

The Dweller of the Threshold by Franz Hartmann, M.D.

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[Page 1] It will perhaps be asked, why in this enlightened century we desire to call attention to *Alchemy*, which, by the majority of mankind, is looked upon as an array of vagaries, extravagancies and superstitions, having been repeatedly *ex cathedra* declared to be such by modern scientific authorities. To those who put implicit faith in the infallibility of modern science we have no apology to offer; but to the unprejudiced investigator we answer that Alchemy — if properly understood — is a science embodying the highest truths which a spiritually enlightened mortal may possibly attain, and that a practical knowledge of them is of the highest importance for his own eternal welfare and for the progression of mankind. Being a *spiritual* science, it is also a *religion*; for *science* means a *knowledge* of facts, and there can be no higher facts than those which relate to the highest state which a man may possibly attain, and with which religion deals. [Page 2]

The word *religion* has a threefold meaning. In its highest aspect it means the practical application of wisdom, by which the divine element germinally contained in the constitution of man, is awakened to self-consciousness and reunited as a conscious power to the divine force from which it emanated in the beginning. This process is taught by those who are spiritually illuminated, but is beyond the full comprehension of those in whom the inner life has not yet awakened; for theoretical knowledge can never become real knowledge without practical experience.

In its second signification the word *religion* means a theoretical knowledge of the essential constitution of man, of the relation existing between man and the source from which he and everything else in nature originated, of his final destiny, etc. Here is the battle-ground of the philosophers, theologians and other speculative minds: the realm of various and contradictory opinions, caused by a reflection and distortion of the truth in the minds of individual men.

In its third signification *religion* is a system of forms, ceremonies and usages; by which some supposed external deity is worshipped or propitiated. Here is the realm of sectarian differences, of bigotry, superstition and ignorance. Here the form is adored, and kept sacred, and the principle neglected. The followers of this kind of religion appeal to the passions of men and cause conflicts and quarrels. It [Page 3] can have nothing to do with true religion; but is evidently opposed to it. [This mistaking of the form for the principle on the part of the keepers of religion is, to a great extent, the cause of the materialism of this Age; for the intellectual classes are wise enough to see that the forms are empty, but not wise enough to grasp the principle without the form]

There can be no religion and no higher science than that of the truth relating to the highest mysteries of the divine element in nature, and these truths are taught in our system of Alchemy. But it will naturally be asked: "Why then do our philosophers, theologians and scientists know nothing about it?" The answer is

that the *Dweller of the Threshold* guards the door to the temple of truth and must be conquered before we can enter.

Who is this *Dweller of the Threshold* ?

Probably all of our readers have heard of him. They may have read his description in Bulwer Lytton's *Zanoni*; where Glyndon, during the temporary absence of the Adept, impelled by his own curiosity to learn the forbidden mysteries of the latter, invaded the laboratory and is frightened out of his wits by the appearance of the horrible spectre which is henceforth his unwelcome companion for life. When he submits to the demands of his lower self, and revels in sensual pleasures, the *hag* disappears; but whenever he attempts to rise above that level, then she steps forth with her hateful eyes and seeks to drag him with her long fingers into her cold embrace. [Page 4]

This *Dweller of the Threshold* meets us in many shapes. It is the *Cerberus* guarding the entrance to Hades; the Dragon which *St. Michael* (spiritual will-power) is going to kill; the *Snake* which tempted Eve, and whose head will be crushed by the heel of the woman; the *Hobgoblin* watching the place where the treasure is buried, etc. He is the king of evil, who will not permit that within his kingdom a child should grow up, which might surpass him in power; the *Herod* before whose wrath the divine child *Christ* has to flee into a foreign country, and is not permitted to return to his home (the soul) until the king (Ambition, Pride, Vanity, Self-righteousness, etc.) is dethroned or dead. Many times Christ flees before Herod and cannot return at all; because Herod lives and rules until the house of life —the temple of the divine Christ —is destroyed by death. [Many people celebrate the birth of an external Christ, as an event said to have taken place some eighteen centuries ago; while they continually drive away the living Christ from their hearts by the power of Herod. Few only recognize the true Christ and permit him to enter. The former flatter themselves for having the right *belief*, the latter enjoy the true *faith*.

All such accounts are allegories, representing a real truth, whose knowledge is of the greatest importance; for it is the beginning of the *Great Work*; and he who does not know how to begin will not accomplish much.

