolve gold, and it will dissolve it without heat or boiling – similar to the way ice melts in hot water. You take it up to the ninth inclusive, and you give it all the excitement of which it is capable in order for it to be able to make for greater things. But I warn you that if you want to go further it will dissolve to the flint [silica] just by casual contact and you will no longer be able to find a vessel to hold it.

For each sublimation or eagle, you separate the black feculent earth like you did the first time, and you will join it to the first to make some use of it - as I will show you in the second work - because the first was used entirely in the production of our mercury, but it [the second work] is one that requires more time. It is also the most difficult. This is why it is compared to the labours of Hercules, and this, to be sure, is a fair application: but when it [the second work] is finished, the rest is regarded only as woman's work and child's play. It is no more an effort, in fact, than those who wash brass, or make IMPAST [dough], which is quite applicable, or to women who take care of laundry, or children who make dumplings and clay dolls out of soggy ground.

The time of this great and important operation is about two common years. And when it is completed, this apprenticeship of our masonry, because is it quite true that this apprenticeship ends, it gives way to a guild-fellowship with tests that are much shorter and less severe.

You have finally in your hands the Universal Mercury concerning which wise men have said so much, and by its means, you may attack the core of Nature, and extract the medicines or tinctures of the three kingdoms by giving them at the same time fixedness and perfection that otherwise they could not have. This Mercury is truly the force of all forces referred to by the learned Hermes Trismegistus, the fiery dragon that destroys everything, the spirit of wine, or rather the water of life of Raymond Lulle, and the Cosmopolitan vinegar. It dissolves and fixates at the same time, because it comes from the union of two fires in opposition to each other, although having the same origin. The first is an acid fire and cold. It is that which dissolves and produces fermentation, while the second is alkaline and hot, it produces putrefaction and fixates the compound. This is why Basil Valentin at the end of his Twelve Keys warns you to distinguish between the cold and the hot in the application of your fires.

It is not, however, that the heat comes from fermentative alkali rather than acid, since it is a mere effect of the movement, as you may have noticed at the beginning of this treaty, but because the presence of this alkali determines it and conserves it during the putrefaction.

Mercury being only half the generation, we must now proceed to the exaltation of Sulphur. As did Flamel and Trevisan, you can take the gold leaf and extract the tincture by projecting it in your Mercury which you have previously dissolved. This path is not the most noble, but it is the shortest; it is only a special tincture which is obtained, but the mercury universalises it in the work and it yields the same result.

It is much nobler, no doubt, to take from the matter this Universal tincture. So you take all your earth derived from eagles, and you will proceed with them by new imbibitions with the astral spirit, until they turn red and are a reddish brown. This is what philosophers call the calcination. The Mercury dissolved and projected over-top will extract the Tincture by means of which you can proceed with the Philosophical marriage that will make the perfection of the work, and complete the works, except that of the multiplication - which is only a short repetition.

This Tincture is the crown of the King that you have to pull from the ashes; this is why the sage Pythagoras and many after him have repeated "Do not despise the Ashes, because the crown of King is contained therein." From there comes the custom to keep the ashes of the dead. This is why

BV said without preface that "the crown of the King is pure gold" and elsewhere he says: "It is a crown taken from the ashes."

You also need to know that the Mercury which effects the extraction of this Tincture is called Dry Water which does not wet the hands, because, although it is a salt that wets not at all, it alone has the power to dissolve all bodies, just as water does to salts and gums. On the surface, the water is called a solvent, but in fact it only divides. Dissolution takes place in all of nature only by means of fermentation, and Mercury works in the same way, but in the higher things where the presence of water is of no effect; there, it performs these functions, and as it does, it separates bodies or substances working to put them in their place and make them undergo fermentation, only because of dissolution. Moreover dissolution is itself only a more extensive division of the bodies, or an absolute disjunction, and the exact mixture of all their parts. It happens in this circumstance that the separate parts, with natures opposite to each other, collide and are engaged in a kind of battle which we have given the name of fermentation, after which they unite again, but only after being purged of that which was foreign to them, which causes corruption, and prevents the union being perfect; but after their complete separation, the union is so intimate that all the efforts of Nature to separate them would be null and insufficient. So will the bodies and souls of the righteous be after the judgement and their purification.

