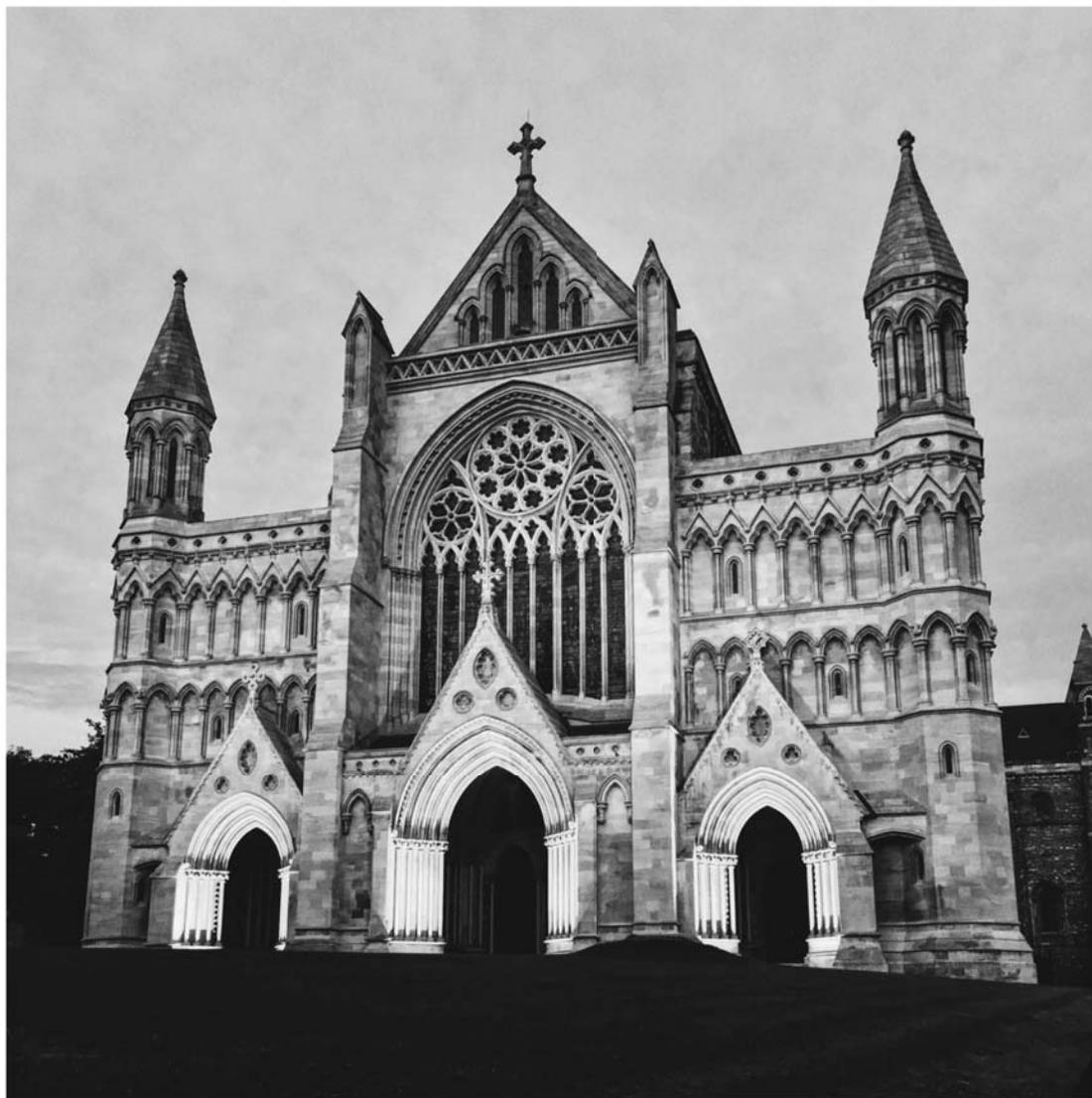


THE MYSTERY OF THE CATHEDRALS



FULCANELLI

BERSERKER

BOOKS



Caveat:

This book is catholic bias and for an alternative view of cathedrals which conceives of them as bioenergetic harvesting machines of extraterrestrial('angelic') origin read Gustavo Brondino's book 'The History of the House of Turdes'

Fulcanelli

**THE MYSTERY OF THE
CATHEDRALS**

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

*It is a thankless and uncomfortable task for a disciple to present a work written by his own Master. For this reason, I do not intend to analyse *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* here, nor to emphasise its formal beauty and profound teaching. In this regard, I humbly confess my inability and prefer to leave it to readers to appreciate it for what it is worth, and to the Brothers of Heliopolis the joy of collecting this synthesis, so masterfully presented by one of their own. Time and truth will do the rest.*

*The author of this book has not been with us for a long time. The man is gone. Only his memory remains. And I feel a kind of pain when I recall the image of the hard-working and wise Master to whom I owe so much, while I deplore, alas, that he disappeared so soon. His many friends, unknown brothers who expected him to solve the mystery of *Verbum dimissum*, will mourn him with me.*

Could he, having reached the summit of Knowledge, refuse to obey the orders of Destiny? No one is a prophet in his own land. This old adage perhaps gives us the hidden reason for the upheaval caused by the spark of revelation in the solitary and studious life of the philosopher. Under the effects of this divine flame, the old man is consumed entirely. Name, family, homeland, all illusions, all errors, all vanities, are reduced to dust. And, like the Phoenix of the poets, a new personality is reborn from the ashes. So says, at least, philosophical tradition.

My Master knew this. He disappeared when the fateful hour struck, when the Sign appeared. And who would dare to escape the Law? I myself, despite the pain of a painful but inevitable separation, would act in the same way if the happy event that forced the Adept to renounce the honours of the world were to happen to me today.

Fulcanelli no longer exists. However, and this is our consolation, his thought remains, ardent and alive, enclosed forever in these pages as in a sanctuary.

Thanks to him, the Gothic cathedral reveals its secret to us. And so we learn, with surprise and excitement, how our ancestors carved the first stone of its foundations, a resplendent gem, more precious than gold itself, upon which Jesus built his Church. All truth, all philosophy, all religion rested on this unique and sacred Stone. Many, filled with presumption, believe themselves capable of shaping it, and yet how rare are the chosen ones whose simplicity, wisdom and skill allow them to achieve this!

But this matters little. It is enough for us to know that the wonders of our Middle Ages contain the same positive truth, the same scientific foundation, as the pyramids of Egypt, the temples of Greece, the Roman catacombs, and the Byzantine basilicas.

Such is the general scope of Fulcanelli's book.

Hermeticists—or at least those worthy of the name—will discover something else in it. They say that light is born from the contrast of ideas; they will discover that here, thanks to the confrontation between the Book and the Edifice, the Spirit emerges and the Letter dies. Fulcanelli made the first effort for them; it is up to the Hermeticists to make the last. The road ahead is short. But one must know it well and not walk without knowing where one is going.

Would you like me to tell you more?

I know, not because I discovered it myself, but because the author confirmed it to me more than ten years ago, that the key to the greater mystery has been given, without the slightest fiction, by one of the figures illustrated in this work. And this key consists simply of a colour, revealed to the craftsman from the very first task. No philosopher, to my knowledge, discovered the importance of this essential point. By revealing it, I am fulfilling Fulcanelli's last wish and following the dictates of my conscience.

*And now, allow me, on behalf of the Brothers of Heliopolis and on my own behalf, to warmly thank the artist to whom my master entrusted the illustration of his work. Indeed, thanks to the sincere and meticulous talent of the painter Julien Champagne, *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* has been able to envelop its austere esotericism in a superb mantle of original plates.*

E. CANSELIET
F. C. H.
October 1925

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

When he wrote *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* in 1922, Fulcanelli had not yet received the Gift of God, but he was so close to supreme Enlightenment that he deemed it necessary to wait and remain anonymous, which he had always done, perhaps more out of inclination than out of strict obedience to the rule of secrecy. For it must be said that this man from another time, with his strange appearance, his old-fashioned manners and his unusual occupations, unwittingly attracted the attention of the idle, the curious and the foolish, much less, however, than he would later arouse with the total disappearance of his common personality.

Thus, from the compilation of the first part of his writings, the Master expressed his absolute and irrevocable desire that his real identity remain in the shadows, that his social label disappear definitively, replaced by the pseudonym imposed by Tradition and known for a long time. This famous name has been so firmly engraved in the memory, even for the most distant future generations, that it is certainly impossible for it ever to be replaced by any patronymic, however true, brilliant or famous it may be.

However, we should not think that the father of such a high-quality work would abandon it immediately after creating it without adequate, not to say compelling, and deeply considered reasons. These reasons, on a very different level, led to a renunciation that continues to cause admiration, when even the purest authors, among the best, are always sensitive to the glamour of printed work. It is true that, in the realm of letters of our time, Fulcanelli's case is unlike any other, because it emanates from an infinitely superior ethical discipline, according to which the new Adept adjusts his destiny to that of his rare predecessors, who appeared successively, like him in his own time, marking out the infinite path like beacons of salvation and mercy. An unblemished lineage, prodigiously perpetuated, so that the eternal, universal and indivisible Truth may be ceaselessly refined in its dual spiritual and scientific manifestation. Like most of the ancient Adepts, Fulcanelli, in throwing the worn-out remains of the old man into the nettles of the ditch, left nothing on the path but the onomastic trace of his ghost, whose haughty banner proclaims the supreme aristocracy.

Those who have some knowledge of the alchemy books of the past will know that oral teaching from master to disciple prevails over any other, which has the force of an aphorism. Fulcanelli received his initiation in this way, as we received it after him, although we must declare, for our part, that Cyliani had already opened wide the door to the labyrinth for us during that week in 1915 when his pamphlet was republished.

In our *Introduction to The Twelve Keys to Philosophy*, we deliberately emphasised that Basilio Valentín was our Master's initiator, and we did so, among other reasons, to have the opportunity to change the epithet of the word, that is, to replace—out of a desire for accuracy—the true qualifier we had used in the past, in our prologue to *Las Moradas Filosofales*, with the first numeral adjective. At that time, we were unaware of the moving letter that we will transcribe a little later and which owes its impressive beauty to the breath of enthusiasm, to the fervent accent that inflames its author, plunged into anonymity by the scraping of the signature, just as the name of the addressee is erased due to the lack of details. This was undoubtedly Fulcanelli's teacher, who left among his papers the revealing epistle crossed by two dark stripes where it had been folded, having been kept for a long time in his briefcase, where it was covered in the impalpable, greasy dust of the constantly active stove. The author of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* kept for many years, like a talisman, the written proof of the triumph of his true initiator, which nothing prevents us from publishing today, especially as it gives us an eloquent and accurate idea of the sublime terrain in which the Great Work is situated. We do not believe that anyone will reproach us for the length of the strange letter, from which it would undoubtedly be regrettable to delete a single word:

My old friend,

This time, you have truly received God's gift, it is a great blessing, and, for the first time, I understand the rarity of this favour. I believe, in fact, that in its unfathomable abyss of simplicity, the mystery is impossible to find by the sole force of reason, however subtle it may be and however much it may have been exercised. In short, you possess the Treasure of Treasures. Let us give thanks to the Divine Light for having made you a partaker of it. Moreover, you have rightly deserved it for your unshakeable faith in the Truth, for your constancy in effort, for your perseverance in sacrifice, and also, let us not forget... for your good works.

When my wife announced the good news to me, I was stunned with joyful surprise and could not contain my happiness. So much so that I said to myself: I hope we do not pay for this moment of intoxication with a terrible tomorrow. But, however brief my knowledge of the matter may be, I believed I understood, and this with certainty, that *the fire only goes out when the work is done and all the dye impregnates the glass, which, from decanting to decanting, remains absolutely saturated and becomes as bright as the sun.*

You have taken your generosity to the point of associating us with this lofty and hidden knowledge that belongs to you by right and in an absolutely personal way. Better than anyone, we understand its full value, and, also better than anyone, we are capable of eternal gratitude for it. You know that the most beautiful phrases and the most eloquent protests are not worth as much as the emotional simplicity of these few words: you are good, and for this great virtue, God has placed the diadem of true royalty upon your forehead. He knows that you will make worthy use of this sceptre and the priceless privileges that come with it. We have known you for a long time as the blue cloak of your friends in misfortune, but that cloak of charity has suddenly grown wider, for now all the blue of the sky and its great sun cover your noble shoulders. May you enjoy this great and rare happiness for a long time, to the satisfaction and comfort of your friends, and even your enemies, for misfortune erases everything, and from today onwards, you possess the magic wand that works all miracles.

My wife, with the inexplicable intuition of sensitive beings, had had a truly strange dream. She had seen a man wrapped in all the colours of the prism, rising up to the sun. The explanation was not long in coming. How wonderful! What a beautiful and victorious response to my letter, laden with dialectics and theoretically accurate, but still very distant from the Truth, from Reality. Ah! It could almost be said that he who greets the morning star loses his sight and reason forever, for he is fascinated by its false light and is precipitated into the abyss... Unless, like you, a stroke of great luck comes along to pull him back from the edge of the precipice.

I am eager to see you, my old friend, to hear you recount your last hours of anguish and triumph. But believe me, I will never be able to put into words the great joy we experienced and all the gratitude we feel towards you in the depths of our hearts. Hallelujah!

I embrace you and
congratulate you,
your old friend...

He who knows how to do the Work with *mercury alone* has found what is most perfect; that is, he has received the light and accomplished the Magisterium.

Perhaps one passage will have shocked, surprised, or baffled the attentive reader who is already familiar with the main facts of the Hermetic problem. It is when the intimate and wise correspondent exclaims:

"Alas! It can almost be said that he who greets the morning star loses forever the use of his voice and reason, for he is fascinated by its false light and is precipitated into the abyss."

Doesn't this sentence seem to contradict what we stated more than twenty years ago in a study on the Golden Fleece (1), namely, that the star is the great sign of the Work—which seals the philosophical matter—telling the alchemist that he has not found the light of the madmen, but that of the wise, which consecrates wisdom and which we call the morning star? But has it been pointed out that we briefly specified that the hermetic star is first and foremost admired in the mirror of art or mercury, before being discovered in the chemical sky, where it shines in an infinitely more discreet manner? If we had been more concerned with the duty of charity than with the observance of secrecy, and even at the cost of appearing to be fervent adherents of paradox, we could have insisted on the marvellous arcane and, to this end, copied a few lines written in a very old notebook, after one of those erudite conversations with Fulcanelli which, accompanied by cold, sweetened coffee, gave us such deep delight as assiduous and studious adolescents, eager for invaluable knowledge:

Our star is unique and yet it is double. Learn to distinguish its real imprint from its image, and you will see that it shines more brightly in the light of day than in the darkness of night.

Statement corroborating and supplementing that of Basilio Valentín (Twelve Keys), no less categorical and solemn:

(1) Alchimie, p. 137. J.-J. Pauvert, editor.

"The gods have given man two stars to guide him to great Wisdom. Observe them, O man! And follow their light with constancy, for in it lies Wisdom."

Are not these two stars shown in one of the small alchemical paintings in the Franciscan convent of Cimiez, accompanied by the Latin inscription expressing the saving virtue inherent in the nocturnal and stellar splendour: "Cum luce saluten; with light comes salvation"?

In any case, however little philosophical sense one may have and however little effort one may take to meditate on the above phrases of indisputable Adepts, one will possess the key with which Cyliani opens the first lock of the temple. But if one still does not understand, one should reread Fulcanelli and not go elsewhere to seek a teaching that no other book could give with such precision.

There are, therefore, two stars, which, although it may seem implausible, actually form one. The one that shines on the mystical Virgin—both our mother and the hermetic sea—announces the conception and is nothing more than the reflection of the other, which precedes the miraculous advent of the Son. For if the heavenly Virgin is still called stella matutina, the morning star; if it is possible to contemplate in her the splendour of a divine sign; if the discovery of this source of grace brings joy to the artist's heart, it is nevertheless only a simple image reflected by the mirror of Wisdom. Despite its importance and the place it occupies in the authors' works, this visible but unattainable star bears witness to the reality of the other, which crowned the divine Child at the moment of his birth. The sign that led the Magi to the cave in Bethlehem, St. Chrysostom tells us, came to rest, before disappearing, on the head of the Saviour, surrounding him with a luminous halo.

We insist on this because we are sure that some will thank us for it: it is truly a nocturnal star whose brightness shines without great force at the pole of the hermetic sky. It is therefore important to learn, without being deceived by appearances, about this earthly sky of which Wenceslaus Lavinius of Moravia speaks and on which Jacobus Tollius insists so much:

"You will understand what Heaven is by reading the short commentary that follows, through which the chemical Heaven will have been opened. For this heaven is immense, and you have seen the fields of purple light, where its stars and sun have been recognised."

It is essential to meditate well that heaven and earth, although confused in the original cosmic Chaos, are not different in substance or essence, but become so in quality, quantity and virtue. Does not the alchemical, chaotic, inert and barren earth contain the philosophical heaven? Is it therefore impossible for the artist, imitator of Nature and of the Great Divine Work, to separate in his small world, with the help of the secret fire and the universal spirit, the crystalline, luminous and pure parts from the dense, dark and coarse parts? No, therefore, this separation must be carried out, which consists in extracting light from darkness and performing the work of the first of Solomon's Great Days. Thanks to this, we will be able to know what the philosopher's earth is and what the Adepts have called the heaven of the Wise.

Philalethes, who, in his Open Entry into the Closed Palace of the King, is the one who most extensively discussed the practice of the Work, points to the hermetic star and concludes that its appearance is cosmic magic:

"It is the miracle of the world, the union of the higher virtues in the lower ones; for this reason, the Almighty marked it with an extraordinary sign. The Wise Men saw it in the East, were filled with admiration, and immediately understood that a most pure King had been born into the world.

"When you have seen his star, follow it to the Crib; there you will see the beautiful Child."

"Take four parts of our fiery dragon that hides our magical steel in its belly, and nine parts of our magnet. Mix everything together using Vulcan's fire, in the form of mineral water, where a foam will rise to the surface that must be removed. Discard the crust, take the core, purify it three times with fire and salt, which will be easily done if Saturn has seen his image in the mirror of Mars."

Finally, Philaléthe adds.

"And may the Almighty stamp his royal seal on this Work and adorn it with it in particular."

The star, to tell the truth, is not a special sign of the work of the Great Work. We can find it in a multitude of alchemical combinations, particular procedures, and minor spagyric operations; however, it always offers the same indicative value of partial or total transformation of the bodies on which it has been fixed. Juan Federico Helvetius gave us a typical example of this in the passage from his Golden Calf (Vitalus Aureus) that we translate below:

A certain goldsmith from The Hague (whose name is Grillus), a disciple well versed in alchemy but a very poor man due to the nature of this science, asked my best friend, Juan Gaspar Knottter, a dyer, for some salt spirit prepared in an unusual way a few years ago. When Knott asked whether this special spirit of salt would be used for metals, Gril replied that it would, and then poured this spirit of salt onto lead that he had placed in a glass container used for jams or food. Well, after two weeks, a very curious and resplendent silver star appeared, floating, which seemed to have been drawn with a compass by a very skilled artist. Gril, filled with immense joy, told us that he had already seen the visible star of the Philosophers, about which he had probably been informed by Basilio (Valentín). I and many other honourable men contemplated with great admiration this star floating in the spirit of salt, while at the bottom remained the ash-coloured lead, swollen like a sponge. However, in an interval of seven or nine days, the moisture from the spirit of salt disappeared, absorbed by the intense heat of the air.

(2) Around 1664, the year of the first edition, impossible to find in Vitalus Aureus.

in July, and the star reached the bottom, settling on that spongy, earthy lead. It was a result worthy of admiration and not for a small number of witnesses. Finally, Gril cupelled the part of this ashen lead to which the star had adhered and obtained, from a pound of this lead, twelve ounces of cupelled silver and, in addition, from these twelve ounces, two ounces of excellent gold.

Such is Helvetius' account. We give it only to confirm the presence of the star sign in all the internal modifications of bodies treated philosophically. However, we do not wish to be the cause of fruitless or misleading work that some enthusiastic readers will undoubtedly undertake, based on Helvetius' reputation, the probity of eyewitnesses, and perhaps also our constant desire for sincerity. For this reason, we would like to point out to those who wish to repeat the experiment that two essential pieces of information are missing from this account: the exact chemical composition of the hydrochloric acid and the operations previously carried out on the metal. No chemist will be able to contradict us if we assert that ordinary lead, whatever its type, will never take on the appearance of pumice stone when subjected to the action of muriatic acid in cold conditions. Several preparations are therefore necessary to cause the metal to expand, to separate the coarsest impurities and unstable elements from it, and finally, through the necessary fermentation, to produce the swelling that gives it a spongy, soft structure and already shows a marked tendency towards a profound change in its specific properties.

Blaise de Vignère and Naxágoras, for example, have written extensively about the advisability of prolonged pre-cooking. For if it is true that common lead is dead—because it has undergone reduction, and a large flame, says Basilio Valentín, devours a small fire—it is no less true that the same metal, patiently fed with fiery substance, will revive, gradually resume its abolished activity, and from an inert chemical mass become a philosophically living body.

Some may be surprised that we have dealt so extensively with a single point of the Doctrine, devoting most of this prologue to it, which consequently makes us fear that we may have exceeded the purpose normally assigned to writings of this kind. It should be noted, however, that it was logical for us to develop this theme, which introduces us, so to speak, to Fulcanelli's text. Indeed, right from the outset, our Master dwells at length on the crucial role of the Star, on the mineral Theophany that heralds, with certainty, the tangible elucidation of the great secret buried in religious buildings. The Mystery of the Cathedrals: this is precisely the title of this work, of which we are now offering—after the 1926 print run of only three hundred copies—the second edition, augmented with three drawings by Julien Champagne and several original notes by Fulcanelli, collected as they are, without the slightest addition or change. These refer to a very distressing issue that occupied the Master's pen for a long time and about which we will say a few words in relation to the philosophical dwellings.

Furthermore, if one were to justify the merit of The Mystery of the Cathedrals, it would suffice to point out that this book has brought back into the spotlight the phonetic Kabbalah, whose principles and application had fallen into complete oblivion. After this detailed and precise teaching, following the brief considerations

we made about the centaur, the horse-man of Plessis-Bourré, and the two alchemical mansions, it will now be impossible to confuse the mother tongue, the energetic language that is easily understood but never spoken, and, according to Cyrano de Bergerac, the instinct or voice of Nature, with the transpositions, the upheavals, the substitutions and the calculations no less abstruse than arbitrary of the Jewish Kabbalah. That is why it is important to distinguish between the two words, cábala and kábala, in order to use them properly: the first, as a derivative of xaj3a>.>.ni or from the Latin caballus, horse; the second, from the Hebrew kabbalah, which means tradition. In short, it is no longer possible, on the pretext of the figurative meanings admitted by analogy, of gossip, manipulation or intrigue, to deny the noun Kabbalah the function that only it is capable of performing and that Fulcanelli masterfully confirmed when he found the lost key to the Gay Science, the Language of the Gods or the Birds. The same ones that Jonathan Swift, the singular Dean of St Patrick's, knew thoroughly and practised in his own way, with such knowledge and virtuosity.

Savignies, August 1957

FOREWORD TO THE THIRD EDITION

"It is better to live in great hardship as a poor man than to have been a lord and rot in a rich tomb.

To have been a lord! What am I saying? Lord, alas! Is he not one anymore? According to the Davidites, you will never know your place.

FRANCOIS VILLON.
The Testament, XXXVI and XXXVH.

It was necessary and, above all, a matter of the most basic philosophical health, that The Mystery of the Cathedrals reappear as soon as possible. Thanks to Jean-Jacques Pauvert, this has been accomplished, and in the manner to which he has accustomed us and which, for the greater good of scholars, always obeys the dual concern of adjusting, in the best sense of the word, professional perfection and the sale price to the reader. Two conditions, extrinsic and essential, very convenient to the eternal Truth, to which, in addition, Jean-Jacques Pauvert has wanted to get even closer, this time presenting the Master's first work with the perfect photograph of the sculptures drawn by Julien Champagne. In this way, the infallibility of the sensitive plate, in comparison with the original artwork, proclaims the wisdom and skill of the excellent artist who met Fulcanelli in 1915, ten years before we enjoyed the same invaluable privilege, which is nevertheless too often burdensome and envied.

What is alchemy for man, if not—truly, and born of a certain state of soul derived from real and effective grace—the search for and awakening of Life secretly dormant beneath the thick envelope of being and the rough crust of things? On the two universal planes, where matter and spirit coexist, there is absolute progress consisting of permanent purification, until ultimate perfection is achieved.

To this end, nothing better expresses the mode of operation than the ancient apothegm, so precise in its imperative brevity: Solve et coagula; dissolve and coagulate. It is a simple and linear technique that requires sincerity, resolution and patience, and appeals to that imagination, alas, almost totally abolished in our age of aggressive and sterilising saturation, in the vast majority of people. Rare are those who apply themselves to the living idea, to the fruitful image, to the symbol that is always inseparable from all philosophical elaboration or poetic adventure, and which gradually opens up, in slow progression, to a greater amount of light and knowledge.

Many alchemists, and La Turba* in particular, have said, through the mouth of Baileus, that "the mother takes pity on her son while he is very hard on her". The family drama unfolds, in a positive way, within the alchemical-physical macrocosm, so that we can hope, for the terrestrial world and its Humanity, that Nature will end up forgiving men and conforming, in the best possible way, to the torments that they perpetually impose on her.

*Compilation of quotations attributed to ancient philosophers and alchemist philosophers themselves. Written in Latin but translated from Arabic, it enjoyed great credibility among alchemists in the Middle Ages. (Translator's note)

Now consider the most serious aspect: while Freemasonry continually seeks the lost word (*verbum dimissum*), the universal Church (ΧαΟοΑῶXi7 katholiké), which possesses this Word, is on the way to abandoning it in the ecumenism of the devil. Nothing favours this unforgivable fault more than the fearful obedience of the clergy, so often ignorant, to the fallacious impulse, which claims to be progressive, of occult forces that seek only to destroy the work of Peter. The magical ritual of the Latin Mass, deeply disrupted, has lost its value and now marches in step with the flexible hat and street clothes adopted by the clergy, happy in their disguise, in a promising stage towards the abolition of philosophical celibacy...

In favour of this policy of constant abandonment, a fatal heresy takes root, in reasoned vanity and profound contempt for the mysterious laws. Among these is the inescapable necessity of the fertile decay of all matter, whatever it may be, so that life may continue in it under the deceptive appearance of nothingness and death. Faced with the transitory, dark and secret phase that opens up the amazing possibilities of alchemy, is it not terrible that the Church should now consent to this atrocious cremation that it once absolutely prohibited?

Immense is the horizon now revealed to you by the parable of the grain that falls to the ground, recounted by St John:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (XII, 24).

The beloved disciple also transmits to us another precious teaching from his Master, concerning Lazarus, that the decay of the body cannot mean the total abolition of life:

Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Mary, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Sir, he stinks, for he has been there four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" (XI, 39 and 40.)

In its forgetfulness of the Hermetic Truth that secured its foundations, the Church, when faced with the question of the cremation of corpses, effortlessly adopts the flawed reasoning of the science of good and evil, according to which the decomposition of bodies in increasingly crowded cemeteries constitutes a threat of infection. And of epidemics, because the living continue to breathe the atmosphere that surrounds them. A specious argument that, at least, makes us smile, especially knowing that it was already formulated, in all seriousness, more than a century ago, when the petty positivism of Comte and Littré was flourishing. A touching request, in short, which was not exercised in our blessed times, when the two catastrophes, grandiose in their duration and in the multitude of deaths, took place in rather small areas, where burial was often delayed much longer and carried out at a shallower depth than regulations allowed.

In contrast to this, it is worth recalling here the macabre and singular experiments carried out at the beginning of the Second Empire, with patience and determination typical of another age, by the famous doctors and toxicologists Mateo José Orfila and Marie-Guillaume Devergie on the slow and progressive decomposition of the human body. Here is the result of the experiment carried out, until then, on the foul odour and intense proliferation of vibrios:

"The smell gradually diminishes; finally, a time comes when all the soft parts spread out on the ground form nothing more than a muddy, blackish detritus with a somewhat aromatic smell."

As for the transformation of stench into perfume, we must note its striking similarity to what the old Masters declare with regard to the Great Physical Work, and among them, in particular, Morien and Raimundo Lulio, when they specify that the foul odour (*odor teter*) of dark dissolution is followed by the sweetest perfume, because it is proper to life and heat (*quia et vitae proprius est et caloris*).

After what we have just pointed out, what should we not fear, if dubious testimony and specious argumentation can develop around us, on the plane where we find ourselves? This is a deplorable tendency, invariably displayed by envy and mediocrity, whose annoying and persistent effects we now impose upon ourselves the duty to destroy.

We say this in reference to a very objective correction made by our teacher Fulcanelli when studying, in the Cluny Museum, the statue of Marcellus, Bishop of Paris, which was located in Notre Dame, in the bay window of the portico of Saint Anne, before the architects Viollet-le-Duc and Lassus replaced it around the year 1850, with an acceptable copy. The Adept of The Mystery of the Cathedrals was thus prompted to correct the mistakes made by Louis-François Cambriel, who, being in a position to describe the original sculpture, which had occupied its place in the cathedral since the beginning of the 14th century, wrote this brief and capricious description during the reign of Charles X:

"This bishop puts a finger to his mouth to tell those who see him and want to know what he represents... If you discover and guess what I represent with this hieroglyphic, be quiet...! Say nothing!" (Course on Hermetic Philosophy or Alchemy in Nineteen Lessons. Paris, Lacour et Maistrasse, 1843.)

These lines are accompanied, in Cambriel's work, by a clumsy design that gave rise to them or was inspired by them. Like Fulcanelli, we find it difficult to imagine that two observers, namely the writer and the illustrator, could separately fall victim to the same illusion. In the engraving, the holy bishop, who sports a beard, in obvious anachronism, has his head covered with a mitre adorned with four small crosses. And he holds, with his left hand, a short staff that rests on the hollow of his shoulder. Imperturbable, he raises his index finger to his chin, with the mimetic expression of one who recommends secrecy and silence.