The Dweller of the Threshold, the *Dragon* of mediaeval symbolism, is nothing else but our own [Page 5] lower semi-animal, animal or perhaps brutish self, that combination of material and semi-material principles which form the lower *ego*, which the great majority of men blindly and lovingly hug and caress, because they love themselves. Man does not see its true qualities as long as he clings to it, else he would perhaps be disgusted with it; but when he attempts to penetrate within the portals of the paradise of the soul; when his self-consciousness begins to become centered in his higher self, then the Dweller of the Threshold becomes objective to him, and he may be terrified at its (his own) ugliness and deformity.

Let us examine the attributes of that semi-animal self : First of all we see that it is the residence of animal instincts and passions, which represent themselves to the interior eye in semi-animal and animal forms; for external forms on the astral plane are the external expressions of internal principles ; a psychic activity will produce a corresponding form. In it reside the animal sensations and the calculating intellect with all its cunning, sophistry and craftiness, personal will and the love of illusions.

According to the doctrines of the Rosicrucians the personal intellect and will of man is merely a reflex of the eternal and universal spiritual Sun of Wisdom (spiritual consciousness) acting within the sphere of self, in throwing — so to say — a ray into the mirrors of the minds of men and women. As the light of the [Page 6] terrestrial sun, by being thrown upon the moon, becomes reflected and modified, and the earth during night-time — instead of the warm, life-giving sunshine — receives merely the cold and illusive light of the moon; likewise the material and superficial prisoner, during the night of his ignorance, sees only the cold moonshine of his own perverted intellect, and mistakes it for the sun of eternal truth. Proud of his supposed possession of the true light, he neglects to seek deeper. He rests self-satisfied in his acquired false learning and falls a prey to the dragon. He cannot conquer the Dweller of the Threshold, nor does he wish to do so, because he is himself that Dweller, and is in love with himself. He does not want to enter the temple, and does not perhaps even know that the temple exists.

To be better understood, we will call the light coming directly from the great spiritual Sun of Wisdom *Intuition* : that coming to our consciousness through the intellectual working of the brain *Reason* . They are originally caused by only one ray; but the former represents that ray in its purity, the latter as having become colored, distorted or reversed within the individual sphere of self. In the day-time, when the sun shines, we do not require the light of the moon. If it were continually day in our soul, if its atmosphere were not clouded, if we were living in that pure ethereal state in which one is able to see the light of wisdom in its [Page 7] fullness and without a doubt, we would not need to exert our own individual intellect for the purpose of knowing the truth. The voice of intuition would be heard so plain, that it could not possibly be misunderstood and we should know all we desired to know, for we should perceive indirectly and not need to speculate about it. But man has become immersed in matter. A part of that divine man-forming ray has become so much differentiated as to be grossly material, and has lost the capability to see the pure light of the spiritual sun. The consequence is that we must necessarily have recourse to the feeble moonlight of our own material reason, to help us to grope along in our darkness. A part of ourselves — that part which has not yet become grossly material, our *higher self* — still sees the light of the sun and hears the *Word*, and may communicate it to the lower self, if the latter will listen; but the more the lower self clings to the sphere of phenomena and sensuality, the more will it become separated from the higher self; the more will the light of Intuition become indistinct and uncertain, and the more will the superficial reasoner become dependent on his individual reasoning intellect and proud of its illusive power, until he falls a prey to the dragon. [Modern material science can therefore never become Spiritual science; for the former is bound to the sphere of phenomena and deals only with them. To become practically acquainted with spiritual science, men must develop their own inner senses. Without the ability to perceive interior things, such a science would be a matter for mere speculation and theory] [Page 8]

The same line of reasoning may be applied to the *Will*. Man imagines he has a will of his own; but his life and will are merely a ray of the eternal and universal life and will-power, acting within his sphere of self, becoming colored, distorted and perhaps perverted, by personal and selfish desires. The ray of the Eternal Will, acting within the entirely unselfish soul of man, is the *legitimate* son produced by the power of *Abram*, shining into the womb of *Sarah* (meaning the pure and unadulterated living well of truth); but the same ray, acting within *Hagar* and becoming tainted by selfish desires, produces the son of the concubine, the *Ishmael* who must be sent away into the wilderness to starve and to perish. [Little indeed would be the value of the Bible or any other *Holy Scripture*, if the stories contained therein were merely accounts of events having taken place in the lives of certain persons unknown to us, and said to have been living some thousands of years ago. The Biblical personages are allegories, representing certain occult powers, and their history represents certain mysterious processes. The book of *Genesis*, if properly understood, is a history of spiritual evolution]