After the extraction of the Tincture, there remains behind a refractory earth that we call 'damned earth', because, just like sin, it is the cause of death and suffering. We must reject it carefully because this is what prevents the ingress of the Tincture, and which causes here below the antipathy and enmity between beings.

The boiling action which usually accompanies fermentation is figured in our books as a struggle between two champions, one of which must overcome the other, and put him to death, but no one should take this literally. This boiling must be attributed only to the release of the gases which are looking to be balanced, either by mixing or by extension.

Similarly, when we talk about the Hermetic Seal, do not interpret it as the exact closing of the vessel: a foolish closure which would do more harm than good, due to the fact that that it would prevent the manipulation, as well as the separation and conjunction, of the substances in due time and proportions. We therefore call it the union of several substances in one, in a way that they can no longer be separated, because for us, or in our language, to open is the same as dissolve, and to close is the same thing as fixing. We have seven seals corresponding to seven planetary bodies, and who knows one, knows all the others.

We also use a lot of terms familiar to vulgar chemistry, therefore you must know once and for all, that distillation cohobation, sublimation, calcination, reverberation, waxing, etc., are for us, from the beginning to the end, one and the same operation, which is to dissolve and coagulate, which is the same as wetting and drying, and that is something any apprentice can do.

Now that you have the solution of the principal Enigmas that obscure our language and prevent or at least delay the intelligence, I will explain what is our philosophical marriage between Gabertin [or Gabritius, the fixed part] and Beya [or Beza, Mercurial water]. You must know by now that the red Tincture, which is the fixed Sulphur of the philosophers, and which they sometimes call Lion, and sometimes spirits of wine, or very sour vinegar and sometimes orpiment, has the function of the male here and is called Gabertin. The Mercury or the white Tincture, which they call Moon, silver, Water of Life, vinegar, arsenic, magnesia, leafy Earth, etc. has here the office of female and is called Beya.

You should know that these two substances, Sulphur and Mercury, that the little peasants call the

two flowers, together constitute a single Mercury, the said hermaphrodite, or rather androgynous, meaning male and female. In the operation that I will describe, they are doing the functions alternately, consequently they have often given to one another the same names, but particularly that of Mercury, yet still making a small difference essential to know. So they put before the name of Mercury the first term to express the white tincture. They call it the Green Lion; the Sulphur - Red Lion. If they name the Mercury as: water-of-life, vinegar, arsenic, magnesia, Moon, silver; then they name (by an accurate comparison and proportion) the Red Tincture as: Spirit-of- wine, very sour vinegar, orpiment, realgar, lively gold, the Sun etc.

For final comment, let me just note that the Mercury is only a salt inverted in this mercurial substance; the Sulphur itself is never without salt, nor is the salt without Mercury, which makes you see clearly three substances in one - substances which we have named for our convenience.

To proceed with the philosophical marriage you separate your Red Tincture into two, and you let some dry out, putting the other part aside for need. How many people failed as a result of having ignored this precaution! They believed that to whiten the red, and redden white, was just the ordinary and necessary result of the progress of the Great Work, and that all this was done by itself. Thus, they know that red is nourished by the white and the white by the red - and that white is taken for the milk used to feed the newborn child, or for the virginal dress. As for the red, it expresses either the increase of the fire, or the change of clothing - it is taken by some for the Royal Coat.

So you will proceed to the imbibitions on the half of your Sulphur which you have left to dry out, with the white Mercury, following the weights and measures which you have already used, and will continue like this until fully saturated so that the material remains liquid at the bottom of vessel, that is to say a slurry. If you have operated well, in forty days you will get the dissolution of the body after which will come the fermentation and the putrefaction.

In the fermentation, the matter swells, rises and makes a little noise like an anthill, and when the putrefaction does happen, the matter collapses and turns black. It is only when it has reached perfect darkness, called head of the Crow that it is in full putrefaction. This is only the first matter of our work, matter not found anywhere in the land of the living, which we do not create, however, but it is said to have flown over our heads, because that mercury having been sublimated nine times, the Sulphur is still high above.