"Verification is easy," concludes Fulcanelli, "since we possess the original work and the deception is obvious at first glance. Our saint, in accordance with medieval custom, is completely shaven, his mitre, very simple, lacks any adornment, and the staff he holds in his left hand is stuck, by its lower end, into the dragon's jaws. As for the famous gesture of the characters in the Mutus Liber and Harpocrates, it is entirely the fruit of Cambriel's unbridled imagination. Saint Marcellus was depicted giving his blessing in a noble attitude, his forehead bowed, his forearm bent, his hand at shoulder level and his middle and index fingers raised."

As we have just seen, the question that is the subject of the entire paragraph VII of the PARIS chapter of this work has been completely resolved, and the reader can now learn about it in depth. The deception had thus been uncovered, and the truth perfectly established, when Emile-Jules Grillot de Givry, some three years later, referring to the central pillar of the south portico of Notre Dame, wrote the following lines in his Museum of Sorcerers:

The statue of Saint Marcellus, currently located in the portico of Notre Dame, is a modern reproduction with no archaeological value; it is part of the restoration work carried out by architects Lassus and Viollet-le-Duc. The original 14th-century statue is currently confined to a corner of the great hall of the thermal baths at the Cluny Museum, where we had it photographed (fig. 342). It can be seen that the bishop's crozier is sunk into the dragon's mouth, an essential condition for the hieroglyph to be legible, and an indication that a heavenly ray is needed to light the furnace of Athanor. However, at a time that we can place in the mid-16th century, this ancient statue was removed from the portico and replaced by another in which the bishop's crozier, in order to counteract the alchemists and destroy their tradition, had been deliberately shortened so that it no longer touched the dragon's mouth. This difference can be seen in our figure 344, which shows the ancient statue as it was before 1860. Viollet-le-Duc had it removed and replaced it with a fairly accurate copy of the one in the Cluny Museum, thus restoring the portico of Notre Dame to its true alchemical significance.

What a mess this is, to say the least, according to which a third statue was introduced in the 16th century between the beautiful relic deposited in Cluny and the modern copy, visible in the Cathedral of the Cité for over a hundred years! Of this Renaissance statue, absent from the archives and ignored in the most scholarly works, Grillot de Givry gives us, in support of his at least gratuitous assertion, a photograph of the

which Bernard Husson deliberately dates and identifies as a daguerreotype. Here is the caption at the bottom of the photograph, which renews its untenable justification:

Fig. 344.-16TH-CENTURY STATUE REPLACED, AROUND
1860, BY A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL EFFIGY.

Portico of Notre Dame de Paris.

(Author's collection.)

Unfortunately for this image, the presumed Saint Marcellus does not wield the episcopal crozier lent to him by Grilloit's pen, which is decidedly lost and impossible to identify. At most, we can make out in the left hand of the prelate, who is bearded and terrifying, a kind of thick bar lacking the ornate scroll at its upper end that could have turned it into an episcopal crozier.

The intention was clearly for the reader to infer from the text and the illustration that this 16th-century sculpture – conveniently invented – was the same one that Cambriel "examined with great attention one day as he passed by the church of Notre-Dame in Paris", since the author states on the very cover of his *Course in Philosophy* that he finished this book in January 1829. This would have validated the description and drawing by the alchemist of Saint-Pauli-de-Fenouillet, which complement each other in their error, while the irritating Fulcanelli, overly eager for accuracy and frankness, would have been convicted of ignorance and inconceivable error. However, the conclusion in this regard is not so simple, as we can now see in François Cambriel's engraving, where the bishop carries a pastoral staff that is undoubtedly shortened but complete with its abacus and spiral portion.

We will not dwell on the explanation given by Grilloit de Givry, ingenious but somewhat simplistic, for the shortening of the pastoral rod (*virga pastoralis*); on the contrary, we cannot fail to denounce the singular fact that, with all evidence, he tried to combat it without bringing it to mind.

-innocently, Jean Reyor will point out, pretending that everything happened by chance- the relevant correction of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*, which it is impossible for an intelligence as knowledgeable and curious as his not to have been aware of. Indeed, Fulcanelli's first book had been published in June 1926, while *The Museum of the Sorcerers*, dated in Paris on 20 November 1928, appeared in February 1929, a week after the sudden death of its author.

At the time, the procedure, which did not seem very honourable to us, caused us as much surprise as pain and deeply disconcerted us. Certainly, we would never have spoken of it if, after Marcel Clavelle—alias Jean Reyor—Bernard Husson had not recently experienced the inexplicable need, thirty-two years later, to throw the stone again and come to Cambriel's aid. We will limit ourselves here to giving the boastful opinion of the former—in *Le Voile d'Isis*, November 1932—since the latter endorsed it entirely, without reflection and without showing the scruples he should have felt in dealing with the admirable Adept and common Master:

"Everyone shares Fulcanelli's righteous indignation! But what is most regrettable is this author's levity, given the circumstances. We will see below that there was no reason to accuse Cambriel of 'artifice', 'deception' and 'impudence'.

Let us be clear: the pillar currently standing in the portico of Notre Dame is a modern reproduction that forms part of the restoration carried out by architects Lassus and Viollet-le-Duc around 1860. The original pillar is now confined to the Cluny Museum. However, it must be said that the current pillar is, on the whole, a fairly faithful reproduction of the 16th-century pillar, with the exception of some motifs on the plinth. In any case, neither of these two pillars corresponds to the description and illustration given by Cambriel and innocently reproduced by a well-known occultist. And yet Cambriel did not in any way try to deceive his readers. He described and had faithfully drawn the pillar that all Parisians could see in 1843. The fact is that there is a third pillar of Saint Marcellus, an unfaithful reproduction of the original pillar, and it is this pillar that was replaced around 1860 by the more accurate copy that we see today. That inaccurate reproduction certainly has all the characteristics pointed out by the good Cambriel. Far from being deceitful, he was, on the contrary, deceived by the unscrupulous copy, but his good faith is absolutely beyond doubt, and this is what we wanted to make clear.

In order to better achieve his purpose, Grilloit de Givry—the well-known occultist cited by Jean Reyor—presented, in *The Museum of Sorcerers*, without any reference, as we have seen, photographic evidence whose similar plate indicates its recent production. What, ultimately, is the exact value of this document, which he used to reinforce his text and refute, with all the appearances of irrefutability, Fulcanelli's impartial judgement of François Cambriel; a judgement that was perhaps severe, but undoubtedly well-founded, which Grilloit de Givry,

as we also know, was very careful not to point out? An occultist in the most absolute sense, he was no less discreet about the origin of his sensational photograph...

Could it be, quite simply, that this image representing the statue removed in the last century, during the work of Viollet-le-Duc, was taken in a place other than Notre-Dame de Paris, or that it was even a reproduction of a character very different from Bishop Marcellus of ancient Lutetia?

In Christian iconography, there are many saints who have an aggressive or submissive dragon at their side, including John the Evangelist, James the Greater, Philip, Michael, George, and Patrick. However, Saint Marcellus is the only one who touches the monster's head with his staff, in accordance with the respect that painters and sculptors of the past always felt for his legend. This legend is very rich, and among the bishop's last deeds is one (*inter novissima ejus opera hoc annumeratur*) recounted by Father Gérard Dubois d'Orléans (*Gerardo Dubois Aurelianensi*) in his History of the Church of Paris (in *Histona Ecclesiae Panswnsis*), which we summarise here, translating it from the Latin text

:

A certain lady, more illustrious for the nobility of her lineage than for her customs and reputation, met her end and was laid to rest with pompous funeral rites, dignified and solemnly. In order to punish her for the violation of her bed, a horrible serpent advances towards the woman's grave, feeding on her limbs and her corpse, whose soul it had corrupted with its deadly hissing. It does not allow her to rest in her place of repose. But, disturbed by the noise, the lady's old servants were greatly frightened, and the crowd from the city began to gather to watch the spectacle and became alarmed at the sight of the enormous animal.

The blessed prelate is warned, goes out with the people and orders the citizens to remain as spectators. As for him, without fear, he stood before the dragon... which, as if it were a supplicant, prostrated itself at the knees of the holy bishop and seemed to flatter him and beg for mercy. Then Marcellus, striking its head with his staff, threw his stole over it [*Tum Marcellus caput ejus baculo percutiens, in eum orarium*

(1) *injecit*]; leading it in a circle for two or three miles, followed by the people, he drew out (*extrahebat*) its solemn march before the eyes of the citizens. Then he addressed the beast and ordered it that, from tomorrow, it should either remain perpetually in the deserts or throw itself into the sea..."

Let us say, in passing, that it is hardly necessary to point out the hermetic allegory in which the two paths, dry and wet, are distinguished. It corresponds exactly to the 50th emblem of Michel Maier, in his *Atalanta Fulgiens*, in which the dragon imprisons a clothed woman, who lies inert, in the splendour of her maturity, at the bottom of an equally violated pit.

But let us return to the alleged statue of Saint Marcellus, disciple and successor of Prudentius, which, according to Grillot de Givry, was placed in the mid-16th century in the panel of the

(1) *Orarium4 quod vulgo stola dicitur.* (Glossarium Cangii) Orarium, commonly called a stole. (Glossary of Du Cange.)

south portico of Notre Dame, that is, in the place of the admirable relic preserved on the left bank in the Cluny Museum. It should be noted that the hermetic effigy is currently housed in the northern tower of its first dwelling.

In order to firmly refute the veracity of this completely unfounded assertion, we can cite the irrefutable testimony of Mr Esprit Gobineau de Montluisant, a privileged gentleman, in his *Very Curious Explanation of the Enigmas and Hieroglyphic and Physical Figures Found in the Great Portico of the Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of Notre Dame de Paris*. See how our eyewitness, 'studying carefully' the sculptures, gives us proof that the high relief transported to the Rue du Sommerard by Viollet-le-Duc was located on the pillar in the middle of the right portico 'on Wednesday, 20 May 1640, the eve of the glorious Ascension of Our Saviour Jesus Christ':

"On the pillar in the middle, separating the two doors of this portico, there is still the figure of a bishop, inserting his crozier into the mouth of a dragon lying at his feet and seeming to emerge from a billowing sea, in whose waves appears the head of a king with a triple crown, who seems to be drowning in the waves and then emerging from them again."

The historical account, clear and decisive, did not overly concern Marcel Clavelle (*Jean Reyor*, pseudonym), who was then forced, in order to get out of trouble, to move the birth of the statue to the time of Louis XIV, a statue that was completely unknown until Grillott abruptly invented it, whether in good or bad faith. Similarly troubled by the same evidence, Bernard Husson does not fare much better, arguing, in good faith, that the 16th-century reference on page 407 of *El museo de los brujos* is a

typographical error, fortunately corrected in the caption to 17th century, which, as we have seen above, is in no way evident.

Furthermore, and with a loss of accuracy, is it not inconceivably thoughtless to admit that a restorer from the Valois period, yielding to his own guilty and singular initiative, transported the magnificent statue, which has undoubtedly has only been preserved there for a century or so, to a room in the excavated Baths, next to the delightful palace rebuilt by Jacques d'Ambroise? And how strange it would seem, consequently, that this 16th-century architect should have shown, for the Gothic and beardless effigy that he is said to have replaced, a desire for conservation that the careful Viollele-Duc was not to show, three hundred years later, for the bearded bishop, the work of his remote and anonymous colleague!

Certainly, it may have been the case that Marcel Clavelle and Bernard Husson, successively, allowed themselves to be foolishly blinded by the intense pleasure of catching the great Fulcanelli in an error, but that Grillot de Givry did not see the enormous lack of logic in their inconsequential refutation is something totally impossible to digest.

*Moreover, I think everyone will agree with me that it was very important, on the occasion of this third edition of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*, to clearly establish the validity of Fulcanelli's rejection of Cambriel and thus radically dispel the unfortunate misunderstanding created by Grillot de Givry; that is to say, if you prefer, to really put an end to and definitively close a controversy that we knew to be biased and lacking in any real substance.*

Savignies, July 1964
EUGÈNE CANSELIET

THE MYSTERY OF THE CATHEDRALS

I

The strongest impression of our early childhood—we were seven years old at the time—which we still vividly remember, was the emotion that the sight of a Gothic cathedral aroused in our childish souls. We felt immediately transported, ecstatic, filled with admiration, unable to escape the attraction of the marvellous, the magic of the splendid, the immense, the dizzying, which emanated from this work that was more divine than human.

Later, the vision changed, but the impression remains. And, although habit has modified the vivid and poignant nature of that first contact, we have never been able to stop feeling a kind of rapture before these beautiful picture books that rise up in our square and spread their stone-carved pages up to the sky.

In what language, by what means, could we express our admiration, our gratitude and all the feelings of gratitude that fill our hearts for all that these silent masterpieces, these wordless and voiceless teachers, have taught us to enjoy, to know and to discover?

Without words and without voice? What are we saying! If these lapidary books have their letters carved – phrases in low relief and thoughts in ogives – they also speak through the imperishable spirit that exudes from their pages. Clearer than their younger siblings—manuscripts and printed works—they have the advantage over them of conveying a unique, absolute meaning, with simple expression and ingenuous, picturesque interpretation, a meaning purged of subtleties, allusions and literary ambiguities.

"The language of stones spoken by this new art," says J. F. Colfs (I) very aptly, "is both clear and sublime. For this reason, it speaks to the souls of the most humble as well as to those of the most cultured. What a poignant language Gothic stone is! A language so poignant, in fact, that the songs of Orlando da Lasso or Palestrina, the organ works of Handel or Frescobaldi, the orchestrations of Beethoven or Cherubini, or, even greater still, the simple and austere Gregorian chant, only serve to heighten the emotions

that the cathedral itself produces in us. Woe to those who do not admire Gothic architecture, or at least let us pity them as those who are destitute of heart!

A sanctuary of tradition, science and art, the Gothic cathedral should not be seen as a work dedicated solely to the glory of Christianity, but rather as a vast concretion of popular ideas, trends and faith, as a perfect whole to which we can turn without fear when we seek to understand the thinking of our ancestors in all fields: religious, secular, philosophical or social.

The bold vaults, the nobility of the naves, the spaciousness of the proportions and the beauty of the execution make the cathedral an original work of incomparable harmony, but one that the exercise of worship does not seem to occupy entirely.

While the contemplation, under the spectral and polychrome light of the high stained-glass windows, and the silence invite prayer and predispose to meditation, the pomp, structure and ornamentation produce and reflect, with extraordinary force, less edifying sensations, a more secular atmosphere.

(1) J. F. Colfs, *La Fil@n généalogique de toutes les Ecoles gothiques*, Paris, Baudry, 1884.

and, let us say it, almost pagan. There, in addition to the ardent inspiration born of a robust faith, one can discern the thousand concerns of the great popular soul, the affirmation of its conscience and its own will, the image of its thought insofar as it is complex, abstract, essential, sovereign.

If we come to this building to attend divine services, if we enter it following funerals or taking part in the joyful procession of famous festivals, we also crowd into it in many other different circumstances. Political assemblies are held there under the presidency of the bishop; the price of grain and livestock is discussed there; weavers set the price of their cloth there; and we go there to seek comfort, to ask for advice, to beg for forgiveness. And there is hardly a guild that does not have the masterpiece of its new member blessed there and that does not meet there once a year under the protection of its patron saint.

Other ceremonies, much to the delight of the crowd, were also held there during the beautiful medieval period. One of these was the *Feast of Fools* – or of the Wise – a secretive procession that left the church with its pope, its signatories, its devotees and its people – the people of the Middle Ages, noisy, mischievous, boisterous, overflowing with vitality, enthusiasm and ardour – and travelled through the city... A hilarious satire of an ignorant clergy, subjugated to the authority of *disguised Science*, crushed under the weight of an indisputable superiority. Ah, the Feast of Fools, with its *Triumph of Bacchus* chariot, pulled by a male centaur and a female centaur, naked like the god himself, accompanied by the great Pan; an obscene carnival that took possession of the ogival naves! Nymphs and naiads emerging from the bath; divinities of Olympus, without clouds and without petticoats: Juno, Diana, Venus and Latona, gathering in the cathedral to hear Mass! And what a Mass! Composed by the initiate Pierre de Corbeil, Archbishop of Sens, according to a pagan ritual, in which the sheep of 1220 let out the cry of joy of the Bacchanalia: Evohé! Evohé!, and the men of the choir responded, delirious:

Haec est clara dies clararum clara dierum!
Haec est festas dies festarum festa dierum! (2)

Another was the *Feast of the Ass*, almost as lavish as the previous one, with the triumphal entry, under the sacred arches, of *Maitre Aliborom*, whose hoof once trod the Jewish soil of Jerusalem. Our glorious Christopher was honoured in a special service in which, after the epistle, *that asinine power that has earned the Church the gold of Arabia, the incense and myrrh of the land of Sheba*. A grotesque parody that the priest, unable to understand, accepted in silence, bowing his head under the weight of the ridicule poured out by those *mockers from the land of Sheba, or Caba*, the Kabbalists themselves! And it is the very chisel of the *master craftsmen* of the time, we *imagine*, that confirms these curious rejoicings. Indeed, in the nave of Notre-Dame de Strasbourg, writes Witkowski (3), "the bas-relief on one of the capitals of the great columns reproduces a satirical procession in which we see a piglet carrying an oil lamp, followed by donkeys dressed in priestly robes and monkeys equipped with various religious attributes, as well as a fox enclosed in an urn. It is the *Procession of the Fox* or the *Feast of the Donkey*". We should add that an identical scene, illuminated, appears on folio 40 of manuscript no. 5,055 in the National Library.

There were, in short, certain shocking customs that revealed an often very harsh, secretive meaning, which were repeated every year and took place in the Gothic church, such as the *Flagellation of Hallelujah*, in which the altar boys threw their *clogs* (4) out of the naves of Langres Cathedral with loud lashes of their whips; the *Burial of Carnival*; the *Diablerie of Chaumont*; the processions and banquets

- (2) This day is famous among famous days!
This day is a celebration among celebrations!

(3) G. J. Witkowski, *L'Art profane à l'Eglise*. Foreign. Paris, Schemit, 1908, page 35.

(4) Spinning top with a *Tau* or *Cross* profile. In Kabbalah, *sabot* is equivalent to *cabot* or *chabot*, the *chat botié* (Puss in Boots) from *Mother Goose's Tales*. The Twelfth Night cake sometimes contains a *sabot* instead of a bean.

of the *Dijon Infantry*, the last echo of the Feast of Fools, with its *Mad Mother*, its Rabelaisian diplomas, its banner on which two brothers, with their heads bowed, amused themselves by showing *their buttocks*; the unique *ball game*, which was played in the nave of Saint Stephen's Cathedral in Auxerre and disappeared around 1538; and so on.

II

The cathedral is a hospitable refuge for all misfortunes. The sick who went to Notre-Dame de Paris to implore God for relief from their suffering remained there until they were completely cured. They were assigned a chapel, located near the second door and lit by six lamps. There they spent their nights. Doctors held their consultations at the very entrance to the basilica, around the holy water font. The Faculty of Medicine also held its sessions there, after leaving the University in the 13th century to become independent, and where it remained until 1454, the date of its last meeting, convened by Jacques Desparts.

It is an inviolable refuge for the persecuted and a tomb for the illustrious deceased. It is the city within the city, the intellectual and moral core of the community, the heart of public activity, the apotheosis of thought, knowledge and art.

With its abundant ornamentation and the variety of themes and scenes that adorn it, the cathedral appears as a comprehensive and varied encyclopaedia—sometimes naive, sometimes noble, always alive—of all medieval knowledge. These stone sphinxes are, therefore, educators and primordial initiators.

This village of bristling chimeras, minstrels, mamarrachos, masks and menacing gargoyles—dragons, vampires and tarascas—is the secular guardian of ancestral heritage. Art and science, once concentrated in the great monasteries, escape from the laboratory, run to the building, cling to the bell towers, the pinnacles, the flying buttresses, hang from the arches of the vaults, populate the niches, transform the glass into precious gems, the bronze into sound vibrations, and spread across the façades in a joyful flight of freedom and expression. Nothing is more secular than the exotericism of this teaching! Nothing is more human than this profusion of original, vivid, free, moving, picturesque, sometimes disordered and always interesting images; nothing is more moving than these multiple testimonies of the daily existence, tastes, ideals and instincts of our ancestors; nothing more captivating, above all, than the symbolism of the old alchemists, skilfully captured by the modest medieval sculptors. In this respect, Notre-Dame de Paris is undoubtedly one of the most perfect examples and, as Victor Hugo said, 'the most complete compendium of hermetic science, of which the church of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie was a complete hieroglyph'.

The alchemists of the 14th century would meet there every week on Satumo Day, either in the main portico, at the door of Saint Marcel, or at the small Red Door, all of which were adorned with salamanders. Denys Zachaire tells us that this custom still existed in 1539, *on Sundays and public holidays*, and Noël du Fail states that *the great gathering of such academics took place at Notre-Dame de Pads (1)*.

There, under the dazzling glare of the painted and gilded ogives (2), the arches' string courses, the tympanums of

(1) Noël du Fail, *Propos nistiques, balivemeries, contes et discours deu trapel* (c. X). Paris, Gosselin, 1842.

(2) In cathedrals, everything was gilded and painted in bright colours. The writings of Martyrius, a 15th-century Armenian bishop and traveller, attest to this. He says that the portico of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris shone like the entrance to paradise. Purple, pink, blue, silver and gold dominated. Traces of gold can still be seen at the top of the tympanum of the main portico. The portico of the church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois still has its paintings, its blue vault studded with gold.

multicoloured figures, each displaying the results of their work or explaining the order of their research. Probabilities were emitted; possibilities were discussed; the allegory of the beautiful book was studied on the spot, and this abstruse exegesis of the mysterious symbols was not the least animated part of these meetings.

Following Gobineau de Montluisant, Cambriel and *tutti quanti*, we are going to undertake the pious pilgrimage, to talk to the stones and question them. What a pity it is so late! Soufflot's vandalism destroyed much of what the alchemist could admire in the 16th century. And, if art must be grateful to the eminent architects Toussaint, Geffroy Dechaume, Boeswillwald, Viollet-le-Duc and Lassus, who restored the basilica hatefully desecrated by the School, science, on the other hand, will never recover what it lost.

Be that as it may, and despite these regrettable mutilations, the motifs that still remain are numerous enough that we need not regret the time and effort spent on our visit. We will consider ourselves satisfied and amply rewarded for our efforts if we succeed in arousing the reader's curiosity, retaining the attention of the astute observer, and demonstrating to lovers of the occult that it is not impossible to discover the meaning of the mystery concealed beneath the petrified crust of the prodigious magical book.

III

First of all, we must say a few words about the term *Gothic*, applied to French art, which imposed its norms on all productions of the Middle Ages and whose influence extended from the 10th to the 15th century.

Some mistakenly claimed that it came from *the Goths*, an ancient people of Germania; others believed that this form of art, whose originality and extraordinary uniqueness was a cause for scandal in the 17th and 18th centuries, was given this name in a mocking tone, giving it the meaning of *barbaric*—such is the opinion of the classical school, imbued with the decadent principles of the Renaissance.

However, the truth, which springs from the mouth of the people, has sustained and preserved the expression *Gothic art*, despite the efforts of the Academy to replace it with *ogival art*. There is an obscure reason here that should have given our linguists, always on the lookout for etymologies, pause for thought. Why, then, have so few lexicologists been correct? For the simple reason that the explanation must be sought in the *kabbalistic origin* of the word rather than in its *literal root*.

Some perceptive and less superficial authors, struck by the similarity between *Gothic and Goetic*, thought that there must be a close relationship between *Gothic art* and *Goetic or magical art*.

For us, *Gothic art is nothing more than an orthographic deformation* of the word *argotic*, whose homophony is perfect, according to the *phonetic law* that governs, in all languages and regardless of spelling, traditional Kabbalah. The cathedral is a work of *arth goth* or *argot*. Now, dictionaries define *argot* as "a particular language used by all individuals who are interested in communicating their thoughts without being understood by those around them". It is, therefore, a *spoken Kabbalah*. *The argotiers*, or those who use this language, are the hermetic descendants of the *Argonauts*, who commanded the ship *Argos* and spoke the *argotic* language as they rowed towards the fortunate shores of Colchis in search of the famous *Golden Fleece*. Even today, we say of a man who is very intelligent, but also very astute: *he knows everything, he understands argot*. All the Initiates expressed themselves in *slang*, as did the rogues of the *Court of Miracles* - led by the poet Villon - and the *Freemasons* of the Middle Ages, 'innkeepers of the good Lord', who built the *slang* masterpieces we admire today. They too, these *nautical* builders, knew the way to the Garden of the Hesperides...

Even today, the humble, the miserable, the despised, the rebels hungry for freedom and independence, the outlaws, the vagabonds and the nomads speak *slang*, this cursed dialect, expelled from the high society of the nobles, who are so little noble, and from the well-fed and well-meaning bourgeoisie, wrapped in the ermine of their ignorance and fatuity. *Slang* has remained the language of a minority of individuals who live outside the dictates of the law, conventions, customs and protocol, and to whom the epithet *voyous*, meaning *seers*, and the even more expressive *children or creatures of the sun*, is applied. Gothic art is, in effect, *art got or cot (Xo)*, the *art of Light* or Spirit.

Some may think that these are *mere word games*. We readily admit this. The essential thing is that they guide our faith towards certainty, towards positive and scientific truth, the key to religious mystery, and do not keep it wandering in the capricious maze of the imagination. There is no chance, no coincidence, no fortuitous relationship here below; everything is foreseen, ordered, regulated, and it is not for us to modify the inscrutable will of Destiny at will. If the common meaning of words does not allow us any discovery capable of elevating us, instructing us, bringing us closer to the Creator, then vocabulary becomes useless. The verb, which assures man of his indisputable superiority, his sovereignty over all living things, then loses its nobility, its grandeur, its beauty, and is nothing more than a sad vanity. Yes, language, the instrument of the spirit, lives by itself, even if it is only a reflection of the universal Idea

. We invent nothing, we create nothing. Everything is in everything. Our microcosm is but a tiny, animated, thinking, more or less imperfect particle of the macrocosm. What we believe we discover through the sole effort of our intelligence already exists somewhere. Faith makes us sense what it is; revelation gives us absolute proof of it. We often flank the phenomenon—read miracle—without noticing it, blind and deaf. How many wonders, how many unsuspected things we would discover if we knew how to dissect words, break their crust and free their spirit, the divine light they contain! Jesus expressed himself only in parables: can we deny the truth they teach? And in everyday conversation, are not misunderstandings, synonyms, puns, and assonances what characterise *people of wit*, happy to escape the tyranny of the *letter* and showing themselves, in their own way, to be kabbalists without knowing it?

Finally, let us add that *slang* is one of the forms derived from the *Language of Birds*, the mother and dean of all others, the language of philosophers and diplomats. It is the language whose knowledge Jesus reveals to his apostles when he sends them his spirit, the *Holy Spirit*. It is this language that teaches the mystery of things and lifts the veil on the most hidden truths. The ancient Incas called it *the Language of the Court*, because it was widely used by *diplomats*, to whom it gave the key to a *double science*, sacred science and profane science. In the Middle Ages, it was described as *Gaya ciencia* or *Gay saber*, *Language of the Gods*, *Goddess-Bottle* (1). Tradition affirms that men spoke it before the construction of the *Tower of Babel* (2), the cause of its perversion and, for most, the total oblivion of this sacred language. Currently, outside of *slang*, we discover its characteristics in some local languages, such as Picard, Provençal, etc., and in the dialect of the gypsies.

According to mythology, the famous soothsayer Tiresias (3) had perfect knowledge of the *language of birds*, which he had been taught by Minerva, goddess of *wisdom*. He shared it, they say, with *Thales of Miletus*, *Melampus* and *Apollonius of Tyana* (4), imaginary characters whose names speak eloquently in the science that concerns us, and clearly enough that we need to analyse them in these pages.

- (1) *The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais is an esoteric work, a novel written in *slang*. 's good priest of Meudon revealed himself in it as a great initiate with touches of a first-rate Kabbalist.
- (2) The *tour* (turn), the *tourmeure* *ba* used for *bel*.
- (3) Tiresias, they say, had lost his sight for having revealed the secrets of Olympus to mortals. However, he lived "seven, eight or nine ages of man" and was, successively, both man and woman!
- (4) A philosopher whose life, full of legends, miracles and prodigious deeds, seems highly hypothetical. It seems to us that the name of this almost fabulous character is nothing more than a mythical-hermetic image of the compound, or *philosopher's stone* achieved through the union of brother and sister, Gabritius and Beya, *Apollo* and *Diana*. Hence, we are not surprised by the wonders recounted by Philostratus, as they are of a chemical nature.

IV

With rare exceptions, the floor plan of Gothic churches—cathedrals, abbeys, or collegiate churches—takes the form of a Latin cross laid out on the ground. Now, *the cross is the alchemical hieroglyph for the crucible* (creuset), which was formerly called (in French) *cruzoz crucible* and *croiset* (according to Ducange, in Late Latin, *crucibulum*, *crucible*, had as its root *crux*, *crucis*, cross).

Indeed, it is in the crucible that the raw material, like Christ himself, undergoes its Passion; it is in the crucible that it dies in order to be resurrected afterwards, purified, spiritualised, transformed. On the other hand, does not the people, faithful guardians of oral traditions, express the human earthly trial through religious parables and hermetic similes? Carrying one's cross, climbing Calvary, *passing through the crucible* of existence, are all common expressions where we find the same meaning under the same symbolism.