Man's selfish love, will, thought, imagination, etc., are all only temporal and illusory possessions, which would cease if the eternal sun of the spirit should cease to shine. Likewise, in perfect darkness, all objects are of the same color; only when the light shines forth, each of them will appear in its proper hue by reflecting the universal light; according to the peculiar attributes belonging to their constitutions. But if we conquer the Dweller of the Threshold — the [Page 9] lower self, what shall we obtain? When *Adam*, the material man with all his passions and desires and animal instincts, has died and disappeared during physical life upon the earth, the spiritual man, the *Christ*, arises in his glory. [This event is not to be expected to take place after physical death, but must take place during life. Spirit needs the lower life as a ladder to climb up and attain the higher life] In this spiritual principle rests spiritual consciousness, spiritual life, spiritual knowledge and spiritual power. Its will and imagination are one with the Will and Imagination of the all-penetrating universal power, which created all the forms of the Universe out of its own substance. [The word *Creation* meaning a something coming into existence out of nothing, can only refer to form. Form is nothing, it is a mere shape of something which existed before the form was created, it is nothing *per se* but an illusion] Being one with the divine power in nature, and knowing itself, it knows all the mysteries of nature by direct perception and without the slow process of intellectual theoretical speculation. Being one with the *carpenter of the universe* it may create forms or destroy them by the power of its spiritual will.

Man is a *Microcosm*, in which are potentially or germinally contained all the powers, essences, principles and substances contained in the *Macrocosm* of the Universe; heaven and hell, God, angels, elementals and devils are Within him; and whatever is in his constitution may become developed and grow. [The science of Alchemy teaches the spiritually enlightened man how to deal with these unseen principles and powers; which, though they are invisible, are nevertheless substantial for *Matter* and *Spirit* are *One*. They are both the manifestations of one original power. The manifestation of that power in its external and visible effects is called *Matter*; in its invisible and causative activity it may be called *Spirit*] [Page 10]

A man who thoroughly knows himself, knows all nature, a man who can govern himself with divine wisdom is subject to no other power. He is a God within his own realm, and being one with the ruling power of the universe, his power extends as far as the latter.* [Man can know nothing except that which exists within himself. We can not see a house before its image has entered our sphere of consciousness]

It will therefore be seen that the true science of Alchemy does not require for its practice an array of costly chemicals, retorts, stones, bottles and pots; but the materials with which it deals may be had everywhere for nothing and are within the reach of every one, even within that of the poorest. The power used in practical Alchemy is the power of the Spirit, and only those who possess this power can practice this art; for those who do not possess it, its study will be a matter of mere speculation. There are three distinct kinds of manifestation of energy known: (1) *Mechanical force*, acting merely on the surface of things, and being the slowest of all; every one who is not paralyzed possesses that power: if he did not possess it, he could not know it, neither could it be satisfactorily described to him; (2) *Chemical action*, being far more powerful, because it penetrates into the interior of objects and produces [Page 11] molecular disintegration. Bodies which resist mechanical force can be dissolved by it. It is a power known in its effects to the chemist, while those who are not acquainted with chemistry know little about it, and the opinions of the latter in regard to the facts of chemistry are of no practical value; (3) *Spiritual activity*; the most powerful of all; because it penetrates into the very center — the spiritual essence of things —

and changes their substance and infuses them with life. Like the preceding ones it is a force well known to those who possess it, but unknown to those who do not possess it, however learned in other departments of Science the latter may be. Those, however, who possess it, are at present — in our material Age — very few; because they are the spiritually illuminated ones, the *Adepts*, or men who have passed through the process of *spiritual regeneration*.