The philosophers take the dissolution for the reign of Mercury; it is during this Reign that our metallic principles combine with each other, but it is only here like an appetiser; it is here only for the Reign of Saturn or during the blackness that they start to count, or that they take the beginning of the work, because the three principles are linked in an irrevocable manner and that the Seal of Hermes is accomplished.

This is the vessel of Nature which has to be closed, and not a crystal egg or any other matter, and the closure does not include the throat of a vessel so that the air cannot penetrate there, but as the intimate conjunction of Salt and Sulphur and Mercury, so that we can no longer separate them with any art whatsoever.

There is no need for external fire to reach the white, the matter by drying out arrives there of itself. First, it takes the colour of grey ash which we compare to Tin, which we call the seal of Jupiter, then it comes by degrees to the whiteness, but before you get there you can see circularly on the matter various colours - reds, yellows, blues and greens which we compare to the iris or the rainbow, and which others call the tail of the Peacock.

These colours, which do not last very long, are replaced by a film of a blackish brown which streaks

on drying and allows us to see the matter under a grey colour: soon after, you can see on the edges of the vessel a circular capillary [halo] of a great whiteness; then, the reign of Jupiter, that was foretold in the grey, and which the philosophers compare to the fire of ashes, eventually will give way to that of the Moon.

This circle expands successively until the perfect whiteness of the matter with which philosophers call with reason Moon or Silver, since the weight of this white medicine projected onto 10 of silver, and then onto 100 of another imperfect metal, transmutes it into silver more pure than which comes from mines.

The silver that would be used in this circumstance, taking here the place of ferment, and without it there would be no transmutation. It is in this sense to be understood that saying of the Sages: that without gold, no gold is feasible; they hear of the ferment.

This whitened earth has the appearance of a powder glittering with diamond and is divided into small plates: this is the reason why the sages have named their leafy earth in which they recommend to sow, their GOLD. It is seen as only one half-generation, which is why we must continue the work if we want to reach perfection.

We must give this earth the cultivation needed before planting the gold otherwise it will not bear fruit at all.

We start again therefore the imbibitions with the white mercury, according to the measure previously observed. By means of a well observed fire, the matter spirits away/subtles more and more, covers itself with greenery, after which it begins to go yellow and it takes on an orangey colour which it could not exceed further if the fire was not increased.

This greenery, as sung by the poets, and thus recommended by all philosophers, is the reign of the beautiful Venus, which is followed by that of Mars which is the colour orange.

You remember having two parts of your Red tincture: you just whitened the first, it must now blush. Take the Tincture in reserve, dissolve it by projecting over the philosophical mercury and proceed with this Tincture to the imbibitions, until the matter comes to a beautiful red and dark purple poppy.

Such is the medicine of the first order, both to the White and to the Red, which cures any diseases when we use it without addition of metal, in a vehicle suited to the evil, according to the required caution, and which with the addition, as ferment, both perfect metals, transmutes into gold or silver all the imperfect metals, such as the copper, lead, tin etc.

Prior to attempting a projection, it is necessary to test the matter on a sheet of red-hot copper. If it melts without smoke it is in the desired state, otherwise we must continue the fire.

Multiplication

Multiplication is nothing but a repetition of all the work, from the philosophical marriage. It is only necessary to have the care of sharing in two its matter in the circle of whiteness and in that of the redness, to be able to proceed to the imbibitions on the remaining half with parents of the same blood. The Mercury as well as Red tincture in their first state, would be too imperfect here to be able to join with our medicine.

You will be careful, for each dissolution by the Mercury, to separate a damned earth which is

precipitated, which you will reject with less hesitation, which is absolutely refractory, and which prevents the ingress of the matter in the metals.

With all the conditions I described above, without omitting anything, you will surely arrive at the end so desired by Philosophy. However, do not try to override the sacred number nine, because the matter, if it is fixed, would have acquired such a great fluidity and expansion, that no vessel could contain it, it would be entirely lost.

On this, my brother, thank God for the favour which he has given you, and I thank him for having been useful for you in your intentions, if they are upright, and that you remained in the paths of the good.

The End