Let us not forget that, around the *luminous cross* seen in Constantine's dreams, appeared these prophetic words that he had painted on his *labarum*: *In hoc signo vinces; you will conquer by this sign*. Remember also, fellow alchemists, that *the cross bears the mark of the three nails* that were used to crucify Christ—matter, an image of the three purifications by iron and fire. Meditate also on this clear passage from St Augustine's *Dialogue with Trypho* (*Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 40): 'The mystery of the *lamb* that God had commanded to be sacrificed at Passover,' he says, 'was the *figure* of Christ, with which believers paint their dwellings; that is, themselves, through their faith in Him. Now, *this lamb*, which the law commanded to be roasted whole, was the *symbol of the cross* that Christ was to suffer. For the lamb, in order to be roasted, is placed in such a way that it resembles a cross: one of the branches pierces it from end to end, from the lower extremity

to the head; the other pierces its shoulders, and the lamb's front legs are tied to it (*the Greek says, the hands, XE¿PC:9*)."

The cross is a very ancient symbol, used since time immemorial in all religions and among all peoples, and it would be wrong to consider it a special emblem of Christianity, as Abbé Ansault has amply demonstrated (1). We might even say that the layout of large religious buildings in the Middle Ages, with their addition of a semicircular or elliptical apse attached to the choir, takes the form of the Egyptian hieratic sign of the *ankh*, which is read *as ank and* designates the *universal life* hidden in things. We can see an example of this in the museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, on a Christian sarcophagus from the Arlesian crypts of Saint-Honorat. On the other hand, the hermetic equivalent of the *ank* sign is the emblem of *Venus or Cypris* (*in Greek, Kv7rpLg*, meaning the impure), common copper, which some, to further obscure its meaning, have translated as *bronze and brass*. "Whiten the brass and burn your books," all the good authors repeat to us. *Kv7rpo@* is the same word as *Y,ov(ppog*, meaning *sulphur*, which in this case has the meaning of manure, dung, excrement, rubbish. "The wise man will find our stone even in manure," writes the Cosmopolitan, "while the ignorant man will not be able to believe that it is found in gold."

And so it is that the plan of the Christian building reveals to us the qualities of the raw material and its preparation, through the *sign of the Cross*, which, for alchemists, results in the obtaining of the *First Stone*, the cornerstone.

(1) Abbé Ansault, *La Croix* avant Jésus-Christ, Paris, V. Retaux, 1894.

of the Great Philosophical Work. Jesus built his church on this *stone*, and medieval Freemasons symbolically followed the divine example. But before it was carved to serve as the foundation for Gothic art, and also for philosophical art, the rough, impure, material and coarse stone was often given the *image of the devil*. Notre-Dame de Paris had a similar hieroglyph, which was located under the tribune, in the corner of the choir enclosure. It was a figure of the devil, opening an enormous mouth, in which the faithful extinguished their candles; as a result, the sculpted block appeared stained with wax and blackened by smoke. The people called this image *Maître Pierre du Coignet*, which did not fail to confuse archaeologists. Now, this figure, intended to represent the initial matter of the Work, humanised in the guise of *Lucifer (bearer of light, the morning star)*, was the symbol of our *cornerstone, the Stone of the Corner, the keystone of the little corner*. "The stone that the builders rejected," writes Amyraut (2), "has been turned into the *cornerstone*, on which the entire structure of the building rests; but it is also a stumbling block and a stone of scandal, against which they stumble to their misfortune." As for the carving of this cornerstone—that is, its preparation—we can see it expressed in a beautiful bas-relief of the period, sculpted on the exterior of the building, in a chapel in the apse, on the side of the Rue du Cloître-Notre-Dame.

(2) M. Amyraut, *Paraphrase de la Pretvve Epitre de saint Pierre* (c. ii, v. 7). Saumur, Jean Lesnier, 1646, p. 27.

V

Just as the decoration of the protruding parts was reserved *for the image carver*, the ornamentation of the cathedral floors was entrusted to the ceramist. These were generally paved or tiled with painted fired clay slabs covered with a lead-based glaze. This art had reached such a high level of perfection in the Middle Ages that it provided historical themes with sufficient variety in terms of design and colour. Small multicoloured marble cubes were also used, in the style of Byzantine mosaics. Among the most frequently used motifs were labyrinths, which were traced on the floor at the intersection of the nave and the transept. The churches of Sens, Reims, Auxerre, Saint-Quentin, Poitiers and Bayeux have preserved their labyrinths. In Amiens, there was a large slab in the centre with a gold bar and a semicircle of the same metal embedded in it, representing the sun rising on the horizon. Later, the gold sun was replaced by a copper sun, which in turn disappeared, never to be replaced. As for the labyrinth of Chartres, commonly called *la lieue* (*from le lieu, the place*) and drawn on the pavement of the nave, it is composed of a series of concentric circles that fold into each other with infinite variety. In the centre of this figure, one could once see the combat between Theseus and the Minotaur. This is further proof of the infiltration of pagan themes into Christian iconography and, consequently, of a

obvious mythical-hermetic meaning. However, it would be impossible to establish any connection between these images and the famous constructions of antiquity, the labyrinths of Greece and Egypt.

The labyrinth of cathedrals, or *Solomon's labyrinth*, is, according to Marcellin Berthelot (1), 'a cabalistic figure found at the beginning of certain alchemical manuscripts and forming part of the magical traditions attributed to Solomon. It is a series of concentric circles, interrupted at certain points, so that they form a striking and inextricable path.'

The image of the labyrinth is thus presented to us as emblematic of the entire work, with its two greatest difficulties: that of the path that must be followed to reach the centre—where the fierce battle between the two natures is fought—and that of the other path that the artist must take to leave it. This is where *Ariadne's thread* is needed if one does not want to get lost in the maze of the work and find oneself unable to find the way out.

It is far from our intention to write, as Batsdorff did, a special treatise to explain what this *thread of Ariadne*, which allowed Theseus to fulfil his mission. But we do intend, based on Kabbalah, to provide astute researchers with some information about the symbolic value of the famous myth.

Ariane is a form of *ariagne* (spider), due to metathesis of the *i*. In Spanish, the ñ is equivalent to the *gn*; *apaxv-q* (spider) can therefore be read as *arahné, arahni, arahgne*. Is our soul not the spider that weaves our own body? But this word requires further formations. The verb ALP(O) means *to take, to grasp, to drag, to attract*, from which *alpvn* is derived, *that* which takes, grasps, attracts. Thus, *a;p?7v* is the *magnet*, the virtue enclosed in the body that the wise call their *magnesia*.

Let us continue. In Provençal, iron is called *aran* and *iran*, depending on the different dialects. It is the Masonic *Hiram*, the divine Aries, the *architect of Solomon's Temple*. The Felibres call it

(1) *La Grande Encyclopédie*. Art. Labyrinthe, t. XXI, p. 703.

the spider: *aragno and iragno, airagno*; in Picard, it is called *arégni*. Compare all this with the Greek Ζῆ6npog, iron and magnet. This word has both meanings. But there is more. The verb *apva>* expresses the *edge of a star rising from the sea*: from which *apvav* (aryan) is derived, *the star that rises from the sea, that rises; apvczv, or ariane*, is therefore the *East*, by permutation of vowels. Furthermore, *apvw* also has the meaning of *attracting*, so *apvav* is also the *magnet*. If we now return to *l;8i7pog*, the origin of the Latin *sidus, sideris, star*, we will recognise our *aran, iran*, Provençal *airan*, the Greek *c;pavv*, the *rising sun*.

Ariadne, the mystical spider, escaped from Amiens, leaving only the imprint of her web on the choir floor...

Let us remember, incidentally, that the most famous of the ancient labyrinths, that of Knossos in Crete, discovered in

1902 by Dr Evans of Oxford, was called *Absolum*. And let us note that this term is very similar to *absolute*, which is the name given by ancient alchemists to the philosopher's stone.

VI

All churches have their apse facing southeast, their façade facing northwest, and their transept, which forms the arms of the cross, facing northeast to southwest. This orientation is invariable, established so that the faithful and the profane, upon entering the temple from the west and heading straight for the sanctuary, look *towards where the sun rises*, towards the east, towards Palestine, the cradle of Christianity. They leave darkness and walk towards the light.

As a result of this arrangement, one of the three rose windows that adorn the transept and the main façade is never illuminated by the sun; this is the northern rose window, which shines on the left façade of the transept. The second shines in the midday sun; it is the southern rose window, which opens at the far right of the transept. The last is illuminated by the red rays of the setting sun; it is the large rose window on the main façade, which surpasses its lateral counterparts in size and splendour. In this way, the colours of the Work follow one another on the façades of Gothic cathedrals, in a circular evolution that goes from darkness—represented by the absence of light and the colour black—to the perfection of ruddy light, passing through the colour white, considered "intermediate between black and red".

In the Middle Ages, the central rose window was called *Rota, the wheel*. Now, the *wheel* is the alchemical hieroglyph for the time needed to cook the philosophical matter and, therefore, for the cooking itself. The constant, steady fire that the artist feeds night and day during this operation is called, for this reason, *the wheel fire*. However, in addition to the heat necessary for the liquefaction of the philosopher's stone, a second agent is needed, called *the secret or philosophical fire*. It is this latter *fire*, excited by ordinary heat, that *turns the wheel* and causes the various phenomena that the artist observes in *his retort*:

Go this way, not another, I warn you;
observe only *the tracks of my wheel*. And to
give everything equal heat,
do not ascend or descend to heaven and
earth. If you ascend too much, you will burn
the heavens;
if you descend too far, you will destroy the earth.
On the other hand, if you keep your course in
the middle, progress is steady and the route is
safer (1).

The rose window therefore represents, on its own, the action of fire and its duration. This is why medieval decorators tried to reflect, in their rose windows, the movements of matter excited by elemental fire, as can be seen on the north façade of Chartres Cathedral, in the rose windows of Toul (Saint-Gengoult), Saint-Antoine de Compiègne, etc. In 14th- and 15th-century architecture, the preponderance of the fiery symbol, which clearly characterises the last period of medieval art, led to the style of this era being given the name *Flamboyant Gothic*.

Certain rose windows, emblematic of the compound, have a particular meaning that further emphasises the properties of this *substance that the Creator sealed* with his own hand.

This *magical seal* tells the artist that he has followed the right path and that the mixture has been prepared *according to the canons*.

It is a six-pointed radiant figure (*digamma*), called *the Star of the Magi*, which shines on the surface of the

(1) De Nuysment, *Poème philosophic de la Vérité de la Phisique Minerale*, in *Traitez de l'Harmonie et Constitution generale du Vray SeL* Paris, Périer et Buisard, 1620 and 1621, p. 254.

compound, that is, above the manger where Jesus, the *Child-King*, rests.

Among the buildings featuring six-petalled star-shaped rose windows – a reproduction of *the traditional Seal of Solomon* (2) – we can mention Saint-Jean Cathedral and Saint-Bonaventure Church in Lyon (rose windows on the façades); the Church of Saint-Gengoult in Toul; the two rose windows of Saint-Vulfran in Abbeville; the façade of the Calende in Rouen Cathedral; the splendid rose window of the Sainte-Chapelle, etc.

As this *sign* is of the utmost interest to the alchemist – is it not the star that guides him and announces the birth of the Saviour? – it is worth quoting here certain texts that recount, describe and explain its appearance. We leave it to the reader to make the necessary comparisons, to coordinate the versions, and to isolate the positive truth mixed with legendary allegory in these enigmatic fragments.

(2) The polygonal lily of the valley, commonly called *Solomon's Seal*, owes this name to its stem, whose cross-section is star-shaped, like the magical sign attributed to the king of the Israelites, son of David.

VII

Varro, in his *Antiquitates rerum humanarum*, recalls the legend of Aeneas, saving his father and his household gods from *the flames of Troy* and arriving, *after long wanderings*, at the *Laurentine Fields* (1), *the end of his journey*. He gives us the following reason for this:

Es quo de Troja est egressus Aeneas, Veneris eum per diem quotidie stellam vidisse, donec ad agrum Laurentum veniret, in quo eam non vidit ulterius; qua recognovit terras esse fatales (2). (When he left Troy, he saw the star of Venus every day and during the day, until he reached the Laurentine fields, where he ceased to see it, which made him understand that those were *the lands marked by Destiny*.)

Let us now look at a legend taken from a work entitled *Book of Seth*, which a 6th-century author recounts in these terms (3):

"I have heard some people speak of a Scripture which, although not very certain, is not contrary to the law and is rather pleasing to hear. We read in it that there was a people in the Far East, on the shores of the Ocean, who

(1) Kabbalistically, the *gold ingested, grafted*.

(2) Varro, in *Servius, Aeneid*, t. III, p. 386.

(3) *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum Hom II*, incorporated into the *Aeuvres de Saint Jean Chrysostome, Patr. grecque*, t. LVI, p. 637.

He possessed a book attributed to Set, which spoke of the future appearance of this star and of the gifts that had to be brought to the Child, whose prediction was supposed to have been passed down through the generations of the Wise Men, from fathers to sons. They chose twelve of the wisest among them, those most devoted to the mysteries of the heavens, and set about waiting for this star. If any of them died, their son or the closest relative who shared the same belief was chosen to replace them.

They were called *Magi* in their language because they glorified God in *silence* and in a low voice.

Every year, after the harvest, these men would climb a mountain which, in their language, was called *Mount Victory*, where there was a *cave in the rock*, pleasant because of the streams and trees that surrounded it. Once they reached this mountain, they washed, prayed and praised God in *silence for three days*. They did this during *each generation*, always waiting, in case this *star of joy* appeared during their generation. But at last it *appeared, on this Mount of Victory*, in the form of a *small child* and presenting the *figure of a cross*. It spoke to them, *instructed* them and commanded them to set out on the road to Judea.

"The star preceded them for two years, and they never lacked bread or water on their travels.

What they did next is summarised in the Gospel." According to another legend,

of unknown origin, the star had a different shape (4):

"During the journey, which lasted thirteen days, the Magi took no rest and ate no food; they felt no need for it, and this period seemed to them to have lasted only a day. The closer they got to Bethlehem, the brighter the star shone; *it was shaped like an eagle*, flying through the air and flapping its wings; *above it was a cross*."

The following legend, entitled *Of the things that happened in Persia at the birth of Christ*, is attributed to Julius

(4) *Apocrypha, vol. 11*, p. 469.

Africanus, a 3rd-century chronicler, although it is unknown to which period it actually belongs (5):

The scene takes place in Persia, in a temple of Juno (Hp?79) built by Cyrus. A priest announces that Juno has conceived. All the statues of the gods begin to dance and sing upon hearing this news.

-A star descends and announces the birth of a Child, the *Beginning and the End*. -All the statues fall face down on the ground. -The Magi announce that this Child was born in Bethlehem and advise the king to send ambassadors.

-Then *Bacchus (ἀζοβνυος)* appears, predicting that this Child will cast out all false gods. -Departure of the Magi, guided by the star. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, they announce the birth of the Messiah to the priests.

-In Bethlehem, they greet Mary, have a skilled slave paint her portrait with the Child, and place it in their main temple with this inscription: *To Jupiter Mithras (ΑΛΙ Ι-ΙΑΛW, the sun god), to the great God, to King Jesus, dedicated by the Persian Empire*.

"The light of this star," writes St. Ignatius (6), "surpassed that of all the others; its brilliance was ineffable, and its novelty left those who contemplated it speechless with amazement. *The sun, the moon, and the other stars formed the choir of this star*."

Huginus of Barma, in the *Practice* of his work (7), uses the same terms to express the subject matter of the Great Work on which the star appears: "Take true earth," he says, "*well impregnated with the rays of the sun, the moon and the other stars*."

In the 4th century, the philosopher Calcidius, who, according to Mulaquius, the last of his editors, maintained that one should worship the gods of Greece, the gods of Rome and foreign gods, refers to the star of the Magi and the explanation given by the wise men. After speaking of

(5) *Julius Africanus, in Patr. grecque t. X*, pp. 97 and 107.

(6) *Epistle to the Ephesians*, c. XIX.

(7) Huginus de Barma, *Le Règne de Saturne changé en Siècle dor*. Paris, Dericu, 1780.

a star called Ahe by the Egyptians, which heralds misfortune, adds:

"There is another more holy and venerable story, which testifies that, *through the rising of a certain star*, it was announced not sickness or death, but the coming of a venerable God, for the grace of conversation with man and for the benefit of mortal things. *After seeing this star travelling through the night, the wisest of the Chaldeans, as men perfectly trained in the contemplation of celestial things, inquired, according to what they say, into the recent birth of a God, and, upon discovering the majesty of this Child, paid him the homage due to such a great God. Which you know much better than others.*" (8)

Diodorus of Tarsus (9) is even more positive when he states that "this star was not one of those that populate the sky, but a certain virtue or force (*Svvat̃zLg*) *urano-diurna* (*Oc-ζo,rEpap*), which had taken the form of a star to announce the birth of the Lord of all."

Gospel according to Saint Luke, U, v. 1 to 7:

"Now there were shepherds in that region keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and *the glory* of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. But the angel said to them,

"Do not be afraid, for I bring you *good news of great joy* for all the people; today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a *sign* for you: you will find a *baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.*"

"Then a multitude of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.'"

(8) Calcidio, *Comm in Timaeon Platonis*, c. 125; in *Frag. philosophorum graecorum* de Didot, t. 11, p. 2 1 0. Calcidius is undoubtedly addressing an initiate.

(9) Diodorus of Tarsus, *On Destiny*, in *Photius*, cod. 233; *Patr. greceque*, vol. CIII, p. 878.

Gospel according to St. Matthew, 11, v. 1 to 1 1:

"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him.

"... Then Herod secretly summoned the Magi and asked them about *the time when the star had appeared to them*. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, so that I too may go and worship him.

After hearing the king, they set out, and suddenly the star they had seen in the East went before them until it came to rest *over the place* where the Child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with great joy. And entering the house, they found the Child with Mary his mother, and prostrating themselves, they worshipped him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Regarding such strange events, and given the impossibility of attributing the cause to some celestial phenomenon, A. Bonnetty (10), impressed by the mystery surrounding these narratives, asks:

"Who are these Magi, and what are we to think of this star? This is what rationalist critics and others are asking themselves at this moment. And it is difficult to answer these questions, because ancient and modern Rationalism and Ontologism, drawing all their knowledge from themselves, have made us forget all *the means by which the ancient peoples of the East preserved their primitive traditions.*"

We find the first mention of the star in the words of Balaam. He was apparently born in the city of Peor, on the banks of the Euphrates, and is said to have lived around 1477 BC, at the height of the Assyrian Empire, which was then in its infancy. A prophet or magician in Mesopotamia, Balaam exclaims:

"How could I curse him whom his God does not curse?"

(10) A. Bonnetty, *Documents historiques sur la Religion des Romains*, volume 11, page 564.

curse? How then could I curse him whom Jehovah does not curse? Listen! I see her, but not now; I behold her, but not near... *A star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel...* (Num. XXIV, 47).

In symbolic iconography, the star serves to designate both conception and birth. The Virgin is often depicted surrounded by stars. The one in Larmor (Morbihan), part of a beautiful triptych depicting the death of Christ and the suffering of Mary - *Mater dolorosa* -, in the sky of whose central composition

We can observe the sun, the moon, the stars and Iris' veil. In her right hand she holds a large star -*maris stella*-, an epithet given to the Virgin Mary in a Catholic hymn.

G. J. Witkowski (11) describes a very curious stained-glass window that was located near the sacristy of the old church of

Saint-Jean de Rouen, now destroyed. This stained glass window depicted the *Conception of Saint Romanus* "His father, Benedict, advisor to Clotaire II, and his mother, Felicitas, were lying in bed, completely naked, according to the custom that lasted until the mid-16th century. The conception was represented by a *star shining above the bedspread*, in contact with the woman's womb... The border of this stained glass window, already unique for its main motif, was adorned with medallions in which the observer could see, to their surprise, the figures of *Mars, Jupiter, Venus*, etc., and, so that there would be no doubt about their identity, the image of each deity was accompanied by their name."

(11) G. J. Witkowski, *L'Art profane à l'Eglise. France* Paris, Schemit, 1908, page 382.

VIII

Just as the human soul has its secret folds, so the cathedral has its hidden passageways. Together, these passageways, which extend beneath the floor of the church, constitute the crypt (from the Greek *Kpv7rroq*, hidden).

In this deep, damp and cold place, the observer experiences a singular sensation that imposes silence: the sensation of power united with darkness. Here we find ourselves in the refuge of the dead, as in the Basilica of Saint-Denis, necropolis of the illustrious, as in the Roman catacombs, cemetery of the Christians. Stone slabs; marble mausoleums; tombs; historical ruins, fragments of the past. A gloomy and heavy silence fills the vaulted spaces. The thousand noises from outside, vain echoes of the world, do not reach us. Are we going to end up in the caves of the Cyclopes? Are we on the threshold of a Dantesque hell, or under the underground galleries, so welcoming, so hospitable, of the first martyrs? Everything is mystery, anguish and fear in this dark cave...

Around us, numerous columns, enormous, solid, sometimes twin, stand on their wide, unevenly cut bases. Short capitals, slightly protruding, sober, squat. Rough and worn forms, in which elegance and richness give way to solidity. Thick muscles, contracted by effort, which distribute, without faltering, the formidable weight of the entire building. Nocturnal will, silent, rigid, tense in its perpetual resistance to crushing. Material strength that the builder knew how to order and distribute, giving all these members the archaic appearance of a herd of fossilised pachyderms, welded together, arching their bony backs, contracting their petrified bellies under the weight of an excessive load. A real but hidden force, exercised in secret, developing in the shadows, acting relentlessly in the depths of the underground constructions of the building. Such is the impression experienced by visitors as they walk through the galleries of the Gothic crypts.

In ancient times, the underground chambers of temples served as dwellings for statues of *Isis*, which were transformed, with the introduction of Christianity in Gaul, into those *black Virgins* that are venerated by the people in a very special way today. Their symbolism is, moreover, identical; both bear the famous inscription on their pedestals: *Virgini pariturae*; *To the Virgin who is to become a mother*. Ch. Bigame (1) tells us of several statues of *Isis* designated by the same term: "Already the wise Elias Schadius -says the scholar Pierre Dujols, in his *General Bibliography of the Occult*, had pointed out in his book *De dictis Germanicis*, a similar inscription: *Isidi, seu Virgini ex qua flius proditurus est* (2). These icons would not, therefore, at least exoterically, have the Christian meaning attributed to them. *Isis* before conception is, in astronomical theogony, says Bigarne, the attribute of the *Virgin* that several documents, long before Christianity, designate with the name *Virgo paritura*, that is, *the earth before its fertilisation*, which will soon be animated by the rays of the sun. She is also the mother of the gods, as attested by a stone from Die: *Matri Deum Magnae Ideae*. It is impossible to better define the esoteric meaning of our *black Virgins*. In hermetic symbolism, they represent the *primitive earth*, which the artist must choose as *the subject* of his great work. It is raw material in its mineral state, such as

(1) See Bigame, *considérations sur le culte des dieux chez les Eduens*, Beaune, 1862.

(2) To *Isis*, or to the *Virgin* from whom the Son will be born.

as it emerges from the metal-bearing layers, deeply buried beneath the rocky mass. It is, the texts tell us, "a black, heavy, brittle, friable *substance*, which has the appearance of a stone and can be crumbled like a stone". It seems natural, then, that the humanised hieroglyph of this mineral should have its own specific colour and be assigned, as its dwelling place, the underground chambers of temples.

Nowadays, black Virgins are few and far between. We will mention some of the most famous ones. Chartres Cathedral is the richest in this regard, as it has two: one, which bears the expressive name of *Notre-Dame-sous-Terre*, is located in the crypt and sits on a throne whose base bears the inscription we have already mentioned: *Virgini pariturae*. The other, outside, called *Notre-Dame-du-Pilier*, occupies the centre of a niche filled with *votive offerings* in the form of flaming hearts. The latter, Witkowski tells us, is the object of veneration by many pilgrims. "In ancient times," adds this author, "the stone column that supports it appeared worn by the tongues and teeth of its ardent worshippers, like the foot of St. Peter in Rome or the knee of Hercules, whom the pagans worshipped in Sicily; but to protect it from overly fervent kisses, it was covered with wood in 1831." With its underground virgin, Chartres is reputed to be the oldest place of pilgrimage. In the beginning, it was nothing more than an ancient statuette of Isis, 'sculpted before Christ', according to old local chronicles. In any case, the current image dates only from the late 18th century, as the one of the goddess Isis was destroyed at an unknown time and replaced by a wooden image, with the Child sitting on her knees, which was burned in 1793.

As for the extra Virgin of Notre-Dame du Puy, whose limbs are hidden, she has a triangular shape, thanks to the cloak that is tied around her neck and widens without a fold to her feet. The fabric is decorated with vines and ears of wheat – allegories of the Eucharistic bread and wine – and reveals, at the level of the navel, the head of the Child, crowned with the same sumptuousness as that of his mother.

Notre-Dame-de-Confession, the famous black Madonna of the crypts of Saint-Victor in Marseille, is a beautiful example of ancient statuary, slender, magnificent and voluptuous. This figure, full of nobility, holds a sceptre in her right hand and wears a triple-flowered crown on her forehead (plate 1).

Notre-Dame de Rocamadour, a famous place of pilgrimage, already frequented in 1166, is a miraculous Madonna whose origin, according to tradition, dates back to Zacchaeus, the Jewish chief tax collector of Jericho, and who dominates the altar of the Chapel of the Virgin, built in 1479. It is a small wooden statue, blackened by time and wrapped in a mantle of silver lamellae that protects the worm-eaten image. "The fame of Rocamadour dates back to the legendary hermit Saint Amador or Amador, who carved a small statue of the Virgin Mary out of wood, to which numerous miracles were attributed. It is said that Amador was the pseudonym of the publican Zacchaeus, converted by Jesus Christ; having come to Gaul, he spread the cult of the Virgin. This cult is very ancient in Rocamadour; however, the great pilgrimages did not begin until the 12th century (3)."

In Vichy, the Black Madonna of the Church of Saint-Blaise has been venerated since "the most remote antiquity," according to Antoine Gravier, a 17th-century communal priest. Archaeologists maintain that this sculpture dates from the 14th century, and as the church of Saint-Blaise, where it is housed, was not built until the 15th century, in its oldest parts, Abbé Allot, who tells us about this statue, believes that it was previously located in the chapel of Saint-Nicolas, founded in 1372 by Guillaume de Hames.

The church of Guéodet, still called Notre-Dame-de-la-Cité, in Quimper, also has a black Madonna.

Camille Flammarion (4) tells us of a similar statue that he saw in the cellars of the Observatory on 24 September

1871, two centuries after the first thermometric observation was made there in 1671. "The colossal building of Louis XIV," he writes, "which raises the balustrade of its terrace

(3) *La Grande Encyclopédie*, vol. XXVIII, p. 761.

(4) Camille Flammarion, *L'Atmosphère*. Paris, Hachette, 1888, p. 362.

Twenty-eight metres above ground, it sinks into the subsoil at the same depth: twenty-eight metres. In the corner of one of the underground galleries, there is a statuette of the Virgin Mary, placed there in 1671, and invoked by the name of *Notre-Dame de dessous terre* in verses engraved at her feet. This little-known Parisian Virgin, who personifies the mysterious theme of Hermes in the capital, seems to be the twin of the one in Chartres: the *benoiste Damme souterraine*.

Another useful detail for the Hermeticist is that in the ceremony prescribed for the processions of Black Virgins, only *green* candles were burned.

As for the statuettes of Isis—we refer to those that escaped Christianisation—they are even rarer than the Black Virgins. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the great antiquity of these icons. Witkowski (5) refers to one that was found in the Cathedral of Saint-Etienne in Metz.

'This stone figure of Isis,' writes the author, 'measured 0.43 m high by 0.92 m wide and came from the old cloister. The high relief protruded 0.18 m from the background; it represented a naked female bust, but so emaciated that, to use an graphic expression of Abbot Brantôme, 'it could only show the skeleton'; her head was *covered with a veil*. Two dry breasts hung from her chest, like those of the Dianas of Ephesus. The skin was painted *red*, and the fabric of the carving was *black*... There were similar statues in Saint-Germain-des-Près and Saint-Etienne de Lyon.

In any case, as far as we are concerned, the cult of Isis, the Egyptian Ceres, was very mysterious. We only know that the goddess was solemnly celebrated every year in the city of Busiris and that an ox was sacrificed to her. "After the sacrifices," says Herodotus, "men and women, numbering several tens of thousands, strike each other with heavy blows. I consider it impious on my part to say in the name of which god they strike each other." The Greeks, like the Egyptians, kept absolute silence about the mysteries.

(5) See *L'Art profane à l'Église*. Foreign. *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

of the cult of Ceres, and historians have taught us nothing that can satisfy our curiosity. *Revealing the secret of these practices to the uninitiated was punishable by death*. Even listening to their disclosure was considered a crime. Entrance to the temple of Ceres, following the example of the Egyptian sanctuaries of Isis, was strictly forbidden to all who had not received initiation. However, the information that has been passed down to us about the hierarchy of the high priests allows us to suppose that the mysteries of Ceres must have been of the same order as those of Hermetic Science. Indeed, we know that the mysteries of the cult were divided into four categories: the *hierophant*, responsible for instructing the neophytes; the *torchbearer*, representing the Sun; the *herald*, representing Mercury; and the minister

of the altar, who represented the *Moon*. In Rome, the *Cerealia* were celebrated on 12 April. In the processions, they carried an *egg*, symbol of the world, and pigs were sacrificed.

We have said above that on a stone from Die, representing Isis, she was called *the mother of the gods*. The same epithet was applied to Rhea or Cybele. The two divinities are thus close relatives, and we are inclined to consider them as different expressions of one and the same principle. Monsieur Charles Vincens confirms this opinion by describing a bas-relief depicting Cybele, which could be seen for centuries on the exterior of the parish church of Pennes (Bouches-du-Rhône), with the inscription: *Matri Deum*. "This curious fragment," he tells us, "disappeared around 1610, but it is engraved in the *Recueil de Grosson* (p. 20)." A singular hermetic analogy: Cybele was worshipped in Pesinonte, Phrygia, in the form of a *black stone* said to have *fallen from the sky*. Phidias depicts the goddess seated on a throne between *two lions*, wearing a mural crown from which a *veil* descends. She is sometimes depicted holding a *key* and in the act of *removing her veil*. Isis, Ceres, Cybele: three heads under the same veil.