They are people in whom the spiritual soul has grown and developed, penetrating the whole physical body with its power, enabling them to cure diseases by the touch of their hands and communicate life to them, to sink their own consciousness into the minds of other men and read their thoughts, to perceive with the interior eye things which are hidden to the external sight, and to perform other things which the ignorant call *miracles*; because they are miraculous to them and beyond the power of their understanding. [Page 12]

Do you know what the expression *spiritual regeneration* means ? If you do not know it, ask some modern scientist, and he will probably answer like Nicodemus of old: " How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb ? " You may ask your clergyman, and if he has not passed himself through that process and become an Adept, the probability is that he will have only a very vague idea about it. If he belongs to a *Christian Church*, he will probably say that spiritual regeneration takes place when the ceremonies of *baptism* and *confirmation* are administered ; that thereby a spiritual power descends through his hands upon the candidate, who thereupon becomes regenerated. He will say that the power to confer this spirit has been given to him by having been made a clergyman. But he does not himself know that power, neither have we ever seen a case in which a person, after having submitted to such ceremonies, has become an Adept and endowed with the power to heal and to work *miracles*; nor is it reasonable to suppose that the *Universal Spirit* — the *Holy Ghost*, could be monopolized by any class of people or by a Church, and be made an article of trade, or that one man's spiritual evolution could be made to depend on the will and pleasure of another human being. Everything in nature takes place according to natural laws. Trees and animals grow when the necessary conditions are given; intellectual [Page 13] development requires intellectual food; spiritual development requires the growth of the spirit. Grapes do not grow on thistles, and men are not born from cows. No one can give to another that which he does not himself possess. A truly *divine* person must be in possession of divine powers, and he cannot possess and use such powers without being conscious of it. Oh for a clergyman who is really a *divine* ! He would be a real spiritual guide. But to be a true spiritual guide requires more than mere talk about spiritual things, which one has merely learned from hearsay and knows practically nothing about. [Paracelsus says: " The wearing of a black coat, or the possession of a piece of paper signed by some human authority, does not make a man divine, who acts wisely, because wisdom comes from God. The knowledge which our clergymen possess is not obtained by them from the Father, but they learn it from each other. He who desires to learn the truth, must be able to see it, and not be satisfied with descriptions of it received from others. The highest power of the intellect, if it is not illuminated by wisdom, is only a high grade of animal intellect, and will perish in time; but the intellect animated by the love of the Supreme is the intellect of the Angels and will live in eternity." (See *Fundamenta Sapientae*.)

Jacob Boehme, the great Christian mystic, says: " Feign and dissemble, shout, sing, preach and teach as much as you please; but if the spirit within you is not alive, all the noise you make will amount to nothing. A Christ belongs to no sect, and needs no artificial church. He carries his church within his soul; he does not quarrel or dispute with others about any difference of opinion, he desires nothing else but his God."

(*Regeneration.*)]

There are, however – even in this age of materialism—men who have passed or are passing through this spiritual regeneration, of which the Bible says that no one can (consciously) enter the Kingdom of God, except he be reborn of the Spirit. They say that spiritual regeneration or *initiation* has three [Page 14] stages. With the first spark of an *interior* thought, penetrating to the center of the soul and awakening the *spiritual consciousness* of man, the germ is laid for the development of the inner spiritual man. If the new-born Christ is continually fed with the proper nutriment (of the soul) and not driven away by Herod, it will grow ; a new and inner life (unknown before) will come into action and penetrate all the parts of the physical body. Certain mysterious processes, which are not communicated to the uninitiated, take place, and in this consists the true *baptism with the water of truth* or the attainment of *spiritual consciousness*, having nothing to do with any external ceremony or administration of water by sprinkling, dipping or otherwise. It consists in the unnatural man becoming natural, in bringing his will and imagination (thought) into harmony with that of the Universal Spirit, and becoming able to recognize the truth by direct interior perception.

The second is the fastening of the Spirit, the *Baptism of blood*, when the inner life becomes fixed through the power of the *Word* — a process during which certain physiological changes take place within the organization of the physical body. The third is the *Baptism with the living fire of the Spirit*; whereby the candidate for immortality attains spiritual power and becomes able to exercise it according to his will. Then will he be able to control the organic functions of his body (*involuntary functions*), [Page 15] because he will be master over the functions of his soul, the physical organism being merely an external expression of the former. He will be able to act from the interior to the exterior, from the center to the periphery; while the inexperienced waste their strength in useless attempts to reverse that process. To practice Alchemy and to exercise spiritual power, one must be spiritually developed. The first step to this development is the conquering of the *Dweller of the Threshold*, and the key to the position is the displacement of the love of self by the love of eternal *Good*, which finds its expression in the *Universal Brotherhood of Humanity*, the fundamental principle upon which the *Theosophical Society* rests.