IX

Having completed this preliminary work, we must now undertake the hermetic study of the cathedral, and, in order to limit our investigations, we will take as our model the Christian temple of the capital: Notre-Dame de Paris.

Certainly, our task is difficult. We no longer live in the times of Messer Bemard, Count of Treviso, Zachaire or Flamel. The centuries have left their deep mark on the façade of the building, the weather has carved deep wrinkles into it, but the damage caused by time is little compared to that caused by human fury. Revolutions have left their mark there, a lamentable testimony to the wrath of the mob; vandalism, the enemy of beauty, has sated its hatred with horrible mutilations, and the restorers themselves, though driven by the best of intentions, have not always known how to respect what the iconoclasts had not destroyed.

Notre-Dame de Paris once rose majestically above a series of eleven steps. Barely separated by a narrow atrium from the wooden houses with their pointed, stepped walls, it gained in boldness and elegance what it lost in mass. Today, thanks to the retreat of the neighbouring buildings, it appears all the more solid as it is more separated and its walls, columns and buttresses rise directly from the ground; the successive accumulation of earth has gradually covered the steps until the last of them has been absorbed.

In the middle of the limited space, on one side, by the imposing basilica, and on the other, by the picturesque cluster of small buildings adorned with spires, spikes and weather vanes, with their painted shops with carved beams and burlesque signs, with their corners broken by niches with virgins or saints, flanked by turrets, watchtowers and battlements, in the middle of this space, we say, stood a tall, narrow stone statue holding a book in one hand and a snake in the other. This statue was part of a monumental fountain on which the following couplet was inscribed:

Qui sitis, hue tendas: desunt si forte liquores,
Pergredere, aeternas diva paravit aquas.

You who are thirsty, come here. If by chance the waves are missing, the Goddess has prepared eternal waters.

The townspeople called him *either Monsieur Legris, the Grey Seller, the Great Faster, or the Faster of Notre Dame*.

Many interpretations have been given to these strange expressions applied by the common people to an image that archaeologists have been unable to identify. The best explanation is that given by *Amédée de Ponthieu (1)*, which we find all the more interesting because its author, who was not a Hermeticist, judges impartially and without preconceptions:

"In front of this temple," he tells us, referring to Notre Dame, "stood a *sacred monolith*, shapeless because of the time. The ancients called him *Febigenus (2)*, son of Apollo; the common people later called him *Maitre Pierre*, meaning *Master Stone, stone of power (3)*; he was also called *micer Legris*, at a time when *grey meant fire* and, in particular, *feu grisou, will-o'-the-wisp...*

(1) Amédée de Ponthieu, *Légendes du Vieux Paris*, BachelinDeflorenne, 1867, p. 91.

(2) Begotten of the sun or of gold.

(3) It is the cornerstone we have already mentioned.

According to some, its shapeless features resembled those of Aesculapius, or *Mercury*, or the god *Terme* (4); according to others, those of Archambaud, chief steward of Clovis II, who donated the land on which the hospital was built; others believed they saw the features of William of Paris, who had erected it at the same time as the frontispiece of Notre-Dame; Abbé Leboeuf saw in it the figure of Jesus Christ; others, that of Saint Genevieve, patron saint of Paris.

This stone was removed in 1748 when the Parvis-de-Notre-Dame square was enlarged.

At around the same time, the chapter of Notre Dame was ordered to remove the statue of Saint Christopher. The colossus, painted grey, stood attached to the first column on the right as one entered the nave. It had been erected in 1413 by Antoine des Essarts, chamberlain to King Charles VI. An attempt was made to remove it in 1772, but Christophe de Beaumont, then Archbishop of Paris, strongly opposed this. Only after his death was the statue dragged out of the metropolis and destroyed. Notre-Dame de Amiens still has the good Christian giant carrying the Baby Jesus, but the truth is that if it escaped destruction, it was only because it is part of the wall: it is a bas-relief sculpture. Seville Cathedral also has a colossal fresco painting of Saint Christopher. The one in the church of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie perished with the building, and the beautiful statue in the cathedral of Auxerre, dating from 1539, was destroyed by official order in 1768, only a few years before the one in Paris.

It is clear that powerful reasons were required to motivate such acts. Although they seem unjustified to us, we nevertheless find their cause in the symbolic expression taken from the legend and condensed – undoubtedly with excessive clarity – in the image. Saint Christopher, whose original name, *Offerus*, is revealed to us by Jacques de Voragine, means, for the masses, the *one who carries Christ* (from the Greek *Xpturo@opog*); but phonetic cabalism reveals another meaning, appropriate and in accordance with hermetic doctrine. He is called Christopher instead of *Ctíofo*.

(4) The Termes were busts of Hermes (Mercury).

who carries gold (in Greek, XPVUQ(Popog). Based on this, we can better understand the great importance of the highly eloquent symbol of Saint Christopher. It is the hieroglyphic symbol of *solar sulphur* (Jesus) or *nascent gold*, raised above the mercurial waves and then elevated by the energy of Mercury itself to the degree of power possessed by the Elixir. According to Aristotle, the emblematic colour of Mercury is *grey* or *violet*, which suffices to explain the fact that the statues of Saint Christopher were covered with a cloak of that colour. A number of ancient engravings preserved in the Print Room of the National Library, depicting the colossus, are executed in simple lines and in a shade of *diluted soot*. The oldest dates from 1418.

In Rocamadour (Lot), we can still see a gigantic statue of Saint Christopher erected on the esplanade of Saint-

Michel, in front of the church. Next to him we see an *old iron chest*, and on top of it, a rough fragment of a sword stuck in the rock and held in place by a chain. According to legend, this fragment belonged to the famous *Durandarte*, the sword that the paladin Roland broke when he opened the breach at Roncesvalles. Be that as it may, the truth that can be inferred from these attributes is very clear. The sword that splits the rock, Moses' rod that brings forth water from the rock of Horeb, the sceptre of the goddess Rhea, with which she struck Mount Dymidus, and Atalanta's javelin are, in reality, one and the same hieroglyph of that hidden matter of the Philosophers, of which Saint Christopher represents the nature, and the iron-bound chest, the result.

We regret that we cannot elaborate further on the magnificent emblem that occupied the first place in the ogival basilicas

. We have no precise and detailed description of these great figures, admirable groups for the teaching they contained, but which a superficial and decadent era made disappear, without the excuse of an indisputable necessity.

The 18th century, the reign of the aristocracy and ingenuity, of courtly abbots, powdered marquises, gentlemen in wigs, the blessed times of dance masters, madrigals and Watteau's shepherdesses, a brilliant and perverse century, frivolous and mannered, which was to drown in blood, was particularly disastrous for Gothic works.

Swept along by the strong current of decadence that took the paradoxical name of Renaissance during the reign of Francis I, incapable of an effort equivalent to that of their ancestors, completely ignorant of

medieval symbolism, artists devoted themselves to reproducing bastardised works, without taste, without character, without esoteric intention, rather than continuing and perfecting the admirable and healthy French creation.

Architects, painters, and sculptors, preferring their own glory to that of art, turned to ancient models that had been disfigured in Italy.

The builders of the Middle Ages had inherited faith and modesty. Anonymous creators of true masterpieces, they built for Truth, for the affirmation of their ideal, for the propagation and ennoblement of their science. Those of the Renaissance, concerned above all with their personality, jealous of their value, built to perpetuate their names. The Middle Ages owed its splendour to the originality of its creations; the Renaissance owed its fame to the slavish fidelity of its copies. Here, an idea; there, a fashion. On the one hand, genius; on the other, talent. In Gothic work, the craft remains subject to the Idea; in Renaissance work, it dominates and erases it. One speaks to the heart, the brain, the soul: it is the triumph of the spirit; the other addresses the senses: it is the glorification of matter. From the 12th to the 15th century, poverty of means but richness of expression; from the 16th century onwards, plastic beauty, mediocrity of invention. Medieval masters knew how to animate common limestone; Renaissance artists left marble inert and cold.

The antagonism between these two periods, born of opposing concepts, explains the Renaissance's contempt and deep revulsion for all things Gothic.

Such a state of mind was bound to be fatal to the work of the Middle Ages; and to it we must attribute, in fact, the countless mutilations that we deplore today.

PARIS

I

The cathedral of Paris, like most metropolitan basilicas, is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary or Virgin Mother. In France, the common people call these churches *Notre-Dame*. In Sicily, they have an even more expressive name: *Matrices*. They are, therefore, temples dedicated to the *Mother* (in Latin, *mater, matris*), to the *Matron* in the primitive sense, a word which, through corruption, has become *Madonna* (*Italian ma donna*), my Lady and, by extension, Our Lady.

Let us cross the gate and begin our study of the façade with the large portico, called the central portico or the Portico of Judgement.

The central pillar, which divides the entrance into two, features a series of allegorical representations of medieval sciences. Facing the square—and in a place of honour—is alchemy, represented by a woman whose forehead touches the clouds. Seated on a throne, she holds a sceptre—a symbol of sovereignty—in her left hand, while holding two books in her right, one closed (esotericism) and the other open (exotericism). Between her knees and resting on her chest stands the nine-step ladder - *scala philosophorum* - a hieroglyphic symbol of the patience that her faithful must have in the course of the nine successive operations of the hermetic work (plate H). "Patience is the ladder of the Philosophers," Valois (I) tells us, "and humility is the gate to their garden; for all those who persevere without pride and without envy, God will have mercy on them."

Such is the title of the philosophical chapter of this *mutus Liber* that is the Gothic temple; the frontispiece of this occult Bible with its massive stone pages; the imprint, the seal of the Great Christian Work. It could not be better situated than at the very threshold of the main entrance.

Thus, the cathedral is presented to us as founded on alchemical science, which investigates the transformations of the original substance, of elemental *Matter* (Latin *materea, root mater, mother*). For the Virgin Mother, stripped of her symbolic veil, is nothing more than the personification of the primitive substance used by the creative Principle of

all that exists. Such is the meaning, moreover most luminous, of the singular epistle read at the Mass of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, the text of which we transcribe:

The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his works, *before his deeds of old*. I was appointed from eternity, *before the world began*. When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no depths. The fountains of the waters had not yet sprung forth; the heavy mass of the mountains had not yet been settled; before there were hills, I was already born. He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the axes of the globe of the earth. When He spread out the heavens, I was with Him; when He enclosed the abyss with a fixed law and a barrier; when He consolidated the firmament above and balanced the springs of water; when He circumscribed the sea within its boundaries and set a law for its waves so that they would not transgress their limits; when He laid the foundations of the earth, *I was with Him*, arranging everything.

This clearly refers to the *very essence of things*. And, indeed, the Litany teaches us that the Virgin is the Vessel that contains the Spirit of things. - *Vas spirituale*.

(1) *Works by Nicolas Grosparny and Nicolas Valois*. Maus. bibliot. de l'Arsenal, n.- 2.516 (166 S.A.F.), p. 176

"On a table, at the height of the Magi's chests," Etteilla tells us (2), "there was, on one side, a book or a series of sheets or plates of gold (the book of Thoth), and on the other, a glass filled with a celestial-astral liquor, composed of one third wild honey, one part water from the earth and one part water from the sky... The secret, the mystery, was therefore in the glass."

This unique Virgin - *Virgo singularis*, as the Church expressly calls her - is also glorified by epithets that quite clearly denote her positive origin. Is she not also called the palm tree of Patience (*Palma patientiae*), Lily among thorns (3) (*Lirium inter spina*), symbolic Mite of Samson, Fleece of Gideon, Mystical Rose, Gate of Heaven, House of Gold, etc.? The same texts also call Mary the Seat of Wisdom, which is equivalent to the Theme of Hermetic Science, of universal knowledge. In the symbolism of planetary metals, she is the Moon, which receives the rays of the sun and secretly preserves them in her bosom. She is the dispenser of the passive substance, which is animated by the solar spirit. Mary, Virgin and Mother, therefore represents form; Elijah, the sun, God the Father, is the emblem of the vital spirit. From the union of these two principles comes living matter, subject to the vicissitudes of the laws of mutation and continuity.

And then *Jesus* emerges, the incarnate spirit, the fire that takes shape in things as we know them here below:

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US

On the other hand, the Bible tells us that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was from the branch of *Jesse*. Now, the Hebrew word *Jesse* means *fire, sun*, divinity. Being from the branch of

(2) Etteilla, *Le Denier du Pauvre*, in *Sept nuances de l'Oeuvre philosophique*, s. 1. n. E (1786), p. 57.

(3) This is the title of some famous alchemical manuscripts by Agricola and Ticinensis. See the libraries of Rennes (159), Bordeaux (533), Lyon (154) and Cambrai (919).

Jesus is therefore equivalent to being of the race of the sun, of fire. As matter has its origin in solar *fire*, as we have just seen, the very name of *Jesus* is presented to us in its original and divine splendour: *fire, sun, God*.

Finally, in the *Ave Regina*, the Virgin is appropriately called *Root* (*Salve, radix*), to indicate that she is the beginning and origin of Everything. "Hail, root through which Light has shone upon the world."

Such are the reflections suggested by the expressive bas-relief that welcomes visitors under the portico of the basilica. Hermetic philosophy, the ancient Spagyria, welcomes you to the Gothic church, the alchemical temple par excellence. For the entire cathedral is nothing more than a silent but graphic glorification of the

ancient science of Hermes, of which, moreover, it has managed to preserve one of the ancient craftsmen. Notre-Dame de Paris keeps, in fact, its alchemist.

If, driven by curiosity or to distract yourselves on a summer's day, you climb the spiral staircase that leads to the upper parts of the building, slowly follow the path, laid out like a sewer, which opens at the top of the second gallery. As you approach the central axis of the majestic building, you will notice, in the inner corner of the north tower, amid a procession of chimeras, the impressive relief of a large stone old man. It is he, the alchemist of Notre Dame (plate III).

(4) The Phrygian cap, worn by the *sans-culottes* and constituting a kind of protective talisman amid the revolutionary carnage, was a distinctive sign of the Initiates. The wise Pierre Dujols, in an analysis of Lombard's (of Langres) work

Lombard (de Langres) entitled *Histoire des Jacobins, depuis 1789 jusqu'à ce jour, ou Etat de l'Europe en novembre 1820* (Paris, 1820), writes that, upon admitting the Epopte (into the *Mysteries of Eleusis*), the recipient was asked *if he felt he had the strength, will and self-sacrifice necessary to participate in the GREAT WORK*. Then, a red cap was placed on his head and the following formula was pronounced: "Cover yourself with this cap, which is worth more than a royal crown." Little did they suspect that this type of hat, called a liberia in the *Mithraic cults*, and once worn by freed slaves, would become a Masonic symbol and the supreme sign of Initiation. It is therefore no surprise to see it featured on our coins and public monuments.

Wearing the Phrygian cap, attribute of the Adept (4), carelessly placed over his long, thick curly hair, the sage, wrapped in his light laboratory coat, leans with one hand on the balustrade, while stroking his thick, silky beard *with* the other. He is not meditating; he is observing. His eyes are fixed, and there is a strange sharpness in his gaze. Everything about the Philosopher's attitude reveals intense emotion. The curvature of his shoulders, the forward projection of his head and chest, effectively express the greatest surprise. His petrified hand comes to life. Is it an illusion? One would swear to see it tremble...

What a splendid figure that of the old master who scrutinises, questions, anxious and attentive, the evolution of mineral life, and finally contemplates, dazzled, the miracle that only his faith had allowed him to glimpse!

And how poor are the modern statues of wise masters—whether cast in bronze or carved in marble—compared to this venerable image, so formidably realistic in its simplicity!

II

The stylobate of the façade, which develops and extends under the three arches, is entirely devoted to our science; and this set of images, as curious as they are instructive, is a real gift for the decipherer of hermetic enigmas.

There we will find the lapidary name of *the theme of the Sages*; there we will witness the preparation of the secret solvent; there, finally, we will follow step by step the work of the Elixir, from its first calcination to its final firing.

However, in order to follow a certain method in this study, we will always observe the order of succession of the figures, moving from the outside towards the door leaves, just as a worshipper would do when entering the sanctuary.

On the sides of the buttresses that border the great portico, at eye level, we find two small bas-reliefs, each set in an ogee moulding. The one on the left-hand pillar shows the alchemist discovering *the mysterious Fountain* that Trevisano describes in the final *parable* of his book on the *natural philosophy of metals (1)*.

The artist has walked a long time; he has strayed down false paths and dubious roads; but at last he is filled with

(1) See J. Mangin de Richebourg, *Bibliothèque des Philosophes Chiiniques*, Paris, 1741, t. 11, treatise VII.

joy! The stream of *living water* flows at his feet; it gushes forth from *the hollow oak tree* (2). Our Adept has hit the mark. And so, disregarding the bow and arrows with which, like Cadmus, he pierced the dragon, he watches the clear stream flow, its dissolving power and volatile essence attested to by a bird perched in the tree.

But what is this hidden *Source*? What is the nature of this powerful solvent capable of penetrating all metals—gold, in particular—and of accomplishing, with the help of the dissolved body, the great work in its entirety? These are such profound enigmas that they have discouraged a considerable number of researchers; all, or almost all, have come up against this impenetrable wall, erected by the Philosophers to serve as an enclosure for their citadel.

Mythology calls it *Libethra* (3), and tells us that it was a source of *Magnesia*, near which there was another source called *the Rock*. *Both sprang from a large rock* shaped like a woman's breast, so that the water seemed to *flow like milk from two breasts*. Now, we know that ancient authors call the matter of the Work *our Magnesia* and that the liquor extracted from this magnesia is called *the Milk of the Virgin*. This is already a clue. As for the allegory of the mixture or combination of this primitive water that sprang from *the Chaos* of the Wise with a second water of a different nature (although of the same kind), it is quite clear and sufficiently expressive. From this combination results a third *water that does not wet the hands* and which the Philosophers have called either *Mercury* or *Sulphur*, depending on its *quality* or physical appearance.

In the treatise on *Azoth* (4), attributed to the famous monk of Erfurth, Basilio Valentin, but which seems more likely to be the work of Senior Zadith, a figure can be seen engraved in wood.

(2) "Beware of this oak tree," Flamel simply states in the *Livre des Figures hiéroglyphiques*.

(3) See Noel, *Dictionnaire de la Fable*, Paris, Le Normant, 1801.

(4) *Azoth or Moyen de faire l'Or caché des Philosophes*, by Brother Basile Valentin. Paris, Pierre Moët, 1659, p. 51.

which depicts a crowned nymph or mermaid swimming in the sea and spraying two jets of milk from her plump breasts that mix with the water.

Arab authors give this fountain the name *Holmal* and also teach us that its waters gave immortality to the prophet Elijah (HĀtog, sun). They locate the famous fountain in Modhallam, a term whose root means *dark and gloomy sea*, clearly pointing to the elemental confusion that the Sages attribute to their *Chaos* or prime matter.

A painting of the fable we have just mentioned was found in the small church of Brixen (Tyrol). This curious painting, described by Misson and cited by Witkowski (5), seems to be the religious version of the same chemical theme. "Jesus pours the blood from his side, opened by Longinus' spear, into a large cup; the Virgin presses her breasts, and the milk that flows from them falls into the same vessel. The surplus falls into a second cup and is lost in the depths of an abyss of flames, where the souls of Purgatory, of both sexes, with bare breasts, rush to receive this precious liquid that comforts and refreshes them."

At the foot of this ancient painting, there is an inscription in Latin:

*Dum fluit e Christi benedicto vulnere sanguis,
Et dum Virgineum lac pia Virgo premit,*

*Lac fuit et sanguis, sanguly conjungitur et lac,
Et sit Fons Vitae, Fons et Otigo boni* (6).

Among the descriptions accompanying the *Symbolic Figures of Abraham the Jew*, a book that, according to some, belonged to Nicolas Flamel (7) and was displayed by this Adept in his study, we will cite two that are related to

(5) G. J. Witkowski, *L'atl profane á l'Eglise*, Foreign, p. 63.

(6) "While blood flows from Christ's blessed wound and the Virgin Mary presses her breast, milk and blood flow and mix, becoming the Source of Life and the Spring of Goodness."

Virgin presses her virginal breast, milk and blood flow and mix, becoming the Source of Life and the Spring of Goodness."

(7) *Recueil de Sept Figures peintes*. Bibl. de l'Arsenal, number 3,047 (153 S.A.F.).

the mysterious Source and its components. Here are the original texts of these two explanatory notes:

Third figure. -It depicts a garden enclosed by hedges, where there are several paintings. In the centre, there is a *hollow oak tree*, at the foot of which, on one side, there is a rose bush with golden leaves and *white and red roses*, which surrounds the oak tree up to the top, near its branches. And *at the foot of the hollow oak tree, there is a clear, silver-like fountain* that disappears into the ground; and among several people who are searching for it, there are four blind men who are digging up the earth and four others who are searching for it without digging, the fountain being *right in front of them*, and they cannot find it, except for one who weighs it in his hand."

This last character is the subject of the sculpted motif of Notre-Dame de Paris. The preparation of the solvent in question is described in the explanation accompanying the following image:

"Fourth figure. -Represents a field in which there is a *crowned king, dressed in red* in the Jewish style, holding an unsheathed sword; two soldiers killing the children of *two mothers*, who are sitting on the ground, weeping for their children; and two other soldiers throwing the blood into a large vat filled with the blood, where *the sun and moon*, descending from the sky or the clouds, *come to bathe*. There are six soldiers armed in white armour, and the king is the seventh, and *seven innocent* dead, and *two mothers, one dressed in blue* who is crying, wiping her face with a handkerchief, and the other, who is also crying, *dressed in red*.

Let us also quote a figure from the book of Trismosin (8), which is very similar to Abraham's third. In it we see an oak tree at the foot of which, encircled by a golden crown, a hidden stream flows into the field. Among the leaves of the tree, white birds flutter about, while a raven, which seems to be asleep, is about to be caught by a poorly dressed man perched on a ladder. In the foreground of this rustic scene, two so-

(8) See Trismosin, *La Toyson d'Or*. Paris, Ch. Sevestre, 1612, page 52.

scholars, dressed in sumptuous robes, discuss and reason about this scientific point, without noticing the oak tree behind them, nor seeing the Fountain that flows at their feet...

Finally, let us say that the esoteric tradition of the *Fountain of Life* or *Fountain of Youth* is embodied in the *sacred wells* that most Gothic churches *possessed* in the Middle Ages. The water extracted from these wells was often believed to have healing properties and was used in the treatment of various diseases. Abbon, in his poem about the siege of Paris by the Normans, refers to several events that attest to the marvellous properties of the water from the well of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, which was located at the back of the sanctuary of the famous abbey. Similarly, the water from the well of Saint-Marcel in Paris, dug in the church near the tomb of the venerable bishop, was, according to Grégoire de Tours, an effective remedy for various ailments. And even today, there is a miraculous well inside the ogival basilica of Notre-Dame de Lépine (Marne), called the Well of the Holy Virgin, and in the middle of the choir of Notre-Dame de Limoux (Aude), there is a similar well whose water is said to cure all illnesses, and on which the following inscription can be seen:

Omnis qui bibit hanc aquam, si fidem addit, salvus erit.

Those who drink this water, if they also have faith, will enjoy good health.

We will soon have occasion to refer again to this *Pontic water*, to which the Philosophers gave a multitude of epithets more or less suggestive.

Opposite the sculpted motif expressing the nature of the secret agent, we will witness, on the opposite buttress, the cooking of *the philosophical compound*. Here, the artist watches over the product of his labour. Covered in his armour, his legs protected by greaves, and his shield in hand, our knight stands on the terrace of a fortress, judging by the battlements that surround him. In a defensive move, he points his lance at an indistinct shape (a ray of light? a beam of flames?), which is unfortunately impossible to identify, so mutilated is the relief. Behind the combatant, a small, strange building consisting of a crenellated base supported by four pillars is topped by a segmented dome with a spherical keystone. Under the lower arch, an aculeiform and inflamed mass gives us the explanation of its purpose. This curious pavilion or miniature fortress is the instrument of the Great Work, the *Athanor*, the hidden stove of two flames - potential

and virtual—that all disciples know and that has been popularised by numerous descriptions and engravings (plate V).

Immediately above these figures are depicted two themes that seem to complement them. However, as esotericism is hidden here under sacred appearances and biblical scenes, we will refrain from discussing them, so as not to be accused of arbitrary interpretation. There were great sages among the ancient masters who did not fear to explain the parables of Holy Scripture, so susceptible to diverse interpretations, in alchemical terms. Hermetic philosophy often appeals to the testimony of Genesis to serve as an analogy for the first stage of the Work; many allegories from the Old and New Testaments take on unexpected significance when viewed in the context of alchemy. Such precedents should encourage us and, at the same time, serve as an excuse; we prefer, however, to limit ourselves to motifs whose profane character is indisputable, leaving benevolent researchers the freedom to exercise their sagacity with the rest.

III

The hermetic themes of the stylobate are developed in two superimposed rows, to the right and left of the portico. The lower row comprises twelve medallions, and the upper row, twelve figures. The latter represent characters seated on plinths adorned with grooves, with profiles that are sometimes concave, sometimes angular, and placed in the intercolumniations of trefoil arches. All of them display discs with various emblems, but always referring to alchemical work.

Starting on the left of the upper row, the first bas-relief shows us the image of *the raven*, symbol of *the colour black*. The woman holding it on her knees symbolises *Putrefaction* (plate VI).

Let us pause for a moment on the hieroglyph of *the Raven*, as it conceals an important point of our science. It expresses, in fact, in the cooking of *the Rebis* philosophare, *the colour black*, the first appearance of decomposition following the perfect mixture of the materials of *the Egg*. According to the Philosophers, *it is* the sure sign of future success, the clear sign of the exact preparation of the compound. The *raven* is, in a way, the canonical seal of the Work, just as the star is the signature of the initial theme.

But this blackness that the artist awaits, which he eagerly anticipates and whose appearance fulfils his desires and fills him with joy, does not manifest itself only during the course of cooking. The black bird appears on several occasions, and this frequency allows authors to sow confusion in the order of operations.

According to Le Breton (1), *'there are four putrefactions* in the philosophical Work. The first, in the first separation; the second, in the first conjunction; the third, in the second conjunction, which occurs between heavy water and its salt; finally, the fourth, in the fixation of sulphur. In each of these putrefactions, *blackness* occurs'.

It was therefore easy for our old masters to cover the arcane with a thick veil, mixing the specific qualities of the various substances in the course of the four operations that produce the colour black. In this way, it is very laborious to separate them and clearly distinguish what corresponds to each of them.

Here are some quotations that may enlighten the researcher and enable him to find his way through this dark labyrinth: 'In the second operation,' writes the Unknown Knight (2), 'the prudent artist fixes the general soul of the world in common gold and purifies the terrestrial and immobile soul. In the aforementioned operation, the putrefaction, which they call *the Head of the Raven*, is very long. This is followed by a third multiplication by adding the philosophical matter or the general soul of the world.'

This clearly indicates two successive operations, the first of which ends, and the second begins after the black colouring appears, which is different from the firing.

A valuable anonymous manuscript from the 18th century (3) also tells us about this first putrefaction, which should not be confused with the others:

"If the matter is not corrupted and mortified," says this work, "you will not be able to extract our elements and our principles; and, to help you in this difficulty, I will give you signs

(1) Le Breton, *Clefs de la Philosophie Spagyrique*. Paris, Jombert, 1722, page 282.

(2) *La Nature à découvert*, by the Chevalier Inconnu, Aix, 1669.

(3) *La Clef du Cabinet hermétique*. 18th century manuscript, Anonymous, s. l. n. f.

to know it. Some philosophers have also observed this. Morien says: it is necessary to notice *a certain acidity* and that it has *a certain smell of the grave*. Philaléthe says that it must look like *fish eyes*, that is, small bubbles on the surface, and give the impression that it produces foam; for this is

a sign that the matter is fermenting and bubbling. This fermentation is very long, and one must be very patient, since it is carried out by our *secret fire*, which is the only agent capable of opening, sublimating and rotting.

But among all these descriptions, the most numerous and most consulted are those referring to *the raven* (or black colour

black), since they encompass all the characteristics of the other operations.

Bernardo Trevisano (4) expresses it in these terms:

"Note, then, that when our compound begins to be imbued with our permanent water, then the entire compound becomes a kind of molten pitch, and is blackened like charcoal. And when it reaches this point, our compound is called: *black pitch, burnt salt, molten lead, impure brass, magnesia, and John's blackbird*. For then a *black cloud* is seen, floating in the middle region of the flask—and at the bottom of it remains the molten matter in the form of pitch, and it remains completely dissolved. Of this cloud, Jaques of the borough of St. Saturnin speaks, saying: O blessed cloud that flies in our flask! There is the eclipse of the sun, of which Raimundo speaks (5). And when this mass is thus blackened, it is said to be dead and deprived of its form... Then, the moisture manifests itself in the colour of black and foul-smelling quicksilver, which was previously dry, white, fragrant, fiery, purified of sulphur by the first operation, and now to be purified by this second operation. And because of this, this body is deprived of its soul, which it has lost, and of its

(4) Bernardo Trevisano, *La Parole délaissée*. Paris, Jean Sara, 1618, page 39.

(5) With this single name, the author refers to *Raimundo Luijo (Doctor Illuminatus)*.

splendour and marvellous luminosity it had previously, and is now black and ugly... This black or blackened mass is the *key* (6), principle and sign of the perfect invention of the manner of working of the second regime of our precious stone. Therefore, says Hermes, if you see blackness, think that you have gone the right way and followed the right path.

Batsdorff, the presumed author of a classic work (7) that others attribute to Gaston de Claves, teaches that putrefaction occurs when blackness appears, and that this is the sign of regular work in accordance with nature. He adds: "The Philosophers have given it various names and have called it *Occident, Darkness, Eclipse, Leprosy, Raven's Head, Death, Mortification of Mercury*... It follows, then, that this putrefaction separates the pure from the impure.

Now, the signs of good and true putrefaction are a very black or very deep *blackness*, a foul, bad and infectious *odour*, called by philosophers *toxicum et venenum*, an odour that *is not perceptible* to the sense of smell, but only to the understanding."

Let us end the quotations here, which we could multiply without much benefit to the scholar, and return to the
the
of Notre Dame.

The second bas-relief shows us the effigy of the philosophical Mercury: a serpent coiled around a golden rod. Abraham the Jew, also known by the name of Eleazar, used it in the book that came into Flamel's hands, which is not surprising, since we find this symbol throughout the medieval period (plate VII).

The serpent indicates the incisive and dissolving nature of Mercury, which eagerly absorbs metallic sulphur and retains it so strongly that cohesion can no longer be overcome. It is the 'poisonous worm that infects everything with its venom', as described in the *Ancient War of the Knights* (8).

This reptile is the type of *Mercury in its state*

(6) The name "*key*" is given to any radical (i.e., *irreducible*) alchemical dissolution, and sometimes this term is extended to the *monsters or solvents* capable of effecting it.

(7) *Le Filet d'Ariane*. Paris, d'Houry, 1695, p. 99.

first, and the golden rod, the corporeal sulphur that is added to it. The dissolution of sulphur or, in other words, its absorption by mercury, has given rise to very diverse emblems; but the resulting body, homogeneous and perfectly prepared, retains the name of *philosophical mercury* and the image of the caduceus.

It is the matter or the

First-order *compound*, the *sulphated egg*, which only requires gradual cooking to transform first into *red sulphur*, then into *elixir*, and finally, in the third period, into *universal medicine*. "In our Work," say the philosophers, "Mercury is sufficient."

Next comes a woman with long hair like flames. She personifies *Calcination* and clutches to her breast the disc of the *salamander*, "which lives in fire and feeds on fire" (Iâm. VIII). This

fabulous lizard designates nothing other than the *central salt*, incombustible and fixed, which retains its nature even in the ashes of calcined metals, and which the ancients called *metallic seed*. In the violence of the fiery action, the combustible portions of bodies are destroyed; only the pure, unalterable parts resist, and, although very fixed, they can be extracted by leaching.

Such, at least, is the *spagyric* expression of calcination, a similarity that authors use to illustrate the general idea that one must have of hermetic work.

However, our masters in the Art take great care to draw the reader's attention to the fundamental difference between ordinary calcination, as carried out in chemical laboratories, and that practised by the Initiate in the philosopher's cabinet. The latter is not carried out by means of ordinary fire, it does not require the aid of a reverberatory furnace at all, but it does require the help of an *agent*.

(8) With the addition of a commentary by Limojon de Saint-Didier, in *The Hermetic Triumph* or the *Victorious Philosopher's Stone*. Amsterdam, Weitsten, 1699, and Desbordes, 1710. This work has been republished by *Atlantis*, including the frontispiece and its explanation, which are often missing in older copies.

hidden, of a *secret fire*, which, to give an idea of its form, resembles water more than flame. This *fire*, or this *burning water*, is the vital spark communicated by the Creator to inert matter; it is the *spirit* enclosed in things, the *fiery*, imperishable *ray*, enclosed in the depths of dark, formless and frigid substance. Here we touch upon the highest secret of the Work; and we would be pleased to cut this Gordian knot in favour of the aspirants to our Science - remembering, alas, that we ourselves were detained by this same difficulty for more than twenty years - if we were permitted to profane a mystery whose revelation depends upon *the Father of Lights*. However much it pains us, we can only point out the pitfall and advise, along with the most eminent philosophers, a careful reading of Artepheus (9), Pontano (10) and the little work entitled *Epístola de Igne Philosophorum* (11). In them you will find valuable indications about the nature and characteristics of *this watery fire* or *igneous water*, teachings that can be supplemented with the following two texts.

The anonymous author of the *precepts of Father Abraham* it says: "This *primitive* and celestial *water* must be extracted from the body in which it is found, and which is expressed with seven letters according to us, signifying the first seed of all beings, and not specified or determined in the house of Aries to beget its son. It is the water to which the Philosophers have given so many names, and it is the universal solvent, the life and health of all things. The Philosophers say that the sun and moon bathe in this water, and that they dissolve by themselves into water, their first origin. Because of this dissolution, it is said that they die, but their spirits are carried over the waters of this sea where they were buried... No matter how much they say, my son, that there are other ways to dissolve these bodies into their raw material, stick to what I tell you, because I have known it from experience and according to what our ancestors passed down to us.

(9) *Le Secret Livre d'artepheus*, in *Trois Traitez de la Philosophie naturelle*. Paris, Marette, 1612.

(10) Pontano, *De Lapide Philosophico*, Francofurti, 1614.

(11) Manuscript from the National Library, 19,969.

Limojon de Saint-Didier also writes: "... *The secret fire* of the Wise Men is a fire that the artist prepares according to the Art, or at least something that can be prepared by those who have a perfect knowledge of chemistry. This fire is not actually hot, but rather a *fiery spirit* introduced into a subject of the same nature as the Stone; and, when moderately excited by external fire, it *calcines*, dissolves, sublimates, and *resolves it into dry water*, just as the Cosmopolitan says.

Moreover, we will soon discover other related figures, either related to the manufacture or to the qualities of *this secret fire enclosed in water*, which constitutes the universal solvent. Now, the material used to prepare it is precisely the subject of the fourth motif: a man shows the image of *the Lamb* and holds, with his right hand, an object that is unfortunately impossible to determine at present (Iâm. IX). Is it a mineral, a fragment of an attribute, a tool, or even a piece of cloth? We do not know. Time and vandalism have taken their toll. However, the *Lamb* remains, and the man, a hieroglyph of the male metallic principle, shows us his figure. This helps us to understand Pernety's words: "The Adepts say that they extract their *steel* from the belly of *Aries*, and they also call *this steel their magnet*."

The Evolution continues, shown to us by the tripartite oriflamme - a triplicity corresponding to the Colours of the Work - which is described in all classical works (plate X).

These three colours follow an invariable order, ranging from *black to red* via *white*. However, as Nature, according to the old adage *-Natura non facit saltus-*, never acts brutally, there are many other intermediate colours that appear between the three main ones. The artist pays little attention to them because they are superficial and fleeting. They only bear witness to the continuity and progression of internal mutations. As for the essential colours, they last longer than these transitory shades and profoundly affect the matter itself, signalling a change of state in its chemical composition. They are not fleeting tones, more or less bright, playing on the surface of the bath, but placements *in the mass* that manifest themselves externally and reabsorb all the others. We believe it was necessary to clarify this important point.

These coloured phases, specific to firing in the practice of the Great Work, have always served as symbolic prototypes; each of them is attributed a precise and often quite widespread meaning in **order** to veiledly express certain concrete truths. This is why there has always been a *language of colours*, closely linked to religion, according to Portal (12), which reappears during the Middle Ages in the stained glass windows of Gothic cathedrals.

The colour black was attributed to Satumo, which became, in spagyric medicine, a hieroglyph for *lead*; in astrology, a malefic planet; in Hermeticism, the *black dragon* or *Philosopher's Lead*; in magic, the *black hen*; and so on. In the temples of Egypt, when the recipient was about to undergo the trials of initiation, a priest would approach him and whisper this mysterious phrase in his ear:

"Remember that Osiris is a *black god!*" It is the symbolic colour of Darkness and the *Cimmerian Shadows*, that of Satan, to whom *black roses* were offered, and also that of primitive *Chaos*, where the seeds of all things are mixed and confused; it is the *sabre* of heraldic science and the emblem of the *earth, night* and *death*.

Just as, in *Genesis*, day follows night, so light follows darkness. Light is symbolised by the colour *white*. Upon reaching this degree, the Sages assure us that its matter has been stripped of all impurity and has been perfectly cleansed and thoroughly purified. It then appears in the form of solid granules of shining corpuscles, with diamond-like reflections and a resplendent whiteness. White has also been applied to purity, simplicity and innocence. White is the colour of the Initiates, because the man who abandons darkness to follow the light passes from the profane state to that of *Initiate, to that of the pure*. He is spiritually renewed.

(12) Frédéric Portal, *Des Couleurs Symboliques*, Paris, Treuttel and Würtz, 1957, page 2.

"The term White," says Pierre Dujols, "was chosen for very profound philosophical reasons. The colour white, according to attested to by most languages, has always designated *nobility, candour, purity*. In Gesenius' famous *Hebrew and Chaldean Dictionary-Manual*, *hur, heur* means to be white, *hurim, heurim* designates the nobles, the white, the pure. This transcription from Hebrew, which varies slightly (*hur, heur, hurim, heurim*), leads us to the word *heureux* (happy). The *bienheureux* (blessed ones), those who have been regenerated and washed by the blood of the Lamb, are always depicted wearing white robes. Everyone knows that *blessed is* also equivalent or synonymous with *Initiate, noble, pure*. Now, the *Initiates dressed in white*. The nobles dressed in the same way. In Egypt, the Manes also dressed in white. Path, the *Regenerator*, wore a tight-fitting white garment to indicate the rebirth of the *Pure* or the *White*. The *Cathars*, a sect to which the *Whites* of Florence belonged, were the *Pure Ones* (from the Greek *Ka0apog*). In Latin, German and English, the words *Weiss* and *White* mean *white, happy, spiritual and wise*. In Hebrew, on the other hand, *schher* characterises a transitional black colour; that is, the *profane seeking initiation*. The black Osiris, who appears at the beginning of the funeral ritual, represents, says Portal, that state of the soul that passes from *night to day, from death to life*.

As for *red*, the symbol of fire, it signifies exaltation, the predominance of spirit over matter, sovereignty, the power and apostolate. Obtained in the form of crystal or red powder, *volatile* and fusible, the philosopher's stone becomes penetrating and suitable for *healing lepers*, that is, for transmuting base metals into gold, which their oxidisability renders inferior, imperfect, 'sick or infirm'.

Paracelsus, in the *Book of Images*, speaks in these terms of the successive stages of the Work:

"Although there are some elemental colours - for the colour blue corresponds particularly to earth, green to water, yellow to air, and red to fire - nevertheless, the colours white and black refer directly to the art of alchemy, in which we thus find the four primitive colours, namely *black, white, yellow, and*

Red. Now, *black is the root and origin of the other colours*, for all black matter can be reverberated for as long as necessary, so that the other colours will appear successively, each in its own time. White follows black, yellow follows white, and red follows yellow. Now, all matter that reaches the fourth colour through reverberation is the *dye* of things of its kind, that is, of its nature.

To give an idea of the scope of the symbolism of colours - and in particular of the three major colours of the Work - let us note that the *Virgin* is always represented dressed in blue (equivalent to *black*, as we shall see below); *God in white*, and *Christ in red*. Here we find the national colours of the French flag, which, incidentally, was composed by the Freemason Louis David. For him, *dark blue* or *black* represents the bourgeoisie; white is reserved for the people, the *pierrots* or peasants, and red for the *bailiwick* or royalty. In Chaldea, the ziggurats, generally three-storey towers, to which the famous *Tower of Babel* belonged, were painted in three colours: *black, white and purple red*.

So far, we have discussed colours in the manner of theorists, as the Masters before us did, in order to adhere to philosophical doctrine and traditional expression. Perhaps it would be advisable from now on to write, for the sake of the Sons of Science, in a tone that is more practical than speculative, and thus discover what differentiates simile from reality.

Few philosophers have dared to venture into this slippery terrain. Etteilla (13), when speaking to us about a hermetic painting (14) that he must have had in his possession, conveyed to us some inscriptions that appeared at the bottom of it; among these, we read, not without surprise, this advice worthy of being *followed*: *Do not trust colour too much*.

What does this mean? Did the old authors deliberately deceive us?

(13) See *Denier du Pauvre* or *la perfection des métaux*, Paris (circa 1785), p. 58.

(14) This painting is believed to have been painted in the mid-17th century.

to his readers? And with what instructions should the disciples of Hermes replace the rebellious colours in order to recognise and follow the right path?

Search, brothers, without losing heart, for you must make an enormous effort here, as in other obscure points. No doubt you have read in various passages of your works that philosophers only speak clearly when they want to keep the uninitiated away from their *Round Table*. The descriptions they give of their regimes, to which they attribute emblematic colours, are perfectly clear. You must therefore conclude that these well-described observations are false and chimerical. Your books are closed, like the Apocalypse, with cabalistic seals. You will have to break these, one by one. We recognise that the task is difficult, but he who conquers without danger triumphs without glory.

Learn, then, not what distinguishes one colour from another, but rather how one regime differs from the next. But first of all, what is a regime? Simply put, it is the way of *nurturing*, maintaining and increasing the life that your stone received at the moment of its birth. It is, therefore, a *modus operandi* that does not necessarily translate into a succession of different colours. "He who comes to know the *Regime*," writes Philaléthe, "will be honoured by princes and the great ones of the earth." And the same author adds: "We hide nothing from you, except the *Regime*. Thus, in order not to bring upon our heads the curse of the philosophers by revealing what they believed should remain in the shadows, we will limit ourselves to pointing out that the *Regime of the Stone*, that is, its cooking, *contains several others*, or, in other words, several repetitions of the same way of operating. Reflect, appeal to analogy and, above all, never stray from natural simplicity. Think that you have to eat every day in order to *maintain your vitality*. That rest is indispensable because it promotes, on the one hand, digestion and assimilation of food and, on the other, the renewal of cells worn out by daily work. And must you not also expel, very frequently, certain heterogeneous products, waste or non-assimilable residues?"

In the same way, your stone needs food to increase its strength, and this food must be graded, that is, changed at a certain point. First of all, give it milk; the more substantial meat-based diet will come later. And do not forget to remove the excrement after each digestion, as your stone could become infected... Follow, then, the order of Nature and obey it as faithfully as possible. And you will understand how to cook properly once you have acquired a perfect knowledge of the Diet. You will then better understand the apostrophe that Tollius (15) addresses to alchemists who are slaves to the letter:

"Go, depart, you who seek with extreme diligence your various colours in glass bottles.

You, who tire my ears with your black *crow*, are as mad as that man of antiquity who was in the habit of applauding in the theatre, even when he was alone there, because he always imagined he was watching some new spectacle. You do the same when, shedding tears of joy, you imagine that you see in your vials the white *dove*, the yellow *eagle* and the red *pheasant*. Go, I say

and get away from me, if you seek the philosopher's stone in a fixed thing; for it will not penetrate metallic bodies any more than the human body could penetrate the most solid walls...
solid walls...

"This is what I had to say to you about colours, so that in the future you may cease to do useless work; to which I will add a few words with reference to smell.

"The Earth is black, water is white; the air becomes more yellowish the closer it gets to the Sun; the ether is completely red. Death, too, is said to be black; life is full of light; the purer the light, the closer it is to angelic nature, and angels are pure spirits of fire. Now, could the smell of

(15) J. Tollius, *Le Chemin du Ciel Chymique*. Trans. from *Manductio Coelum Chemicum*. Amstelaedami, Janss. Waesbergios, 1688.

a dead person or a corpse not unpleasant and repulsive to the sense of smell? In the same way, a foul odour denotes, to philosophers, fixation; on the contrary, a pleasant odour indicates volatility, because it approaches life and warmth.

Returning to the base of Notre Dame, we find, in sixth place, *Philosophy*, whose disc has a cross engraved on it. Here we have the expression of the fourfold nature of the elements and the manifestation of the two metallic principles, *sun and moon*—the latter crushed— or sulphur and mercury, relatives of the stone, according to Hermes (plate XI).

IV

The motifs decorating the right-hand side are more difficult to interpret; blackened and corroded, they owe their deterioration mainly to the orientation of this part of the portico. Battered by the westerly winds, seven centuries of gusts have worn them down to the point of reducing some of them to blunt and vague silhouettes.

In the seventh bas-relief in this series – the first on the right – we see the longitudinal section of the athanor and the internal apparatus intended to hold the philosopher's egg; the figure has a stone in his right hand (Plate XII).

In the next circle we see the image of a griffin. The mythological monster, which has the head and chest of an eagle and

The lion takes the rest of the body, introducing the researcher to the opposing qualities that must necessarily be grouped together in philosophical matter (Plate XIII). In this image we find the hieroglyphic of the *first conjunction*, which occurs only gradually, as the painful and tedious work that philosophers called their *eagles* unfolds. The series of operations that together lead to the intimate union of sulphur and mercury is also called *sublimation*. Thanks to the repetition of the *eagles* or *philosophical sublimations*, the exalted mercury is stripped of its coarse and earthly parts, of its superfluous moisture, and takes possession of a portion of the fixed body, which it dissolves, absorbs and assimilates. *To fly the eagle* means, according to the Hermetic expression, *to bring the light* out of the tomb and *bring it to the surface*, which is the essence of all *true sublimation*. This is what the fable of Theseus and Ariadne teaches us. In this case, Theseus is OEu-Eζog, the *organised, manifest light* that separates from *Ariadne, the spider* at the centre of her web, the *pebble, the empty shell, the silkworm cocoon, the remains of the butterfly* (Psyche).

"Know, my brother," writes Philaléthe (I), "that the precise preparation of *flying eagles* is the first degree of perfection, and to achieve it requires an industrious and skilled genius... We have sweated and worked hard to achieve it. Therefore, you, who are just beginning, be assured that you will not succeed in the first operation without great effort...

"Understand, then, my brother, what the Wise Men say when they observe that they lead their eagles to devour the lion; and the fewer eagles are used, the harder the combat and the more difficulties are encountered in achieving victory. But to perfect our Work, at least *seven eagles* are needed, and even up to *nine* should be used. And our philosophical Mercury is the *bird of Hermes*, which is also given the name of *Goose* or *Swan*, and sometimes *Pheasant*." It is these *sublimations* that Callimachus describes in the *Hymn to Delos*, when he says, speaking of swans:

eXvX,coaavTo Á¿i rovrçg
E,83oíuaX¿9 7rEp¿ A-qXop...
O-yboov OVX Er aE¿Uav, 0 5'CXOOPEV.

"(The swans) circled Delos *seven times*... and had not yet sung for the eighth time when Apollo was born."

This is a variation on the procession that Joshua led *seven times* around Jericho, whose walls collapsed before the eighth lap (Joshua, c. VI, 16).

(1) Lenglet-Dufresnoy, *History of Hermetic Philosophy. –Entrance to the King's Closed Palace*, vol. 11, p. 35. Paris, Cousteliler, 1742.

In order to highlight the violence of the combat that precedes our conjunction, the sages symbolised the *two natures* with the *eagle and the lion*, equal in strength but of opposite constitution. The lion represents terrestrial and fixed force, while the eagle expresses aerial and volatile force. Facing each other, the two champions attack, repel, and tear each other apart with energy, until finally, after the eagle loses its wings and the lion its mane, both antagonists form a single body, of intermediate quality and homogeneous substance, the *animated Mercury*.

In the now distant time when, studying the sublime Science, we bent over the mystery filled with heavy enigmas, we remember seeing a beautiful building being constructed whose decoration surprised us because it reflected our esoteric concerns. Above the entrance door, two children, a boy and a girl, linked together, separate and lift a veil that covered them. Their busts emerge from a pile of flowers, leaves and fruits. A bas-relief dominates the angular crown; it represents the symbolic combat between the eagle and the lion that we have just mentioned, and it is easy to guess that the architect must have had quite a job placing the troublesome emblem, imposed by an uncompromising and superior will (2)...

(2) This six-storey building, constructed of carved stone, is located in the 17th arrondissement, on the corner of Boulevard Péreire and Rue de Monbel. In Tousson, near Malesherbes (Seine-et-Oise), an old 18th-century mansion with a rather stately appearance bears the following inscription on its façade, engraved in characters of the period, the layout and spelling of which we have respected:

I was built by a
farmer
without interest and with a
jealous gift, I was named
PIEDRA BELLA, 1762.

(Alchemy still snowed the name of *Celestial Agriculture*, and its Adepts that of *Farmers*).

The ninth topic allows us to delve even deeper into the secret of how the *universal solvent* is made. A woman points

in it – allegorically – the materials necessary for the construction of *the hermetic vessel*; she lifts a small wooden plank, somewhat resembling a barrel stave, whose essence is revealed to us by the *oak* branch bearing the coat of arms. Here we find again the *mysterious fountain* carved into the buttress of the portico, but the gesture of our character reveals the spirituality of this substance, this *fire of Nature* without which nothing can grow or vegetate here below (Iám. XIV). It is this spirit, spread across the surface of the globe, that the subtle and ingenious artist must capture as it materialises. We will add, once again, that a particular body is needed to serve as a receptacle, an attractive earth where it can find a principle capable of receiving it and giving it 'corporeality'. "The root of our bodies is in the air," say the Sages, "and their head is on the earth." There is that magnet enclosed in the belly of Aries, which must be taken at the moment of its birth, with as much skill as ability.

"The water we use," writes the anonymous author of *The Key to the Hermetic Cabinet*, "is water that contains all the virtues of heaven and earth; that is why it is the *general solvent of all Nature*—it opens the doors of our hermetic and royal cabinet; our King and Queen are enclosed in it, and it is also their bath... It is the Fountain of Trevisano, where the King strips himself of his purple cloak to

wear black robes... It is true that this water is difficult to obtain, which led Cosmopolitan to say in his Enigma that it was rare on the island... This author points it out to us more specifically with these words: it does not resemble water from the clouds, but it has all the appearance of it. Elsewhere, he refers to it as *steel* and magnet, for it is truly a magnet that attracts all the influences of the sky, the sun, the moon and the stars, communicating them to the earth. He says that this *steel* is found in *Aries*, and that it marks the beginning of spring, when the sun travels through the sign of *the Ram*. Flamel gives us a fairly accurate description in the *Figures of Abraham the Jew*; he describes a *hollow oak tree* (3), from which a spring flows, and with the same water, a gardener waters the plants and flowers in a flowerbed. The *oak tree*, which is hollow, represents the *barrel* made of oak wood, in which the water reserved for watering the plants must be corrupted, and which is much better than raw water... Now, here comes the moment to discover one of the great secrets of this Art, hidden by the Philosophers, and without whose *vessel* you will not be able to carry out this putrefaction and purification of our elements, just as we could not make wine without first boiling it in the barrel. Now, just as the barrel is made of oak wood, so the vessel must be made of old oak wood, rounded on the inside, like a hemisphere, with very thick, square edges; failing that, a small barrel and another similar one to cover it. Almost all philosophers have spoken of this *vessel* as absolutely necessary for this operation. Philatéthe describes it using the fable of the python snake, which Cadmus pierced through and through against an oak tree. There is a figure in the book of the *Twelve Keys* (4) that represents this same operation and the *vessel* in which it is performed, from which a great cloud of smoke emerges, denoting the fermentation and boiling of this water; and this smoke ends in a window through which the sky can be seen, in which the sun and moon appear, indicating the *origin of this water and the virtues* it contains. It is our *mercurial vinegar that descends* from heaven to earth and rises from earth to heaven.

We have provided this text because it may be useful, provided, however, that we know how to read it with prudence and understand it with clarity. Here we must repeat once again the maxim so dear to Adepts: the spirit gives life, but the letter kills.

And now we are faced with a very complex symbol: that of *the Lion*. Complex because, given the current bareness of the stone, we cannot be satisfied with a single explanation. The Sages have added various qualifiers to the lion, already for

(3) See above, p. 113.

(4) See *Douze Clés de Philosophie* by Brother Basile Valentin. Paris, Moët, 1659, key 12. (Reprinted by Les Editions de Minuit, 1956.)

express the aspect of the substances on which they act, or to designate a special and predominant quality. In the emblem of the Griffin (eighth motif), we have seen that the Lion, king of land animals, represented the fixed, basic part of a compound, a fixity which, in contact with adverse volatility, lost the best part of itself, that which characterised its form, that is, in hieroglyphic language, the head. This time we must study the animal alone, and we ignore what colour it was originally coated with. In general, the *Lion* is the *sign of gold*, both alchemical and natural; it therefore expresses the physical and chemical properties of these bodies. But the texts give the same name to the receptive matter of the *universal Spirit, of the secret fire* in the preparation of the solvent. In both cases, it is always an interpretation of power, incorruptibility, and perfection, as is eloquently indicated by the knight with his upright sword and covered in chain mail who presents us with the king of alchemical fauna (plate XV).

The first magnetic agent used to prepare the solvent—which some have called *Alkaest*—is called Green lion, due not so much to its green colouring as to the fact that it has not yet acquired the mineral characteristics that chemically distinguish the adult state from the nascent state. It is a *green and unripe* fruit, compared to the *red and ripe* fruit. It is metallic youth, on which Evolution has not yet acted, but which contains the latent germ of real energy, destined to develop later. It is arsenic and lead in relation to silver and gold. It is the current imperfection from which the greatest future perfection will emerge; the rudiment of our embryo, the embryo of our stone, the stone of our elixir. Some adepts, among them Basilio Valentin, called it *green vitriol*, to express its warm, fiery and saline nature; others called it *the Emerald of the Philosophers, May Dew, Saturnine Grass, Vegetable Stone*, and so on. "Our water takes the names of the leaves of all trees, of the trees themselves and of everything that is green in colour, in order to deceive the foolish," says Master Arnau de Vilanova.

As for the *red Lion*, according to philosophers, it is nothing other than the same matter, or *green Lion*, brought by certain procedures to this special quality that characterises hermetic gold or *red Lion*. This

prompted Basilio Valentin to give us the following advice: "Dissolve and feed the true Lion with the blood of the Green Lion, for the fixed blood of the Red Lion is made from the volatile blood of the Green Lion, because both are of the same nature."

Of these interpretations, which is the true one? This is a question we confess we are unable to resolve. The symbolic lion had undoubtedly been painted or gilded. Any trace of cinnabar, malachite or metal would get us out of trouble. But nothing remains, except for the corroded, greyish limestone worn away by time. The stone lion keeps its secret!

The extraction of red, incombustible sulphur is represented by the figure of a monster that is a mixture of a rooster and a fox. It is the same symbol used by Basilio Valentin in the third of his *Twelve Keys*. "It is this superb mantle with the Salt of the Stars," said the Adept, "that follows this celestial sulphur, carefully guarded for fear that it will wear out, and makes them fly like a bird, as long as necessary, and the rooster will eat the fox, and it will drown and suffocate in the water; then, coming back to life through fire, it will be (so that each one gets its turn) devoured by the fox" (plate XVI).

After the fox-rooster comes the *Bull* (plate XVIII).

Considered as a zodiac sign, it is the second month of preparatory operations in the first work, and the first regime of elemental fire in the second. As a practical figure, and since the bull and the ox are consecrated to the sun, as the cow is to the moon, it represents Sulphur, the masculine principle, given that the sun is metaphorically called by Hermes, Father of the Stone. The bull and the cow, the sun and the moon, sulphur and mercury, are therefore hieroglyphs with identical meanings and designate the contrary primitive natures, *before their conjunction*, a nature that Art extracts from imperfect mixed bodies.

V

Of the twelve medallions that adorn the lower row of the base, ten will draw our attention; there are, in fact,

two that have suffered too much damage for us to be able to reconstruct their meaning. We will therefore, reluctantly, disregard the shapeless remains of the fifth medallion (left side) and the eleventh (right side).

Near the buttress that separates the central portico from the north façade, the first motif presents us with a knight

disarmed, clinging to the mane of a fiery horse (plate XVIII). This allegory refers to the extraction of the fixed, central and pure parts by the volatile or ethereal ones in *the philosophical Dissolution*. It is, properly speaking, the rectification of the spirit obtained and the *cohobation* of this spirit over heavy matter. The steed, symbol of speed and lightness, represents the spiritual substance; the knight indicates the ponderability of the coarse metallic body. With each cohabitation, the horse throws off its rider, the volatile abandons the fixed; but the knight immediately returns to his rights and clings to them until the animal, exhausted, defeated and submissive, agrees to carry his stubborn burden and can no longer shake it off. The absorption of the fixed by the volatile is slow and laborious. To achieve it, one must have great patience and perseverance and often repeat the effusion of water upon earth, of spirit upon body.

And only through this technique—long and tedious, indeed—can the hidden *salt of the Red Lion* be extracted, with the help of *the spirit of the Green Lion*. The steed of Notre Dame is like *the winged Pegasus* of fable (root 7r7l'Y71, source). Like Pegasus, it throws its riders to the ground, whether they be Perseus or Bellerophon. It is Pegasus who carries *Perseus* through the air to the abode of the *Hesperides* and, with a kick, causes the *Hippocrene spring* to gush forth on Mount Helicon, a spring which, according to legend, was discovered by *Cadmus*.

In the second medallion, the Initiator presents us with a *mirror* in one hand, while holding the horn of Amalthea in the other; beside him, we see the *Tree of Life* (*Idm.* XIX). The mirror symbolises the beginning of the work; the Tree of Life indicates its end, and the cornucopia, the result.

Alchemically, the raw material that the artist must choose to begin the Work is called *the Mirror of Art*. 'It is commonly called *the Mirror of Art* by philosophers,' says Moras de Respour (I), 'because it is mainly thanks to it that we have learned the composition of metals in the veins of the earth... It is also said that the mere indication of nature can instruct us.' This is the same as what the Cosmopolitan (2) teaches when, speaking of Sulphur, he tells us: "In its kingdom, there is a *mirror* in which the whole world is seen. Whoever looks into this *mirror* can see and learn the three parts of the Wisdom of the whole world, and in this way will be most wise in these three kingdoms, as were Aristotle, Avicenna, and several others, who, like their predecessors, saw in this *mirror* how the world was created." Basilio

Valentin also says in his *Testamentum*, "The entire body of *Vitriol* must be recognised solely through a *Mirror of philosophical Science*... It is a Mirror in which our Mercury, our Sun and Moon shine and appear, and through which we can show in

- (1) De Respour, *Rares Expériences sur l'Esprit minéral* Paris, Langlois et Barbin, 1668.
(2) *Nouvelle Lumière chymique. Traité du Soufre*, p. 78. Paris, D'Houry, 1649.

a moment and prove to the incredulous Thomas the blindness of his crass ignorance." Pernety, in his *Mytho-Hermetic Dictionary*, did not cite this term, either because he did not know it or because he deliberately omitted it. This subject, so vulgar and so despised, soon becomes the *Tree of Life*, Elixir or Philosopher's Stone, a masterpiece of Nature aided by human labour, a pure and rich jewel of alchemy. An absolute metallic synthesis, it assures the happy possessor of this treasure the triple reward of knowledge, fortune and health. It is the cornucopia, an inexhaustible source of the material joys of our earthly world. Finally, let us remember that the mirror is the attribute of *Truth, Prudence and Science* according to all Greek poets and mythologists.

Let us now look at the allegory of *natural weight*. The alchemist removes the veil covering the scales (plate XX).

Most philosophers have been rather vague about the secret of weights. Basilio Valentin limited himself to saying that one had to 'give a white swan to the fiery double man', which seems to correspond to the *Sigillum Sapientum* of Huginus de Barma, in which the artist holds a balance, one of whose pans is tilted in an apparent ratio of two to one with respect to the other. The Cosmopolitan, in his *Treatise on Salt*, is even less precise: "The weight of water," he says, "must be plural, and that of earth streaked with white or red must be singular." The author of the *Basilian Aphorisms, or Hermetic Canons of the Spirit and Soul* (3), writes in canon XVI: "We begin our hermetic work with the conjunction of the three principles prepared according to a certain proportion, which consists of the weight of the body, which must be almost equal to half that of the spirit and soul." If Raimundo Lulio and Philaléthe spoke of it, most preferred to remain silent; some claimed that Nature, by itself, distributed the quantities according to a mysterious harmony unknown to Art. These contradictions hardly stand up to scrutiny. Indeed, we know that philosophical mercury results from the absorption of a certain part of sulphur by

- (3) Printed after the *OEuvres tant Médicinales que Chymiques*, by R. P. de Castaigne. Paris, de la Nove, 1681.

a specific amount of mercury; it is therefore essential to know the exact proportions of the components if we are to operate in the traditional manner. Needless to say, these proportions are shrouded in similes and obscurity, even in the most sincere authors. But we must emphasise, on the other hand, that it is possible to substitute metallic sulphur with common gold; in this case, as the excess solvent can always be removed by distillation, the weight is reduced to a simple assessment of consistency. The balance is, as we can see, a valuable indicator for determining the ancient procedure, from which we seem to have to exclude gold. We are referring to common gold that has not undergone *exaltation* or *transfusion*, operations which, by modifying its properties and physical characteristics, make it suitable for the work.

One of the cartoons we studied shows us a special and rarely used dissolution. It is that of common quicksilver in order to obtain the *common mercury* of the philosophers, which they call "our" mercury, to differentiate it from the fluid metal from which it comes. Although we often find quite extensive descriptions on this subject, we will not hide the fact that such an operation seems to us to be risky, if not sophisticated. According to the authors who have discussed it, common quicksilver, cleansed of all impurities and perfectly exalted, would acquire a fiery quality that it does not possess and could in turn become a solvent. A queen, seated on a throne, kicks down the page who, with a cup in his hand, has come to offer her his services (Iâm. XXI). We should not see in this technique, assuming that it can provide the expected solvent, more than a modification of the old system, and not a special practice, since the agent remains the same. However, we do not understand what advantage a mercury solution with the help of the philosophical solvent would bring us, given that it is the principal and secret agent par excellence. Nevertheless, this is what Sabine Stuart de Chevalier (4) claims. "To obtain

- (4) Sabine Stuart de Chevalier, *Discours philosophique sur les Trois Principes*, o la *Clef du Sanctuaire philosophique*. Paris, Quillau, 1781.

Philosophical mercury, writes this author, must dissolve ordinary mercury without losing any of its weight, for all its substance must be converted into philosophical water. Philosophers know of a natural fire that penetrates to the heart of mercury and extinguishes it internally; they also know of a solvent that converts it into pure and natural Argentine water, which does not and should not contain any corrosive substances. As soon as mercury is freed from its bonds and overcome by heat, it takes the form of water, and this water is the most valuable thing in the world. It takes very little time to make common mercury take this form. We hope you will forgive us for not sharing this opinion, as we have good reasons, based on experience, for not believing that common mercury, devoid of its own agent, can be converted into *water useful* for the Work. The *servus fugitivus* we need is a *mineral* and metallic water, *solid*, sharp, with the appearance of a *stone*, and easily liquefied. This *coagulated water*, in the form of a stony mass, is the *Alkaest and the universal solvent*. If it is advisable to read the philosophers—as Philaléthe advises—with a grain of salt, we would have to use the entire salt cellar for the study of Stuart de Chevalier.

An old man, frozen with cold, bent under the arch of the following medallion, leans, tired and exhausted, on a block of stone; a kind of cuff wraps around his left hand (Iám. XXII).

It is easy to recognise here the first phase of the second Work, when the hermetic *Rebis*, enclosed in the centre of the athanor, undergoes the dislocation of its parts and tends to mortify itself. It is the active and gentle beginning of the *wheel of fire* symbolised by cold and winter, an embryonic period in which the seeds, enclosed in the bosom of the philosophical earth, experience the fermenting influence of moisture. The *kingdom of Satumo* will appear, emblem of radical dissolution, decomposition and the colour black. "I am old, weak and sick," Basil Valentin has him say, "and for this reason I find myself locked in a pit... Fire torments me greatly, and death breaks my flesh and bones." A certain Demetrius, a traveller quoted by Plutarch - the Greeks were masters of everything, even exaggeration - reports in all seriousness that, on one of the islands he visited off the coast of England, Satumo is imprisoned and deep in sleep. The giant Briareus (Aegeon) acts as the guardian of his prison. And this is how, with the help of hermetic fables, famous authors wrote history!

The sixth medallion is nothing more than a fragmentary reproduction of the second. We find the Adept again, who, with his hands joined in prayer, seems to be directing his thanksgiving to Nature, represented by the features of a female bust reflected in a *mirror*. We recognise here the hieroglyphic of *the theme of the Sages*, the mirror in which 'we see all Nature laid bare' (Iám. XXIII).

To the right of the portico, the seventh medallion shows us an old man preparing to cross the threshold of *the mysterious palace*. He has just torn away the veil that hid the entrance from the eyes of the uninitiated. This is the first step taken in practice, the discovery of the agent capable of reducing the fixed body, of *reviving it*, according to the expression used, until it takes on a form analogous to that of its raw substance (plate XXIV). Alchemists allude to this operation when they speak of *reviving materialisations*, that is, of giving life to dead metals. It is the *Entrance to the Closed Palace of the King*, of Philaléthe, the first door of Ripley and Basilio Valentin, a door that must be known how to open. The old man is none other than our *Mercury*, a secret agent whose nature, mode of action, materials and time of preparation have been revealed to us by many bas-reliefs. As for the *Palace*, it represents living or philosophical gold, base gold, despised by the ignorant, hidden under rags that conceal it from view, even though it is precious to those who know its value. We must see in this motif a variation on the allegory of the *green and red lions*, of the solvent and the body to be dissolved. In fact, the old man, whom the texts identify with Saturn—who, it is said, *devoured his children*—was once painted green, while the visible interior of the Palace was *purple*. Later on, we will cite the sources we can turn to in order to ascertain, thanks to the original colouring, that the meaning of Saturn, considered as a solvent, is very ancient. On a sarcophagus in the Louvre, which contained the mummy of a hierogrammatic priest from Thebes named Poeris, we can see, on the left side, the god Shu holding up the sky with the help of the god Chnufis (the soul of the world), while at his feet lies the god Seb (Saturn), whose flesh is *green in colour*.

The next circle allows us to witness the encounter between the old man and the crowned king, between the solvent and the body, between the

volatile principle and the fixed, incombustible and pure metallic salt. The allegory bears a strong resemblance to Bernardo Trevisano's parabolic text, in which 'the priest, old and advanced in years' shows himself to be so knowledgeable about the properties of the hidden source, about its action on the 'king of the country', whom it magnetises, attracts and absorbs. In this operation, and when the mercury is animated, the gold or king is dissolved little by little and without violence; this does not happen in the second, in which, contrary to ordinary amalgam, the hermetic mercury seems to attack the metal with a characteristic vigour that is quite similar to chemical effervescence. The sages said in this regard that, in the Conjunction, violent

storms and great tempests occur, and that the waves of its sea offer the spectacle of a "fierce combat". Some represented this reaction as a fight to the death between different animals: *eagle and lion* (Nicolas Flamel), *rooster and fox* (Basilio Valentin), etc. But, in our opinion, the best description—and, above all, the most initiatory—is that left to us by the great philosopher Cyrano Bergerac of the terrifying duel that took place before his eyes between the *Remora* and the *Salamander*. Others—and they are the most numerous—sought the elements of their figures in the primary and traditional genesis of Creation; they described the formation of the philosophical compound by assimilating it to that of terrestrial chaos, the product of the shocks and reactions of fire and water, air and earth.

Although more human and familiar, the style of Notre Dame is no less noble or expressive. The two natures are represented in it by aggressive and quarrelsome children who, when they come to blows, do not spare their fists. At the height of the fight, one of them drops a pot, and the other a stone (Iám. XXV). It is impossible to describe more clearly and simply the action of *Pontic water* on heavy matter: this medallion honours the master who conceived it.

From this series of themes, with which we will conclude our description of the figures in the central portico, it is clear that the guiding idea was to group together the variable points in the practice of the solution. Indeed, this is sufficient for us to identify the procedure followed. The dissolution of alchemical gold by the Alkaest Solvent characterises the first system; that of base gold by *our mercury* indicates the second. Through this, we produce *animated mercury*.

Finally, a second solution, that of sulphur—red or white—by philosophical water, constitutes the subject of the twelfth and last bas-relief. A warrior drops his sword and stops, overwhelmed, before a tree at the foot of which a *lamb* appears. The tree bears three enormous round fruits, and among its branches appears the silhouette of a bird. Here we find again the *solar tree* described by Cosmopolitan in the parable of *the Treatise on Nature*, the tree from which water must be extracted. As for the warrior, he represents the artist who has just completed the *labour of Hercules*, which is our preparation. The *lamb* attests that he knew how to choose the favourable season and the right substance; the bird indicates the volatile nature of the compound, which is 'more heavenly than earthly'. Then he will only have to imitate Satumo, who, says the Cosmopolitan, 'took ten parts of this water, and then took the fruit of the solar tree and put it in this water... For this water is the *Water of Life*, which has the power to improve the fruits of this tree, so that henceforth there will be no need to plant or graft it, because it will be able, by its scent alone, to give the other six trees its same nature.' Furthermore, this image is a representation of the famous expedition of the Argonauts, as we see Jason with the Golden Fleece and the tree of precious fruits from the Garden of the Hesperides.

In the course of this study, we have had occasion to lament not only the damage caused by stupid iconoclasts, but also the complete disappearance of the polychrome coating that our admirable cathedral once possessed. We have no bibliographic documents left to help researchers and remedy, even in part, the damage caused over the centuries. However, we do not need to examine old parchments or leaf through ancient prints in vain: Notre-Dame preserves within itself the pristine colours of its central portico.

Guillermo de Paris, whose insight we never tire of praising, foresaw the considerable damage that time would inflict on his work. As a cautious master, he had the motifs of the medallions meticulously reproduced in the stained glass windows of the central rose window. The glass thus complements the stone, and, thanks to the aid of this fragile material, esotericism regains its primitive purity.

Here we discover the meaning of the ambiguous points in the statuary. For example, in the allegory of *Cohobation* (first medallion), the stained glass window presents us with not an ordinary horseman, but a prince crowned with gold, wearing white robes and red stockings; of the two quarrelling children, one is green and the other violet-grey; the queen who knocks down Mercury wears a white crown, a green shirt and a purple cloak. We are even surprised to find here certain images that have disappeared from the façade, such as that of the craftsman, seated at a red table, extracting large gold coins from a sack; or that of the woman in a green bodice and scarlet skirt, smoothing her hair in front of a mirror; or that of the Twins, from the lower zodiac, one of whom is ruby-coloured and the other emerald-coloured; and so on.

What a profound subject for meditation the ancient Hermetic Idea offers us, in its harmony and unity! Petrified on the façade, crystallised in the enormous circle of the rose window, it passes from silence to revelation, from gravity to enthusiasm, from inertia to lively expression. Blurred, material and cold under the harsh light from outside, it emerges from the glass in beams of colour and penetrates the naves, vibrant, warm, diaphanous and pure as Truth itself.

And the soul cannot escape a certain disturbance in the presence of this other, even more paradoxical antithesis:
"the torch
of alchemical thought illuminating the temple of Christian thought!"

VI

Let us leave the main portico and move on to the north portico, or Portico of the Virgin. In the centre of the tympanum, and on the cornice above, observe the sarcophagus, an accessory to an episode in the life of Christ. You will see seven circles on it: these are the symbols of the seven planetary metals (Iám. XXVI).

The sun indicates gold, and Mercury,
quicksilver; Venus is to bronze as Saturn is to
lead;
the Moon is the image of silver; Jupiter, of tin,
and Mars, of iron (1).

The central circle is decorated in a particular way, while the other six are repeated in pairs, something that never occurs in the purely ornamental motifs of ogival art. Furthermore, this symmetry extends from the centre to the extremities, as taught by the Cosmopolitan. "Contemplate the sky and the spheres of the planets," says this author (2), "and you will see that Saturn is the highest of all,

(1) *La Cabale Intellective*. Mans. de la Bibi. del Arsenal, S. y A. 72, page 15.

(2) *Nouvelle Lumière chymique. Traité du Mercure*, chap. IX, p. 41. Paris, Jean d'Houry, 1649.

which is followed by Jupiter, then Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury and, finally, the Moon. Now consider that the virtues of the planets do not ascend, but descend; experience even teaches us that Mars easily becomes Venus, but Venus does not become Mars, for she is the lowest sphere. In the same way, Jupiter is easily transmuted into Mercury, because Jupiter is higher than Mercury; the former is second from the firmament, the latter is second above the Earth; and Saturn is the highest, and the Moon the lowest; the Sun mixes with all of them, but is never improved by the lower ones. You will notice, then, that there is a great correspondence between Saturn and the Moon, in the middle of which is the Sun, as well as between Mercury and Jupiter, and Mars and Venus, all of which have the Sun in the middle.

The concordance of mutation of the metallic planets among themselves is thus indicated in the portico of Notre Dame in the most formal way. The central motif symbolises the Sun; the finials at the ends represent Saturn and the Moon; then come Jupiter and Mercury, respectively; and finally, on either side of the Sun, Mars and Venus.

But there is something even more curious. If we analyse the unique row that seems to unite the circumferences of the rose windows, we see that it is formed by a succession of four crosses and three staffs, one of which is a simple spiral, and the others double volutes. It should be noted, in passing, that if this were intended to be ornamental, there would necessarily have to be six or eight attributes in order to achieve perfect symmetry; however, this is not the case, and the fact that one of the spaces, on the left, remains empty, demonstrates that the intention was to give the whole a symbolic meaning.

The four crosses represent, as in spagyric notation, the imperfect metals; the double-spiral staffs represent the two perfect metals, and the single staff represents mercury, a semi-metal or semi-perfect metal.

However, if we look away from the tympanum and down to the left side of the base, divided into five niches, we can see some curious little figures in the space between the small arches.

Behold, going from the outside towards the right foot, the *dog* and the two *doves* (Iám. XXVII), which we find described in the animation of exalted mercury; the *dog of Corasceno*, mentioned by Artephius and Philaléthe, which must be separated from the compound in its black powder state, and the *Doves of Diana*, another exasperating enigma under which the spiritualisation and sublimation of philosophical mercury are hidden. The *lamb*, emblem of the sweetening of the arsenical principle of Matter; the *bent man*, magnificent representation of the alchemical apothegm *solve et coagula*, which teaches how to perform the elemental conversion by volatilising the fixed and fixing the volatile (Iám. XXVIII):

If you know how to
dissolve the fixed, *And*
volatilise the dissolved,
And then fix the volatile into
powder, you have reason for
consolation.

In this part of the portico was once carved the main hieroglyph of our practice: it was the *Raven*.

The main figure of the hermetic coat of arms, the raven of Notre Dame had always exerted a powerful attraction on alchemists, as an ancient legend designated it as the only sign of a sacred deposit. It was said that Guillerin of Paris, "who," according to Victor Hugo, "was undoubtedly condemned for having added such an infernal frontispiece to the holy poem that the rest of the building sings eternally," had hidden the philosopher's stone in one of the pillars of the immense nave. And the exact location of this mysterious hiding place was determined precisely by the visual angle of the raven...

Thus, according to legend, the symbolic bird once pointed out, from outside, the unknown location of the secret pillar where the treasure was hidden.

On the outer face of the pillars without imposts that support the lintel and the springing of the voussoirs, the signs of the zodiac are represented. First, starting from the bottom, we find Aries, *then Taurus*, and at the top, *Gemini*. These are the spring months that mark the beginning of work and the right time for operations.

Some will undoubtedly object that the zodiac may not have any hidden meaning and may simply represent the area of the constellations. That is possible. But in that case, we would have to find the astronomical order, the cosmic succession of the zodiacal figures, which was by no means ignored by our ancestors. However, *Leo* follows *Gemini*, usurping the place of *Cancer*, which has been banished to the opposite pillar. The *sculptor* thus wanted to indicate, by means of this skilful transposition, the conjunction of the philosophical ferment – or *Lion* – with the mercurial compound, a union that must take place towards the end of the fourth month of the first Work. We also observe, under this portico, a small and extremely curious quadrangular relief. It synthesises and expresses the condensation of the *universal Spirit*, which, as soon as it materialises, forms the famous *Bath of the Stars*, in which the chemical sun and moon must bathe, change their nature and rejuvenate themselves. We see in it a child falling from a crucible as large as a vat and held by a standing archangel, haloed, with one wing outstretched, who seems to be striking the innocent child. The entire background of the composition is occupied by a starry night sky (plate XXXIX). We recognise in this theme a simplification of the allegory of the *Massacre of the Innocents*, so dear to Nicolas Flamel and which we will soon see in a stained-glass window in the Sainte-Chapelle.

Without going into detail about the technique of the operation—something no author has dared to do—we will nevertheless say that the *universal Spirit* materialised in minerals under the alchemical name of *Sulphur* constitutes the principle and effective agent of all metallic tinctures. But this *Spirit*, this red *blood* of children, can only be obtained by decomposing what Nature had previously brought together in them. It is therefore necessary for the body to perish, to be crucified and to die, if one wishes to extract the *soul, metallic life and celestial dew* that it contained. And from this quintessence, transferred to a pure, fixed, perfectly cooked body, a new creature will be born, more resplendent than any of those from whom it comes. Bodies have no action on each other; only the spirit is active and effective.

For this reason, the Sages, knowing that the mineral blood they needed to animate the fixed and inert body of gold was nothing more than a condensation of the universal Spirit, the soul of all things; knowing that this condensation in moist form, capable of penetrating and vegetating sublunary mixed bodies, could only occur at night, in the darkness, under a clear sky and calm air; knowing, finally, that the season during which it manifested itself with the greatest activity and abundance corresponded to the earthly spring; for all these reasons combined, the Sages gave it the name of *May Dew*. Thus, Thomas Corneille (3) does not surprise us when he asserts that the great masters of the Rose Cross were called *Brothers of the Cooked Dew**, a meaning they themselves gave to the initials of their order: F. R. C. We would like to say more on this subject of extraordinary importance and show how the *Dew of May* (Maya was the mother of Hermes) – the life-giving moisture of the month of *Mary, the Virgin Mother* – is easily extracted from a particular body, abject and despised, whose characteristics we have already described; but there are insurmountable limits... Here we touch upon the highest secret of the Work, and we wish to keep our oath. Therein lies Trevisano's *Verbum dimissum, the lost Word* of the medieval Freemasons, which all the Hermetic Brotherhoods hoped to rediscover and whose search was the goal of their work and the reason for their existence (4).

(3) *Dictionnaire des Arts et des Sciences*, art. Rose-Croix. Paris, Coignard, 1731.

* The symbolic-burlesque meaning of this name is best understood in the French pun: *Frères de la Rose-croix and Frères de la Rosée Cuite (N del T)*

(4) Among the most famous initiation centres of this kind, we can mention the orders of the *Illuminati*, the *Knights of the Black Eagle*, the *Two Eagles*, the *Apocalypse*; the *Initiated Brothers of Asia, Palestine, and the Zodiac*; the *Societies of the Black Brothers*, the *Chosen Coëns*, the *Mopses*, the *Seven Swords*, the *Invisibles*, the *Princes of Death*; the *Knights of the Swan*, instituted by *Elijah*, the *Knights of the Dog and the Rooster*, the *Knights of the Round Table*, of the *Gineta*, of the *Thistle*, of the *Bath*, of the *Dead Beast*, of the *Amaranth*, etc.

Post tenebras lux. Let us not forget. Light comes from darkness; it is diffused in darkness, in blackness, as day is in night. From the darkness of *Chaos*, light and its rays were extracted, and if, on the day of Creation, the divine Spirit moved over the waters of the Abyss - *Spiritus Dominiferebatur super aquas* - this invisible spirit could not be distinguished from the watery mass at first and was confused with it.

Finally, let us remember that God took *six days* to accomplish his Great Work; that light was separated on the first day, and that the following days were determined, like ours, by regular and alternating intervals of darkness and light.

At midnight, a Virgin Mother
produces this *luminous star*,
at this miraculous moment we call
God our brother.

VII

Let us retrace our steps and pause before the south façade, still called the portico of Sainte-Anne.

Anne. It

offers a single motif, but it is of considerable interest, in that it describes the briefest practice of our Science and deserves, in this respect, a place in the front row of lapidary paradigms.

"Look," says Grillot de Givry (1), "sculpted on the right portico of Notre-Dame de Paris, the bishop standing on the aludel in which it sublimates, chained in limbo, the philosophical mercury. He teaches you where the sacred fire comes from, and the fact that the chapter, following a secular tradition, keeps this door closed all year round, indicates to you that here is the *uncommon path*, ignored by the crowd and reserved for the small number of the chosen ones of Wisdom (2).

Few alchemists are willing to admit the possibility of *two paths*, one short and easy, called *the dry way*, and the other longer and more thankless, called *the wet way*. This may be due to the fact that many authors deal exclusively with

(1) Grillot de Givry, *Le Grand Oeuvre*. Paris, Chacomac, 1907, p. 27.

(2) In St. Peter's, Rome, a similar door, called *the Holy Door or Jubilee Door*, is *gilded and walled up*—the Pope opens it with hammer blows every twenty-five years, or four times a century.

the longer procedure, either because they are unaware of the other or because they prefer to remain silent rather than reveal their principles. Per nety refuses to believe in this duality of methods, while Huginus de Barma asserts, on the contrary, that the ancient masters, the Gebers, the Lulios, the Paracelsuses, each had their own unique procedure.

Chemically, there is nothing to prevent a method based on the wet route from being replaced by another that uses dry reactions, both achieving the same result. Hermetically, the emblem in question is proof of this. Further proof can be found in the 18th-century encyclopaedia, which states that the Great Work can be achieved in two ways: one called the wet method, which is longer and more widely practised, and the other, the dry method, which is much less appreciated. In the latter, one must "cook the *celestial salt*, which is the mercury of the Philosophers, with an earthly metallic body, in a crucible and over a simple fire, for four days".

In the second part of a work attributed to Basilio Valentin (3), but which seems more likely to have been written by Senior Zadiith, the author appears to refer to the dry method when he writes that, "to attain this Art, no great labour or effort is required, and the expenses are small, and the instruments of little value. For this Art can be learned in less than twelve hours, and, in the space of *eight days*, brought to perfection, when it has its own principle within itself."

Philaléthe, in chapter XIX of the *Introitus*, tells us, after talking about the long way, which he claims is tedious and only good for rich people: "But, following *our way*, it takes no more than a week; God has reserved this rare and easy way for the despised poor and for his saints covered in abjection." And Lenglet-Dufresnoy, in his *Observations* on this chapter, also believes that this path uses *double philosophical mercury*. In this way, he adds, the Work is accomplished in *eight days*, instead of the almost eighteen months required by the first of the paths.

This abbreviated path, but covered by a thick veil, has

(3) *Azoth, or Moyen de faire l'Or caché des Philosophes*. Paris, Pierre Moët, 1659, page 140.

been called by the Wise Men *the Saturno Regime*. The cooking of the Work, instead of using a glass vessel, requires only the use of a simple crucible. "I will dissolve your body in a *glass of earth* where I will bury it," writes a famous author (4), who adds later: "Make a fire in your glass, that is, in the earth that encloses it. This brief method, about which we have freely instructed you, seems to me to be the shortest *path*

shortest and true philosophical sublimation to achieve perfection in this serious work." This could explain this fundamental maxim of Science: *a single vessel, a single material, a single furnace.*

Cyliani, in the Preface to his book (5), describes the two procedures in these terms:

"I believe I must warn here that one must never forget that only two materials of the same origin are needed, one volatile and the other fixed; that there are *two paths*, the dry way and the wet way. I follow the latter, preferably, *out of duty*, although the former is very familiar to me: it is done with a single material."

Henri de Lintaut also testifies in favour of the dry method when he writes (6): "This secret surpasses all the secrets of the world, for in a *short time*, without great care or labour, you can achieve a great projection, about which see Isaac the Dutchman, who speaks of it more extensively." Unfortunately, our author is no more verbose than his colleagues. "When I think," writes Henckel (7), "that the artist Elias, quoted by Helvetius, claims that the preparation of the philosopher's stone begins and ends in *four days*, and that he has actually shown this stone still attached to the sides of *the crucible*, it seems to me that it would not be so absurd to question whether what alchemists call many months are not just as many

(4) Salomón Trismosin, *Le Toyson d'Or*. Paris, Ch. Sevestre, 1612, pages 72 and 110.

(5) Cyliani, *Hermès dévoilé*. Paris, F. Locquin, 1832.

(6) H. de Lintaut, *L'Aurore*, Mans. de la Bibl. del Arsenal, S.A.F. 169, number 3,020.

(7) J.-F. Henckel, *Traité de l'Appropriation*. Paris, Thomas Hérisant, 1760, pages 375 and 416.

days, which would be a very short period of time; and there will be no method in which the entire operation consists solely of keeping the materials in a greater degree of fluidity for a long time, which would be achieved by means of a very intense fire, fuelled by bellows; but this method cannot be carried out in all laboratories, and, moreover, perhaps not everyone would find it practicable. The hermetic emblem of Notre-Dame, which had already attracted the attention of the astute Laborde (8) in the 17th century, occupies the spandrel of the portico, from the stylobate to the architrave, and is intricately carved on three sides of the embedded pillar. It is a tall and noble statue of Saint Marcellus, wearing a mitre, under a canopy with a tower that, in our opinion, has no secret significance. The bishop stands on a finely carved oblong niche with four small columns and an admirable Byzantine dragon, all supported by a plinth decorated with a frieze and joined to the base by a moulding. Only the niche and the plinth have any real hermetic value (plate XXX).

Unfortunately, this magnificently decorated pillar is almost new: barely twelve years separate us from its restoration, as it has been rebuilt and... modified.

We do not wish to discuss here the origin of such repairs, nor do we intend to argue for the need to allow the leprosy of time to grow carelessly on a splendid body; however, as philosophers, we can only admire the ease with which restorers approach oval creations. If it was necessary to replace the bishop due to the weather and rebuild its ruined base, the task was simple: it was enough to copy the model, to reproduce it faithfully. It would have mattered little if it contained a hidden meaning: slavish imitation would have preserved it. But they wanted to do better, and while they preserved the features of the holy bishop and the beautiful dragon, they adorned the plinth with Romanesque foliage and borders instead of the rosettes and flowers that had been there in the past.

(8) De Laborde, *Explications, de l'Enigme trouvée à un pilier de l'Éghe Notre-Dame de Paris*, Paris, 1636.

This second edition, revised, corrected and expanded, is certainly richer than the first; but the symbol has been truncated; science, mutilated; the key, lost; and esotericism, extinct. Time corrodes, wears away, disintegrates and crumbles limestone; its cleanliness is impaired, but its meaning remains. Then the restorer, the healer of stones, appears; with a few strokes of the chisel, he amputates, cuts, obliterates, transforms, converts an authentic ruin into an artificial and brilliant archaism, wounds and heals, suppresses and adds, prunes and disfigures in the name of Art, form or symmetry, without the slightest concern for the creative idea. Thanks to this modern prosthesis, our venerable ladies will remain eternally young!

Alas! By touching the casing, they let the soul escape!

Go to the cathedral, disciples of Hermes, to see the location and layout of the new pillar, and then follow the trail of the original. Cross the Seine, enter the Cluny Museum, and you will have the satisfaction of finding it there, next to the staircase leading to the frigidarium of the Baths of Julian. That is where the beautiful fragment ended up (9).

(9) This itinerary is no longer valid, since, about six years ago, the symbolic pillar, the object of such justified veneration, returned to Notre Dame, to a place not far from where it stood for more than five centuries. We find it, in fact, in a room with a high ceiling and semicircular arches in the north tower, which will sooner or later be converted into a museum, and has its counterpart on the south side, at the same level and on the other side of the platform of the great organ.

For the time being, therefore, it is no longer so easy to satisfy the curiosity, whatever its nature, of the visitor, who will find himself nevertheless, driven to the new refuge of the imitative sculpture. But, alas, a sad surprise awaits them, which consists of the infinitely regrettable amputation of almost the entire body of the dragon, now reduced to its front part, although still equipped with its two legs.

The monstrous animal, with the grace of an enormous lizard, clasped the athanor, leaving in its flames the little king three times crowned, who is the son of his violent deeds on the adulterous death. Only the child's face is visible as he undergoes the 'fiery washings' mentioned by Nicolas Flamel. Here he appears swaddled and dressed in medieval fashion, as we can still see in the porcelain figurine of the tiny 'bather' that is usually placed in the *galette* on Three Kings' Day. (Conf *Alchimie, op. cit.*, page 89.)

This enigma of alchemical work, solved precisely—at least in part—by François Cambriel, earned him a mention by Champfleury in his *Excéntricos* (Eccentrics) and by Cherpakof in his *Locos literarios* (*Literary Madmen*). Do we deserve the same honour?

You will observe on the cubic plinth, and on its right side, two solid, circular reliefs; these are the *metallic materials or natures*—subject and solvent—with which the Work must begin. On the main face, these substances, modified by the preliminary operations, are no longer represented in the form of a disc, but as roses with fused petals. One must admire, without reservation, the skill with which the artist was able to express the transformation of the hidden products, free from the external accidents and heterogeneous materials that surrounded them in the mine. On the left side, the rosettes, converted into decorative flowers with welded petals, but with the calyx visible. Although very corroded and almost erased, it is nevertheless easy to discover in them the trace of the central disc. They continue to represent the same objects but after acquiring other qualities; the graphic of the calyx indicates that the metallic roots have been opened and are ready to manifest their seminal principle. Such is the esoteric interpretation of the small motifs on the plinth. The niche will give us the complementary explanation.

The materials prepared and united in a single compound must undergo sublimation or final fiery purification. In this operation, the parts that are consumed by fire are destroyed, the earthy materials lose their cohesion and disintegrate, while the pure, incombustible principles rise in a form very different from that of the compound. There is the *Salt of the Philosophers*, the King crowned with glory, who is born in fire and must rejoice in the subsequent wedding, so that, says Hermes, the hidden things may become manifest. *Rex ab igne veniet, ac conjugio gaudebit et occulta patebunt*. In the niche, we see only the head of this king, emerging from the purifying flames. In its current state, it would be impossible to say whether the sculpture on the figure's forehead is a crown; given the volume and appearance of the skull, we could just as easily see it as a kind of bascinet or helmet. Fortunately, however, we have the text by Esprit Gobineau de Montluisant, whose book was written 'on Wednesday, 20 May 1640, the eve of the glorious Ascension of Our Saviour Jesus Christ' (10), and which tells us positively that the king wears a *triple crown*.

After the elevation of the pure and coloured principles of the philosophical compound, the residue is now in a condition to provide the *mercurial*, volatile and fusible *salt*, which ancient authors often referred to as *the Babylonian Dragon*.

The artist who created this emblematic monster produced a true masterpiece, and although mutilated—the plumage on the left is broken—it remains a remarkable fragment of a statue. The fabulous animal emerges from the flames, and its tail seems to come out of the human being whose head it somewhat envelops. Then, in a twisting movement that makes it bend against the vault, it stretches out its powerful claws to hold the athanor.

If we examine the ornamentation of the niche, we can see a group of slightly hollow grooves, curved at the top and flat at the base. Those on the left wall are accompanied by a flower with four separate petals, representing the universal, quaternary matter of the *primary elements*, according to Aristotle's doctrine spread in the Middle Ages. Immediately below, the duo of *natures* worked on by the alchemist, whose union results in the *Saturn* of the Wise, an anagrammatic name for *natures**. In the front intercolumnium, four decreasing grooves, following the obliquity of the flamed ramp, symbolise the quaternary of the *secondary elements*. Finally, on either side of the athanor, and under the claws themselves of the

(10) Detailed explanation of the hieroglyphic and physical riddles and figures found on the great portal of the Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of Notre-Dame de Paris.

* The anagram, imperfect in Spanish, is accurate in French: *Natures-Sturne*. (Translator's note)

dragon, the five units of the *quintessence*, comprising the three principles and the two natures, plus their totalisation under the number ten, "in which everything ends and is completed." L.-P. François Cambriel (11) maintains that the multiplication of Sulphur - white or red - is not indicated in the hieroglyphic studied; we would not dare to make such a categorical statement. In fact, multiplication can only be achieved with the help of mercury, which plays the role of patient in the Work, and through successive cookings or fixations. It is therefore in the dragon, the image of mercury, that we should seek the symbol representing the nutrition and progression of Sulphur or the Elixir. Well, if that author had taken more care in examining the decorative details, he would certainly have observed:

- 1.° A longitudinal stripe that starts at the head and follows the line of the vertebrae to the tip of the tail.
- 2.° Two similar stripes, placed obliquely, on each wing.
- 3.° Two wider, transverse stripes encircling the dragon's tail, the first at the level of the plumage and the other above the king's head. All these stripes are adorned with solid circles that touch at one point on their circumference.

As for its meaning, this is revealed by the circles on the caudal stripes: the centre is clearly indicated in each of them. Now, Hermeticists know that the king of metals is represented by the solar sign; that is, by a circumference, with or without a central point. It therefore seems reasonable to think that if the dragon is profusely covered with auric symbols—even displaying them in the claws of its right paw—it is because it is capable of copious transmutation; but it can only acquire this

(11) L.-P. François Cambriel, *Cours de Philosophie hermétique ou d'Alchimie en dix-neuf leçons*. Paris, Lacour et Maistrasse, 1843.

power through a series of subsequent cookings with *sulphur or philosophical gold*, which constitutes the *multiplications*.

Such is, explained as clearly as possible, the esoteric meaning that we believe we have discovered in the beautiful pillar of the door of Sainte-Anne. Perhaps others, more erudite or wiser, will offer a better interpretation, for we do not intend to impose our thesis on anyone. Suffice it to say that it agrees, in general, with that of Cambriel. On the other hand, we do not share in any way the opinion of this author in wanting to extend, without any proof, the symbolism of the niche to the statue itself.

It is certainly always painful to have to censure a manifest error, and even more annoying to bring up certain statements in order to destroy them en bloc. However, we must do so, much as we regret it. The science we study is as positive, as real and as exact as optics, geometry or mechanics, and its results are as tangible as those of chemistry. If enthusiasm and inner faith serve as stimulants and valuable aids; if they intervene, on the one hand, in the direction and orientation of our research, we must nevertheless avoid their deviations, subordinate them to logic and reasoning, and subject them to the criterion of experience. Let us remember that only the tricks of false and greedy alchemists, the senseless practices of charlatans, and the ineptitude of ignorant and unscrupulous writers have brought discredit upon the hermetic truth. It is necessary to see clearly and speak well; not a word that has not been thought out, not an idea that has not passed through the sieve of judgement and reflection. Alchemy requires purification; let us rid it of the stains with which even its supporters have sometimes sullied it: afterwards it will be stronger *and* healthier, without losing an ounce of its charm and mysterious attraction.

François Cambriel, on page 33 of his book, expresses himself in these terms: "From this mercury comes Life, represented by the bishop standing above the dragon... This bishop *puts a finger to his mouth*, to tell those who come to see him and learn what he represents... to be quiet, not to say a word...!"

The text is accompanied by an engraving, taken from a terrible drawing – which would be of little importance – but which has been ostensibly altered, which is much more serious. It shows Saint Marcellus holding a short staff like a gatekeeper's flag; his head is covered with a mitre decorated with a cross, and, in a formidable anachronism, Prudentius' disciple has a beard! A funny detail: in the front view, the

dragon has its mouth in profile and bites the poor bishop's foot, who, on the other hand, seems very little concerned about it. Calm and smiling, he simply closes his lips with his index finger, in a gesture of enforced silence.

This is easy to verify, as we have the original work, and the deception is obvious at first glance. The saint, in accordance with medieval custom, is completely clean-shaven; his mitre is very simple and lacks any adornment; the crozier he holds in his left hand is stuck, by its lower end, into the dragon's jaws. As for the famous gesture of the characters in the Mutus *Liber* and Harpocrates, it is entirely the product of Cambriel's excessive imagination of Cambriel. Saint Marcellus was depicted giving the blessing, in an attitude full of nobility, his forehead bowed, his forearm bent, his hand at shoulder level and his middle and index fingers raised.

It is very difficult to believe that two observers could have been victims of the same illusion. Did this fantasy emanate from the artist, or was it imposed on him by the text? The description and the illustration are so consistent that we can give little credence to the observational qualities manifested in this other fragment by the same author:

"One day, as I was passing by the church of Notre-Dame in Paris, I examined *very carefully* the beautiful sculptures that adorn the three doors, and I saw on one of these three doors a most beautiful hieroglyphic, which I had never noticed before, and *for several days in a row I went to consult it* in order to be able to give a detailed account of everything it represented, which I succeeded in doing. The reader can see for themselves from what follows, and even better *if they go there in person.*"

An attitude, indeed, that is not without audacity or impudence. If the reader of Cambriel accepts his invitation, he will find in the door panel of Sainte-Anne anything more than the legendary exotericism of Saint Marcellus. There they will see the bishop slaying the dragon by striking it with his staff, as tradition recounts. That it symbolises, at most, the life of matter, is a personal opinion that the author is free to express; but that it actually performs the *tacere of Zoroaster* is false and always has been.

Such nonsense is regrettable and unworthy of a sincere, honest and upright mind.

VIII

Built by medieval *Freemasons* to ensure the transmission of hermetic symbols and doctrine, our great cathedrals have exerted considerable influence since their inception on a large number of more modest examples of civil and religious architecture.

Flamel liked to cover the buildings he erected everywhere with emblems and hieroglyphics. Abbé Villain informs us that the small portico of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie, which the Adept had built in 1389, was full of figures. "On the western jamb of the door," he says, "we see a little angel carved holding a stone circle in his hands; Flamel had a black marble disc with a fine gold cross inlaid into it..." (1). The poor also owed their generosity to two houses he had built for them on the Rue du Cometiére-de-Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, the first in 1407 and the other in 1410. According to Salmon, these buildings featured "a large number of figures engraved in the stones, with a Gothic N and F on either side". The chapel of the Saint-Gervais hospital, rebuilt at his expense, was in no way inferior to his other foundations. "The façade and the door of

(1) Abbé Villain, *Histoire critique de Nicolas Flamel*. Paris, Desprez, 1761.

the new chapel," writes Albert Poisson (2), "were covered with figures and inscriptions in Flamel's usual style." The portico of Sainte-Geneviève-des-Ardents, located on Rue de la Tixeranderie, retained its interesting symbolism until the mid-18th century, when the church was converted into a dwelling and the ornaments on the façade were destroyed. Flamel also erected two commemorative arcades in the Chamier des Innocents, one in 1389 and the second in 1407. Poisson reports that the first one featured, among other things,

other hieroglyphic plates, a coat of arms that the Adept 'seems to have imitated from another attributed to Saint Thomas Aquinas'. The famous occultist adds that it appears at the end of Lagneau's *Annonia Química*. See below for his description of it:

"The coat of arms is divided into four parts by a cross; in the middle of the cross is a crown of thorns enclosing a bleeding heart from which a reed emerges. In one of the quarters, we see the inscription IEVE in Hebrew characters, amid a profusion of rays of light, beneath a black cloud; in the second quarter, a crown; in the third, the earth is laden with copious harvests; and the fourth appears to be occupied by globes of fire."

This account, in accordance with Lagneau's engraving, allows us to conclude that he had his image copied from the archway of the ossuary. There is nothing impossible about this, since, of the four plaques, three remained from Gohorry's time - that is, around 1572 - and the *Chemical Harmony* was published by Claude Morel in 1601. However, it would have been preferable to stick to the standard coat of arms, which was quite different from Flame's and much less obscure. It still existed at the time of the Revolution, in a stained-glass window in the chapel of Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, in the Dominican convent. The Dominican church, where the Dominicans had settled around 1217, owed its foundation to Louis IX. It was located on Rue de Saint-Jacques and was dedicated to Saint James the Greater.

(2) Albert Poisson, *Histoire de l'Alchimie*, Nicolas FlameL Paris, Chacornac, 1893.

Les Curiosités de Paris, published in 1716 by Saugrain, known as the Elder, adds that next to that church were the schools of the *Angelic Doctor*.

The coat of arms, named after Saint Thomas Aquinas, was drawn and painted with great precision in 1787 and, according to the stained glass window itself, by a hermeticist named Chaudet. Thanks to this drawing, we can describe it (Iám. XXXI).

The French coat of arms, quartered, is topped by a rounded segment that dominates it. In this complementary piece, we see an upside-down golden flask surrounded by a crown of sinople thorns on a sable field. The cross has three azure spheres at the tip and on the right and left arms, with a gules heart with a sinople bouquet in the centre. Silver tears fall from the flask onto this heart, gathering and settling on it. The upper right quarter, divided into a gold section with three purple stars and an azure section with seven gold rays, is opposed on the left tip by a sable land with gold ears of corn on a tan field. In the upper left quarter, a violet cloud on a silver field, and three arrows of the same colour, with gold feathers and pointing to the abyss. In the right corner, three silver snakes on a sinople field.

This beautiful emblem is all the more important to us in that it reveals the secrets relating to the extraction of mercury and its combination with sulphur, obscure points of practice on which all authors have preferred to maintain a religious silence.

The Sainte-Chapelle, Pierre de Montereau's masterpiece, a marvellous stone urn erected between 1245 and 1248 to house the relics of the Passion, also featured a remarkable alchemical ensemble. Today, although we deeply regret the restoration of the original portico, where Parisians in 1830 could admire, with Victor Hugo, 'two angels, one with his hand in a vase and the other in a cloud', we can still take satisfaction in the fact that the south windows of this splendid building remain intact. It would be difficult to find anywhere else a more important collection than that of the Sainte-Chapelle on the formulas of alchemical esotericism. To undertake, leaf by leaf, the description of such a forest of glass would be an arduous task, sufficient to fill several volumes. We will therefore limit ourselves to offering a sample taken from the fifth bay, first transept, which refers to the Slaughter of the Holy Innocents, the significance of which we have explained above (Iám. XXXII).

We cannot recommend highly enough to lovers of our ancient science and to all those who are curious about the occult

to study the symbolic stained glass windows of the high chapel; they will find much to observe in them, as well as in the large rose window, an incomparable creation of colour and harmony.

AMIENS

Like Paris, Amiens offers us a remarkable collection of hermetic bas-reliefs. A singular and noteworthy circumstance is that the central portico of Notre-Dame de Amiens - Portico of the Saviour - is an almost faithful reproduction, not only of the motifs that adorn the portico in Paris, but also of the order in which they appear. Only slight details differentiate them: in Paris, the figures hold discs; here, they hold shields. In Amiens, the emblem of Mercury is presented by a woman; in Paris, by a man. In both buildings, the same symbols, the same attributes, and similar costumes and attitudes. There is no doubt that the hermetic work of William of Paris exerted a real influence on the decoration of the great portico of Amiens.

Moreover, this Picardy masterpiece, magnificent among all others, remains one of the purest documents bequeathed to us by the Middle Ages. Its preservation allows restorers to respect most of the themes; and thus, the admirable temple, thanks to the genius of Robert de Luzarches, Thomas and Renault de Cormont, retains all its original splendour today.

Among the allegories typical of the Amiens style, we will first mention the ingenious representation of *the wheel of fire*. The philosopher, seated with his elbow resting on his right knee, seems to be meditating or watching (plate XXXIII).

However, this four-leaf clover, which we consider to be very characteristic, has been interpreted very differently by some authors. Jourdain and Duval, Ruskin (*The Bible of Amiens*), Abbé Roze and, after them, Georges Durand (1) believed they had discovered its meaning in the prophecy of Ezekiel, who, according to G. Durand, 'saw four winged animals, as St John later saw them, and wheels within wheels. What is represented here is the vision of the wheels. Naively taking the text literally, the artist reduced the vision to its simplest expression. The prophet is seated on a rock and seems to be dozing, leaning on his right knee. In front of him are two carriage wheels, and that is all.'

This version contains two errors. The first betrays an incomplete study of traditional technique, of the formulas observed by the *latomi* in the execution of their symbols. The second, more serious, comes from a faulty observation.

In fact, our craftsmen had a habit of isolating or at least emphasising their supernatural attributes by a cord of clouds. We have clear evidence of this on the face of the three buttresses of the portico; here, however, we see nothing of the sort. Furthermore, our character has his eyes open; he is not asleep, but seems to be watching as the slow action of *the wheel fire* unfolds near him. As if this were not enough, it is well known that in all Gothic representations of apparitions, the illuminated figure always faces the phenomenon; his attitude and expression invariably reveal surprise or ecstasy, anxiety or bliss, which is also not the case here. The two wheels are, and can only be, an image with a meaning obscure to the uninitiated, expressly intended to conceal something well known to both the initiate and our character. This is why we do not see him absorbed in concerns of this kind, but rather watching and keeping vigil, patient but a little tired.

- (1) G. Durand, *Monographie de l'Eglise cathédrale d'Amiens, Paris*, A. Picard, 1901.

With *Hercules'* arduous labours completed, his work has been reduced to *the ludus puerorum* of the texts, that is, to keeping the fire burning, something that a woman could easily and successfully do while spinning yarn.

As for the double image of the hieroglyph, we must interpret it as a sign of the two revolutions that must act successively on the compound to ensure a high degree of perfection. Unless one prefers to see in it an indication of the two natures in the *conversion*, which is also achieved by gentle and regular firing. This latter thesis was supported by Pernety.

In reality, *linear and continuous* cooking requires the *double rotation* of the same wheel, a movement that is impossible to express in stone and which explains the need for two wooden wheels locked together to form a single one. The first wheel corresponds to *the wet phase* of the operation - called *elixation* - in which the compound remains molten until a light film forms, which gradually increases in thickness and depth. The second period, characterised by dryness - *or roasting* - begins on the second turn of the wheel and is completed when the contents of *the egg*, calcined, appear granular or powdery, in the form of crystals, sand or ash.

The anonymous commentator of a classic work (2) says, regarding this operation, that it is truly the hallmark of the Great Work, that 'the philosopher *cooks* at a gentle, solar heat, and in a single vessel, a *single vapour* that

thickens gradually." But what should be the appropriate external heat temperature for this cooking method? According to modern authors, the initial heat should not exceed human body temperature. Albert Poisson sets the base at 50°, with progressive increases up to about 300° Celsius. Philaléthe, in his *Rules* (3), states that "the degree of heat that it may have from

(2) *La Lumière sortant par soy-mesme des Ténèbres*, Paris, d'Houry, 1687, chapter III, p. 30.

(3) *Règles du Philaléthe pour se conduire dans l'oeuvre hermétique*, in *Historie de la Philosophie hermétique*, by Lenglet-Dufresnoy. Paris, Coustelier, 1742, vol. II.

lead (327°) or molten tin (232°), and even stronger, that is, such that the vessels can withstand it without breaking, should be considered a *temperate heat*. There, he says, you will begin your degree of heat appropriate to the realm in which nature has placed you. In his fifteenth rule, Philaléthe insists on this important point; after warning that the artist must work on mineral bodies and not on organic substances, he expresses himself as follows.

"It is necessary that the water on our side boil with the ashes of the tree of Hermes; I urge you to make it *boil* night and day without ceasing, so that, in the works of our stormy sea, the celestial nature may rise and the terrestrial nature may descend. For I assure you that if we do not make it *boil*, we will never be able to call our work a *cooking*, but rather a *digestion*."

Next to the *wheel fire*, we will point out a small carved motif to the right of the same portico, which G.I. Durand claims is a copy of the seventh medallion in Paris. Here is what this author says (vol. 1, p. 336):

Messieurs Jourdain and Duval called this vice, which is the opposite of perseverance, inconstancy; but it seems to us that the word apostasy, proposed by Abbé Roze, is more appropriate to the subject represented. He is a bareheaded, beardless, tonsured character, a clergyman or monk, wearing a hooded robe that reaches halfway down his legs, which differs only from that worn by the clergyman in the group representing Wrath in the belt that girds it. Throwing aside his breeches and shoes, a kind of half-calf boots, he seems to be walking away from a beautiful little church with long, narrow windows, a cylindrical bell tower and an arched door that can be seen in the distance" (Iám. XXXIV). In a footnote, Durand adds: "In the main portico of Notre Dame de Paris, the apostate leaves his clothes inside the church; in the stained-glass window of the church itself, he is outside and clearly has the attitude of a man fleeing. In Chartres, he has stripped himself entirely naked and appears covered only by his shirt. Ruskin observes that, in the miniatures of the 12th and 13th centuries, the mad infidel is always depicted barefoot."

As for us, we find no correlation between the motif in Paris and that in Amiens.

While the former

symbolises the beginning of the Work, this one, on the contrary, expresses its completion. The church is more like an athanor, and its bell tower, which contradicts the most basic rules of architecture, is the secret furnace that encloses the philosopher's stone. This furnace is equipped with openings through which the craftsman observes the phases of the work. An important and very characteristic detail has been overlooked: we refer to the hollow vaulted arch in the base. For it is difficult to accept that a church can be built on visible vaults, so that it appears to rest on four feet. It is no less risky to liken the light mass that the artist points to with his finger to a piece of clothing. These reasons have led us to believe that the Amiens motif is the result of hermetic symbolism and represents firing, as well as the *ad hoc* apparatus. The alchemist points with his right hand to the sack of coal, and the abandonment of footwear shows the extent to which prudence and silence must be exercised in this hidden work. As for the craftsman's light clothing in the Chartres motif, this can be explained by the heat given off by the furnace. In the fourth degree of fire, operating by the dry method, it is necessary to maintain a temperature close to 1,200°, which is also essential in projection. Our modern workers in the metallurgical industry also dress in the simple manner of the alchemist of Chartres. We would indeed be very pleased to know the reason why apostates feel the need to remove their garments when leaving the temple. Precisely this reason should have been given to us, if the thesis formulated by the aforementioned authors was to be maintained and explained.

We have already seen that, in Notre Dame de Paris, the athanor also takes the form of a small tower raised above vaults. Needless to say, it was impossible, esoterically speaking, to reproduce it exactly as it was in the laboratory. They therefore limited themselves to giving it an architectural form, without, however, suppressing its characteristics, which were capable of revealing its true purpose. In it we find the constituent parts of the alchemical furnace: ash pan, tower and dome. Of course, those who have consulted the old prints – and in particular the woodcuts of *pyrotechnics* that Jean Liébaut inserted in his treatise (4) – will not be fooled by appearances.

The furnaces are represented in the form of towers, with their glacis, battlements and embrasures. Some combinations of these devices take on the appearance of buildings or small fortresses from which still peaks and retort necks emerge.

Against the right foot of the main portico, we find, in a recessed four-leaf clover, the allegory of the rooster and the fox, so dear to Basilio Valentin. The rooster is perched on an oak branch, which the fox tries to reach (lám. XXXV). The uninitiated will see in this the theme of a fable very popular in the Middle Ages, which, according to Jourdain and Duval, would be the prototype of that of the crow and the fox. But "one does not see," adds G. Durand, 'the dog or dogs that complement the fable are not visible'. This typical detail does not seem to have drawn the authors' attention to the hidden meaning of the symbol. And yet our ancestors, who were precise and meticulous translators, would not have failed to include those actors if it had been a well-known scene from a fable.

Perhaps it would be appropriate here to elaborate on the meaning of the image, for the benefit of the children of science, our brothers, more than we thought it appropriate to do so in relation to the same emblem sculpted on the Parisian portico. Later on, we will explain the close relationship between the rooster and the oak tree, which has its analogy in the family bond. For now, we will only say that the rooster and the fox are nothing more than the same hieroglyphic representing two different physical states of the same matter. What first catches the eye is the rooster, or volatile portion, and, consequently, active and full of movement, extracted from the subject, which has the oak tree as its emblem. Here is our famous fountain, whose clear water flows from the foot of the sacred tree, so revered by the Druids, and which was called Mercury by the ancient philosophers, although it bears no resemblance to it.

(4) See Jean Liébaud, *Quatre Livres des Secrets de Médecine et Philosophie Chimique*. Paris, Jacques du Puys, 1579, pp. 17 and 19.

common quicksilver. For the water we need is dry, does not wet our hands, and comes out of the rock when it is struck by Aaron's rod. Such is the alchemical significance of the rooster, emblem of Mercury for pagans and of resurrection for Christians. This rooster, however volatile it may be, can become the Phoenix. Before that, however, it must take on the provisional state of fixity that characterises the symbol of the fox, our hermetic vixen. It is important to know, before undertaking the practice, that mercury contains within itself everything necessary for the work. "Blessed be the Most High," exclaims Geber, "who created this mercury and gave it a nature that nothing can resist! For without it, no matter how hard the alchemists worked, their labour would be useless." It is the only matter we need. Indeed, this dry water, although entirely volatile, can, if a means is found to retain it for a long time in the fire, become fixed enough to resist a degree of heat that would have been sufficient to evaporate it entirely. It then changes its emblem, and its resistance to fire and its heavy quality cause the fox to be attributed to it as a symbol of its new nature. The water has become earth and the mercury has become sulphur. However, this earth, despite the beautiful colouring it has taken on through its prolonged contact with fire, would be useless in its dry form; an old axiom teaches us that any dry dye is useless in its dryness. It is therefore advisable to dissolve this earth or salt again in the same water from which it was born, or, which amounts to the same thing, in its own blood, so that it becomes volatile again and the fox regains the complexion, wings and tail of the rooster. Through a second operation, similar to the previous one, the compound will coagulate again and fight against the tyranny of fire once more; but this time, in the fusion itself and no longer because of its dry quality. Thus the first stone will be born, not absolutely fixed nor absolutely volatile, but quite permanent to fire and very penetrating and very fusible, properties that will need to be increased by a third repetition of the same technique. Then, the rooster, attribute of Saint Peter, true and flowing stone on which the Christian edifice rests, the rooster will have crowed three times.

For it is he, the first Apostle, who possesses the two linked keys of solution and coagulation; he is the symbol of the volatile stone that fire turns into a fixed and dense substance when it precipitates it. No one is unaware that Saint Peter was crucified upside down...

Among the beautiful motifs on the north portico, or Saint-Firmin, almost entirely occupied by the zodiac and corresponding bucolic or domestic scenes, we will point out two interesting bas-reliefs. The first depicts a citadel whose massive, bolted gate is flanked by crenellated towers, between which two storeys of buildings rise; a barred skylight adorns the base.

Is it a symbol of philosophical, social, moral and religious esotericism that is revealed and developed throughout one hundred and fifteen four-leaf clovers? Or is it rather, in this motif from 1225, the central idea of the alchemical Fortress, recovered and modified by Khunrath in 1609? Or is it the mysterious and closed Palace of the King of our Art, spoken of by Basilio Valentin and Philalèthe? Whatever it may be, citadel or royal mansion, the building,

Imposing and rugged in appearance, it gives a real impression of strength and impregnability. Built to preserve some treasure or keep some important secret, it seems as if it could only be entered by possessing the key to the solid locks that protect it from any break-in. It has something of a prison and a cave about it, and the door gives the impression of something sinister and threatening, reminiscent of the entrance to Tartarus:

Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.

The second four-leaf clover, placed immediately below it, shows us some dead trees, with their gnarled, twisted and intertwined branches, under a deteriorated sky, but in which the images of the sun, the moon and some stars can still be distinguished (plate XXXVI).

This trio refers to the raw materials of the great Art, metallic planets to which fire, according to the philosophers, has caused death, and which fusion has rendered inert, without vegetative power, like trees in winter.

, has caused death, and which fusion has rendered inert, without vegetative power, like trees in winter.

This is why the Masters have recommended so many times that *we intensify* them, providing them, in fluid form, with *the agent* they lost in the metallurgical reduction.

But where can this agent be found? This is the great mystery that we have often touched upon in the course of this study, breaking it down at random into emblems, so that only the perceptive researcher can know its qualities and identify its substance. We have not wanted to follow the old method, whereby a truth was stated, expressed parabolically, accompanied by one or more spacious or adulterated allegations, in order to disorient the reader incapable of separating the wheat from the chaff. Certainly, this work, which is more thankless than one might think, may be discussed and criticised; but we are sure that we can never be accused of having written a single falsehood. It is said that not all truths are good to be told; but, despite this maxim, we understand that it is possible to make them understood by using a certain finesse in language.

"Our Art," Arcephius said, "is entirely *cabalistic*"; and, indeed, the Kabbalah has always been of great use to us. It has allowed us, without altering the truth, without distorting the expression, without falsifying Science or perjuring ourselves, to say many things that one sought in vain in the books of our predecessors. On occasions, faced with the impossibility of going further without violating our oath, we preferred silence to misleading allusions, muteness to abuse of trust.

Consider, for example, what we can say here, before the *Secret of Secrets*, before this *Verbum dimissum* that we have already mentioned, and which Jesus entrusted to his Apostles, according to the testimony of St. Paul (5):

"I have been made a minister of the Church by the will of God, who has sent me to you to fulfil HIS WORD. That is to say, the SECRET that has been hidden from all times and all ages, but which now manifests itself to those whom it considers worthy."

(5) St Paul, *Epistle to the Colossians*, chapter I, verses 25 and 26.

What can we say, except to invoke the testimony of the great masters who have also tried to explain it?

'Metallic *Chaos*, produced by the hands of Nature, contains all metals and is not itself a metal. It contains gold, silver and mercury; however, it is not gold, silver or mercury' (6). This text is clear. But do you prefer symbolic language? Haymon (7) gives us an example of this when he says:

"To obtain the first agent, one must go to the back of the *world*, where thunder rumbles, wind blows, hail and rain fall; there one will find the thing, if one seeks it."

All the descriptions that philosophers have left us of their *subject*, or raw material containing the indispensable agent, are extremely confusing and mysterious. Here are some of the best ones.

The author of the commentary on *Light Emerging from Darkness* writes on page 108: "The essence in which the *spirit* we seek dwells is grafted and engraved in it, albeit with imperfect features and traits; the same is said by Ripheus the Englishman at the beginning of his *Twelve Gates and Aegidius de Vadis* in his *Dialogue on Nature*, making it clear, and as if in letters of gold, that a portion of this first *Chaos* has remained in this *world*, known but despised by some, and sold publicly." And the same author adds, on page 263, that 'this *subject* is found in many places and in each of the three kingdoms; but, if we consider the possibility of Nature, it is certain that only *metallic nature* should be helped by Nature and for Nature; thus, only in the *mineral kingdom*,

(6) *Le Psautier d'Hermophile, in Traité de la Transmutation des Métaux*. Anonymous manuscript from the 18th century, stanza XXV.

(7) Haymon, *Epistle on Lapidibus Philosophicis*. Treatise 192, vol. IV of *Theatrum Chemicum*. Argentorati, 1613.

where the metallic seed resides, we must seek the appropriate *subject* for our art."

"There is a stone of great virtue," says Nicolas Valois (8), "and it is called a stone and is not a stone, and it is mineral, vegetable and animal, found in all places and at all times, and in all people."

Flamel (9) writes similarly: "There is a stone hidden, concealed and buried in the depths of a fountain, which is vile, abject and in no way appreciated; and it is covered with dung and excrement; to which, although it is only one, all kinds of names are given. For, says the wise Morien, this stone that is not a stone is animated, having the virtue of procreating and begetting. This stone is white, for it takes its beginning, origin and race from Saturn or Mars, the Sun and Venus; and if it is Mars, Sun and Venus..."

"There exists," says Le Breton (10), "a mineral known to true sages, who conceal it in their writings under various names, which contains in abundance both the fixed and the volatile."

"The Philosophers did well," writes an anonymous author (11), "to hide this mystery from the eyes of those who only appreciate things for the use they have given them; for if they knew, or if *the Matter* that God has chosen to hide in the things that seem *useful* to them were openly revealed to them, they would hold them in higher esteem." Here is an idea similar to another from *The Imitation* (12), with which we will conclude these abstruse quotations:

"He who esteems things for what they are worth, and does not judge them according to the merit or appreciation of men, possesses true Wisdom." And now let us return to the façade of Amiens.

The anonymous master who sculpted the medallions of the portico of the Virgin Mother interpreted the

(8) *Works by N. Grosparmy and Nicolas Valois*, op. cit., p. 140.

(9) Nicolas Flamel, *Original du Désir désiré, o trésor de Philosophie*. Paris, Hulpeau, 1629, p. 144.

(10) Le Breton, *Clefs de la Philosophie Spagyrique*. Paris, Jombert, 1722, p. 240.

(11) *The Key to the Hermetic Cabinet*, manuscript, op. cit., p. 10.

(12) *Imitation of Christ*, book II, chapter 1, verse 6.

condensation of the universal spirit; an Adept contemplates a stream of *heavenly dew* falling on a mass that many authors consider to be a fleece. Without challenging this opinion, it is equally plausible to suppose that it is a different body, such as the mineral known as *Magnesia* or *the philosophical Magnet*. It will be noted that the water falls only on the object in question, which seems to express the existence of a hidden *virtue of attraction* in this body, something that would not be trivial to try to establish (plate XXXVII).

We believe that this is the appropriate place to rectify certain errors committed with regard to a symbolic plant, which, taken literally by ignorant alchemists, contributed greatly to discrediting alchemy and ridiculing its supporters. We are referring to *Nostoc*. This cryptogam, known to all peasants, is found everywhere in the countryside, sometimes on the grass, sometimes on the ground, in fields, on the side of roads or at the edge of forests. In spring, early in the morning, we find them voluminous, swollen with night dew. Gelatinous and trembling—hence their name *tremella*—they are often greenish in colour and dry so quickly under the action of the sun's rays that it is impossible to find any trace of them in the same place where they were a few hours earlier. All these characteristics combined—sudden appearance, water absorption and swelling, green colouring, soft and sticky consistency—led philosophers to take this algae as a hieroglyphic symbol of their subject matter. Now, it is highly probable that what we see in the four-leaf clover of Amiens, absorbing the heavenly dew, is a mixture of plants of this genus, symbol of the mineral *Magnesia* of the Sages. We will not dwell too much on the many names given to *Nostoc*, which, in the minds of the Masters, referred solely to its mineral principle: *Celestial Vital Principle*, *Moon Spittle*, *Earth Butter*, *Dew Fat*, *Vegetable Vitriol*, *Flos Coeli*, etc., depending on whether they considered it to be a receptacle of the universal Spirit, or as terrestrial matter, exhaled from the centre in a state of vapour and then coagulated by cooling upon contact with the air.

These strange terms, which nevertheless have their *raison d'être*, caused the real and initiatory significance of the

Nostoc. This word comes from the Greek *Yve, PvXTog*, equivalent to the Latin *nox, noctis, night*. It is, therefore, something that *is born at night*, that needs the night to develop and that can only be used at night. In this way, *our subject* remains admirably hidden from the eyes of the uninitiated, although it can be easily distinguished and manipulated by those who possess an exact knowledge of the laws of nature. But, alas, how few take the trouble to reflect and remain simple in their reasoning!

Tell us, you who have already *worked* so hard: what do you intend to do with your lit stoves, with your Numerous, varied, and useless tools? Do you expect to achieve true and complete *creation*? No, certainly not, since the power to create belongs only to God, the one and only Creator. So, what you wish to bring about within your materials is a *generation*. But in this case, you need the help of Nature, and you can be sure that this help will be denied you if, through bad luck or ignorance, you do not put Nature in a position to apply its laws. What, then, is the primary, essential *condition* for any generation to manifest itself? We will answer for you: *the total absence of all sunlight*, even diffuse or filtered. Look around you, question your own nature. Do you not observe that, in both humans and animals, *fertilisation and generation* occur, thanks to a certain disposition of the organs, in *complete darkness*, until the day of birth? Is it on the surface of the soil—in full light—or inside the earth—in darkness—that plant seeds can germinate and reproduce? Is it the day or the night that pours the fertilising dew that nourishes and invigorates them? Observe mushrooms: do they not be born, grow and develop at night? And as for yourselves, is it not during the night, in your sleep, that your organism repairs its losses, eliminates its waste and produces new cells and new tissues to replace what has been burned, worn out and destroyed by the light of day? Even the work of digestion, assimilation and transformation of food into blood and organic substance is carried out in darkness. Would you like to try an experiment? Take a few fertilised eggs and incubate them in a well-lit room; at the end of the incubation period, all these eggs will contain dead embryos, more or less decomposed. If any chicks are born, they will be blind, rickety, and will die very quickly. Such is the harmful influence of the sun, not on the vitality of individuals, but on *the generation*. And do not imagine that we have to limit the effects of this fundamental law of created Nature to the organic kingdoms. Even minerals, despite their less visible reactions, are subject to it just as much as animals and plants. It is well known that the obtaining of the photographic image is based on the property possessed by silver salts of *decomposing* under light. These salts thus recover their *inert* metallic state, whereas in the dark laboratory they had acquired an active, living, and sensitive quality. Two mixed gases, chlorine and hydrogen, retain their integrity while kept in the dark; they combine slowly under diffuse light, and with a violent explosion when exposed to sunlight. A large number of metallic salts in solution transform or precipitate in more or less time in daylight. Thus, earthy sulphate quickly turns into sulphate.

ferric, etc.

We must not forget, then, that the sun is the ultimate destroyer of all substances that are too young, too weak to resist its fiery power. And this is so true that this special action has served as the basis for a therapeutic method for the cure of external conditions and for the rapid healing of sores and wounds. It is this deadly power of the sun over microbial cells, first, and then over organic cells, that has made it possible to establish phototherapeutic treatment.

And now, work by day if you so desire, but do not blame us if your efforts always end in failure. We know that the goddess Isis is the mother of all things, that she carries them all in her womb, and that she alone is the dispenser of *Revelation* and *Initiation*. Profane ones, who have eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear, to whom else would you direct your prayers? Do you not know that Jesus can only be reached through the intercession of his *Mother; sancta Maria ora pro nobis*? And the Virgin is represented, for your instruction, standing on the *crescent moon* and always dressed in blue, the symbolic colour of the night star. We could say much more about this, but we believe we have said enough.

Let us therefore conclude our study of the original hermetic types in Amiens Cathedral by pointing out, to the left of the same portico of the Virgin Mother, a small angular motif with an initiation scene. The master points out to three of his disciples the *hermetic star* we have spoken so much about, the traditional star that guides philosophers and reveals to them the birth of *the son of the sun* (plate XXXVIII). Let us recall here, with regard to this star, the motto of Nicolas Rollin, chancellor of Philip *the Good*, which was painted in 1447 on the tiling of the hospital in Beaune, which he founded. This motto, presented in the form of a riddle -Sola*, bore witness to the science of its owner through the characteristic *sign* of the Work, the *one and only star*.

BOURGES

I

Bourges, an old city in Berry, silent, secluded, quiet and grey like a monastic cloister, legitimately proud of its admirable cathedral, also offers lovers of the past other buildings that are no less remarkable. Among these, the palace of Jacques-Coeur and the Lallemand mansion are the purest gems in its marvellous crown.

We will say little about the former, which was once a veritable museum of hermetic emblems. Vandalism took its toll on it. Its successive destinies ruined the interior decoration, and if the façade had not been preserved in its original state, it would be impossible for us today to imagine, before the bare walls, the battered rooms and the high galleries threatening ruin, the original magnificence of this sumptuous mansion.

Jacques Coeur, chief treasurer of Charles V-H, who had it built in the 15th century, had a reputation as an experienced Adept. Indeed, David de Planis-Campy says that he possessed "the precise gift of the blank stone", or, in other words, the transmutation of base metals into *silver*. *Perhaps this is where his title of treasurer came from*. Be that as it may, we must acknowledge that Jacques Coeur did everything he could to prove, through a profusion of carefully chosen symbols, his true, or supposed, status as a *philosopher of fire*.

Everyone knows the coat of arms and motto of this distinguished figure: *three hearts* occupying the centre of this emblem, presented as a hieroglyph: *A vaillants cuers riens impossible*. Utterly magnificent, brimming with energy and, if we study it according to the rules of Kabbalah, it takes on a rather unique meaning. Indeed, if we read *cuers* with the spelling of the time, we obtain at the same time: 1st, the statement of the universal Spirit (*ray of light*); 2nd, the common name of the basic material worked (*iron*), and 3rd, the three repetitions indispensable for the total perfection of the two magisteriums (the three *cuers*). We are therefore convinced that Jacques Coeur personally practised alchemy, or at least witnessed the creation of the *white stone* using iron 'transformed into essence' and baked three times.

Among our treasurer's favourite hieroglyphs, the shell of St James, like the heart, occupies a place preponderant. The two images always appear together or arranged symmetrically, as we can see in the central motifs of the trefoil circles on the windows, balustrades, panels, door handles, etc. Undoubtedly, this duality of the shell and the heart may constitute the hieroglyphic symbol of the owner's name, or his cryptographic signature. However, pectiniform shells (*pecten Jacoboaeus* of the naturalists) have always been the insignia of the pilgrims of Santiago. They were worn on the hat (as we can see in a statue in Westminster Abbey), around the neck or pinned to the chest, always in a very visible way. The *Shell of Compostela* (lám. XXXIX), about which there is much to say, serves, in secret symbolism, to designate the *principle of Mercury (1)*, also called the *Traveller or Pilgrim*. It is mystically worn by all those who undertake the task and seek to obtain the star (*compos stella*). It is therefore not surprising that Jacques Coeur had the popular *icon peregrini* reproduced at the entrance to his palace.

(1) Mercury is the *holy water* of philosophers. Large shells were once used to contain *holy water*; we often still find them in many rural churches.

among the alchemists of the Middle Ages. Does not Nicolas Flamel himself, in his *Hieroglyphic Figures*, describe the parabolic journey he undertook, according to him, to ask "Lord Yago of Galicia" for help, light and protection? All alchemists find themselves in the same situation at the beginning. They must undertake this long and dangerous journey, guided by the cord and marked by the shell, half of which is by land and half by sea. They must be pilgrims first and pilots second.

The chapel, restored and entirely painted, is of little interest. Except for the ribbed vaulted ceiling, where a twenty angels, looking a little too new, carry the globe on their foreheads and unroll phylacteries, and an Annunciation carved on the tympanum of the door, nothing remains of the symbolism of yesteryear. Let us move on, then, to the most curious and original part of the palace.

In the chamber known as the *Treasury*, we see a delightful ornamental group carved on a corbel.

It is said that

it represents the meeting of Tristan and Isolde. We will not deny this, since, moreover, the theme does not alter in any way the symbolic expression that emerges from the image. The beautiful medieval poem is part of the cycle of romances of the *Round Table*, traditional hermetic legends that are a renewal of Greek fables. It alludes directly to the transmission of ancient scientific knowledge, under the veil of ingenious fictions popularised by the genius of our Picard troubadours (Iám. XL).

In the centre of the motif, a small hollow cubic chest stands out at the foot of a leafy tree whose leaves conceal the

crowned head of King Marc. On either side, we see *Tristan of Leonis* and Isolde, the former wearing a round hat and the latter a crown held in her right hand. These characters are depicted in *the forest of Morois*, which is carpeted with flowers and tall grasses, and both gaze at the mysterious hollow stone that separates them.

The myth of Tristan de Leonis is a copy of that of Theseus. Tristan kills *Morlot* in combat, Theseus kills the *Minotaur*. Here

we find again the hieroglyph of *the Green Lion* - hence the name *Léonois* or *Léonnais* borne by Tristan - , which Basilio Valentin shows us in the form of a fight between two champions: the *eagle* and the *dragon*. This singular combat between chemical bodies, whose combination produces the secret solvent (and the vessel of the compound), has been the subject of a large number of profane fables and religious allegories. It is Cadmus nailing the serpent to an oak tree; Apollo killing the monster Python with his arrows, and Jason killing the dragon of Colchis; Horus fighting the Typhon of the Osirian myth; Hercules cutting off the heads of the Hydra, and Perseus that of the Gorgon; Saint Michael, Saint George, and Saint Marcellus slaying the Dragon, Christian copies of Perseus riding Pegasus and killing the monster guarding Andromeda; it is also the battle between the fox and the cock, which we have already discussed when describing the medallions in Paris; it is that of the alchemist and the dragon (Cyliani), of the remora and the salamander (by Cyrano Bergerac), of the red snake and the green snake, etc.

This unusual solvent allows the *resurgence* (2) of natural gold, its softening and return to its primitive state. in a saline, crumbly and highly fusible state. It is the rejuvenation of the king that all authors point to, the beginning of a new evolutionary phase, personified, in the motif at hand, by Tristan, King Marc's nephew. In reality, uncle and nephew are - chemically speaking - one and the same thing, of the same gender and similar origin. Gold loses its crown—by losing its colour—for a certain period of time, and is deprived of it until it reaches the degree of superiority to which art and nature can elevate it. Then it inherits a second crown, 'infinitely more noble than the first', according to Limojon de Asaint-Didier. This is why we can clearly see the silhouettes of Tristan and Queen Isolde, while the old king remains hidden among the foliage of the central tree, which emerges from the stone, just as the tree of Jesse emerges from the Patriarch's chest. Let us also note that the queen is, in a

(2) A hermetic technical term meaning *to return to a raw state*, that is, to return to a state prior to that which characterises maturity, to regress.

At the same time, she is the wife of both the old man and the young hero, in order to maintain the hermetic tradition that makes the king, queen and lover the mineral triad of the Great Work. Finally, let us point out a detail of some value for the analysis of the symbol. The tree behind Tristan is laden with enormous fruits—giant pears or figs—in such abundance that the leaves disappear beneath their mass. Strange forest indeed, this *Mort-Roi*, and how tempted we are to liken it to the fabulous and marvellous Garden of the Hesperides!

II

But even more than the Palace of Jacques Coeur, the Lallemand Mansion catches our attention. A bourgeois residence,

modest dimensions and less ancient in style, it has the rare advantage of presenting itself to us in a state of perfect preservation. No restoration, no mutilation, has stripped it of the beautiful symbolic character that emerges from its abundant decoration of delicate and meticulous themes.

The body of the building, constructed on a slope, shows the foot of its façade at the level of a floor below the courtyard.

This layout requires the use of an ingenious and original staircase without a vaulted ceiling, which provides access to the inner courtyard, where the entrance to the apartments is located.

On the vaulted landing at the foot of the staircase, the caretaker—whose exquisite affability is worthy of praise—pushes open a door to our right. "Here," he tells us, "is the kitchen." This is a fairly large room, dug out of the subsoil, with a low ceiling and barely lit by a single window, wider than it is tall and divided by a stone column. A tiny, shallow fireplace constitutes the "kitchen" proper. In support of his statement, our guide points to an ornamental motif at the base of the vault, depicting a clergyman wielding a pestle. Is this really the image of a 16th-century kitchen boy? We remain sceptical. Our gaze wanders from the small fireplace—where one could barely roast a turkey, but which would certainly be enough to house the tower of an athanor—to the doll promoted to cook, and finally takes in the whole kitchen, so sad and gloomy on this bright summer's day...

The more we reflect on it, the more implausible the guide's explanation seems to us. This low, dark room, separated from the dining room by a staircase and an open courtyard, with nothing more than a narrow, inadequate fireplace, devoid of an iron griddle and hearth, could hardly be used for even the simplest culinary functions. On the contrary, it seems to us extremely suitable for alchemical work, which excludes sunlight as the enemy of all creation. As for the cauldron, we know too well the skill, care and scrupulous accuracy with which the artists of yesteryear translated their ideas to describe the object shown to visitors as a mortar. We cannot believe that the artist would have disdained to represent the mortar, an indispensable complement to the pestle. Moreover, the shape of the utensil itself is characteristic; what the doll in question is holding is actually a long-necked flask, similar to those used by our chemists and also called balloons because of their spherical belly. Finally, the end of the handle of the supposed pestle appears hollow and cut obliquely, which proves beyond doubt that we are in the presence of a utensil, either a glass or a small flask (Íám. XLI).

This indispensable and highly secret vessel was given various names, chosen with the intention of concealing from the uninitiated not only its true purpose, but also its composition. The Initiates will understand us and know perfectly well what vessel we are referring to. In general, it is called the philosophical egg and the Green Lion. By the term egg, the Sages mean its compound, placed in its appropriate vessel and ready to undergo the transformations that the action of fire will cause in it. And it is indeed, in this sense, an egg, since its envelope, or shell, encloses the philosopher's stone, formed of white and red in a proportion analogous to that of a bird's egg. As for the second epithet, the texts have never given their interpretation. Batsdorff says, in his *Ariadne's Thread*, that philosophers gave the name Green Lion to the vessel used for cooking, but he does not explain why. The *Cosmopolitan*, insisting above all on the quality of the vessel and its necessity for the work, states that, in the Work, "there is only this Green Lion that closes and opens the seven indissoluble seals of the seven metallic spirits, and that torments the bodies until they are entirely perfected, through the prolonged and steadfast patience of the artist". The manuscript of F. Aurach (1) shows us a glass flask, half-filled with a green liquor, and adds that the whole art consists in the acquisition of this single green Lion, whose name even indicates its colour. It is the vitriol of Basilio Valentin. The third figure in the *Golden Fleece* is almost identical to the image of G. Aurach. In it we see a philosopher dressed in red, covered with a purple cloak and wearing a green cap, holding a glass flask containing a green liquid in his right hand. Ripley comes closer to the truth when he says: "Only an unclean body enters our teaching; philosophers usually call it green lion. It is the means of combining the tinctures between the sun and the moon."

From these reports, it can be inferred that the vessel must be considered from the dual perspective of its material and its form; on the one hand, in its natural state as a vessel and, on the other, as a work of art. The descriptions—few in number and unclear—that we have just cited refer to the nature of the vessel; many texts instruct us on the shape of the egg. This can be spherical or ovoid, according to the artist's preference, as long as it is made of clear, transparent glass without bubbles. Its walls require a certain thickness in order to withstand internal pressures, and some authors

(1) *Le Très précieux Don de Dieu*. Manuscript by Georges Aurach, of Strasbourg, written and painted in his own hand, in the year of Grace of redeemed Humanity 1415.

recommend choosing the Lorraine glass (2) for this purpose. Finally, the neck may be long or short, depending on the artist's intention or convenience; the essential thing is that it can be easily soldered to the enameller's lamp. But these practical details are sufficiently well known that we need not give further explanations.

As far as we are concerned, we only wish to emphasise that the laboratory and the vessel of the Work – the place where the Adept works and where Nature acts – are the two certain facts that impress the initiate at the beginning of his visit and make the Lallemand Mansion one of the most seductive and rarest philosophical dwellings.

Following the guide, we now find ourselves walking on the tiled floor of the courtyard. After a few steps, we reach the entrance to a brightly lit loggia through a portico formed by three arched openings. It is a large room with a ceiling crossed by thick beams. A series of monoliths, steles and other ancient fragments give it the appearance of a local archaeological museum. For us, however, the most interesting feature is not this, but the back wall, where a magnificent painted stone bas-relief is embedded. It depicts Saint Christopher placing the Baby Jesus on the rocky bank of the legendary stream they have just crossed. In the background, a hermit emerges from his hut, holding a lantern in his hand – as the scene takes place at night – and walks towards the Child King (Íám. XLII).

We have often come across beautiful ancient representations of Saint Christopher; none, however, has been more in keeping with the legend than this one. There seems to be no doubt that the theme of this masterpiece and the text by Jacques de Voragine contain the same hermetic meaning; this, in addition to a certain detail that I do not believe can be found elsewhere. Saint Christopher thus acquires capital importance in view of the analogy between the giant who carries Christ and the material that brings gold (Xpυvo<popog), performing the same function.

(2) The term Lorraine glass was once used to distinguish moulded glass from blown glass. Thanks to moulding, Lorraine glass could have very thick and regular walls.

in the Work. As our intention is to serve the sincere and bona fide student, we will now develop its esotericism, which we had reserved for this place when referring to the statues of Saint Christopher and the monolith erected in the atrium of Notre-Dame de Paris. But, in order for you to understand us better, we will first transcribe the legendary account that Amédée de Ponthieu (3) took from Jacques de Voragine. We will deliberately highlight the passages and names that directly refer to the work, the conditions and the materials, so that the reader can dwell on them, reflect and benefit from them.

Before becoming a Christian, Christopher was called Offerus. He was a kind of giant, and very hard to deal with. When he came of age, he set out on a journey, saying that he wanted to serve the greatest king on earth. He was sent to the court of a very powerful king, who was delighted to have such a strong servant. One day, the king, upon hearing a minstrel utter the name of the devil, made the sign of the cross in terror.

"Why are you doing that?" Christopher asked immediately. "Because I fear the devil," replied the king. "If you fear him, then you are not as powerful as he is. In that case, I want to serve the devil." With that, Offerus left.

After a long journey in search of the powerful monarch, he saw a large troop of horsemen dressed in red coming towards him; their leader, who was black, said to him: "Who are you looking for?" "I am looking for the devil to serve him." "I am the devil. Follow me." And so Offerus joined Satan's followers. One day, after riding for a long time, the infernal troop came across a cross by the side of the road; the devil ordered them to turn back. "Why did you do that?" asked Offerus, always eager to learn. "Because I fear the image of Christ... If you fear the image of Christ, it means you are less powerful than him; in that case, I want to enter the service of Christ. Offerus passed alone in front of the cross and continued on his way. He found a good hermit and asked him where he could see Christ. "Everywhere," he replied.

(3) Amédée de Ponthieu, *Légendes du Vieux Paú*. Paris, Bachelin-Deflorenne, 1867, p. 106.

replied the hermit. "I don't understand," said Offerus, "but if you have told me the truth, what services can a strong and alert young man like me render him?" "You serve him," replied the hermit, "with prayer, fasting and vigil." Offerus grimaced. "Is there no other way to please him?" he asked. The hermit understood the kind of man he had before him, and taking him by the hand, he led him to the bank of a rushing torrent that descended from a high mountain, and said to him, "The poor who crossed these waters drowned; stay here, and carry those who ask you to the other side on your strong shoulders. If you do this for the love of Christ, He will accept you as His servant." "Yes, I will do it for the love of Christ," replied Offerus. And so he built a hut on the riverbank and began to carry travellers who asked him to, night and day.

One night, overcome by fatigue, he was fast asleep when he was awakened by a knock at his door and heard a child's voice calling his name three times. He got up, lifted the child onto his broad back, and entered the torrent. When he reached the middle, he saw that the torrent suddenly became furious, that the waves swelled and rushed over his sinewy legs to knock him down. The man held on as best he could, but the child weighed like an enormous burden; then, afraid of dropping the little traveller, he pulled up a tree to lean on it; but the current continued to grow and the child became heavier and heavier. Offerus, fearing he would drown, raised his head towards him and said, "Child, why are you so heavy? It feels as if I am carrying the world." The child replied, "You are not only carrying the world, but the One who made the world. I am Christ, your God and Lord. In reward for your good service, I baptise you in the name of my Father, in my own name and in that of the Holy Spirit; from now on, you shall be called Christopher." From that day on, Christopher travelled the earth to teach the word of Christ.

This narrative suffices to demonstrate how faithfully the artist observed and reproduced the smallest details of the legend.

But he did even more. Under the inspiration of the wise Hermeticist who had commissioned the work (4), he placed the giant with his feet in the water and dressed him in a light cloth tied over his shoulder and fastened with a wide belt at the abdomen. It is this belt that gives Saint Christopher his true esoteric character. What we are going to say here about him is something that is not taught. But, apart from the fact that science revealed in this way is no less mysterious, we understand that a book that teaches nothing would be useless and vain. For this reason, we will endeavour to strip the symbol down as much as possible, in order to show researchers of the occult the scientific fact hidden beneath its image.

The belt of Offerus appears stitched with criss-crossed stripes, similar to those found on the surface of the solvent when it has been canonically prepared. Such is the Sign that all philosophers admit to indicate, externally, the virtue, perfection and extraordinary purity intrinsic to its mercurial substance. We have said before on numerous occasions, and we will repeat it here, that all the work of the art consists in animating this mercury until it appears covered with the indicated sign. And the ancient authors called this sign the Seal of Hermes, the Salt of the Wise (using Salt for Seal) - which has led to confusion in the minds of researchers - the mark and imprint of the Almighty, His signature, and also the Star of the Magi, the North Star, and so on. This geometric arrangement remains and appears more clearly when gold has been dissolved in mercury to return it to its primitive state, that of young or rejuvenated gold; in a word, child gold. For this reason, mercury—faithful servant and Seal of the earth—is called the Fountain of Youth. Philosophers speak with great clarity when they teach that mercury, once dissolved, carries the child, the Son of the Sun, the Little King (Roitelet), like a true mother, since gold is effectively reborn in its womb. "The wind—which is winged mercury and

(4) From certain documents preserved in the archives of the Lallemand Mansion, we know that Jean Lallemand belonged to the alchemical brotherhood of the Knights of the Round Table.

volatile—she has carried it in her womb," Hermes tells us in his Emerald Table. That being said, we find the secret version of this positive truth in the Galette des Rois, which is usually eaten with the family on Epiphany, a famous feast that commemorates the manifestation of the infant Jesus Christ to the Magi and the Gentiles. According to tradition, the Magi were guided to the Saviour's cradle by a star, which was, for them, the sign announcing the Good News of his birth. Our Galette is marked like the matter itself, and contains in its dough the little child popularly known as the bather. It is the Child Jesus, carried by Offerus, the servant or the traveller, it is the gold in his bath, the bather; the bean, the clog, the cradle or the cross of honour, and it is the fish "that swims in our philosophical sea", according to the Cosmopolitan's own expression (5). It should be noted that, in Byzantine basilicas, Christ was sometimes represented as a mermaid, with a fish tail. We can see this in a capital in the church of Saint-Brice, in Saint-Brisson-sur-Loire (Loiret). The fish is the hieroglyph of the philosopher's stone in its primitive state, because the stone, like the fish, is born in water and lives in water. Among the paintings on the alchemical stove executed in 1702 by P.-H. Plan (6), we see a fisherman with a rod pulling a beautiful fish out of the water. Other allegories recommend fishing with the aid of a net or mesh, which is an exact image of the meshes formed by crossed threads and schematised in our galettes (7) of the Epiphany. Let us point out, however, another more rare but no less luminous emblematic form. At the home of a family friend, where we were invited to eat the Three Kings' cake, we saw, with some amazement, an oak tree with outstretched branches on the crust, instead of the diamonds that usually appear on it. The bather had been replaced by a porcelain fish, and this fish was a sole.

(5) *Cosmopolite or Nouvelle Lumière chimique. Traité du Sel* p. 76. Paris, J. d'Houry, 1669.

(6) Preserved in the museum of Winterthur (Switzerland).

(7) The popular expression avoir de la galette means to be lucky. Whoever is lucky enough to find the bean in the cake will never want for anything; they will never lack money. They will be twice king, by science and by fortune. (The galette is equivalent to our roscón. Translator's note)

(sole) (Latin, Sol, soles, the sun). We will soon explain the hermetic significance of the oak tree when discussing the Golden Fleece. Let us also add that the famous fish of the Cosmopolitan, called Echineis by him, is the ursino (echinus), the bear cub, the lesser bear, the constellation in which the North Star is found. The shells of fossil ursinos, found in abundance in all terrains, have a star-shaped radiating face. For this reason, Limojon de Saint-Didier recommends that researchers orient their course by "looking at the star of the nota". This mysterious fish is the royal fish par excellence; whoever finds it in their portion of cake is invested with the title of king and treated as such. In ancient times, the name royal fish was given to the dolphin, sturgeon, salmon and trout because, according to legend, they were species reserved for the king's table.

In reality, this name was only symbolic, since the firstborn son of kings, the heir to the crown, always bore the title of Dauphin, the name of a fish, and, better still, a royal fish. It is, moreover, a dolphin that the fishermen in the Mutus Liber boat try to catch with a line and hook. The fish we see in various ornamental motifs in the Lallemand Mansion are also dolphins: in the window in the middle of the corner turret, on the capital of a column, and also on the top of a small sideboard in the chapel. The Greek Ictus in the Roman catacombs has the same origin. Martigny (8) reproduces a curious painting from the catacombs depicting a fish swimming in the waves and carrying a basket on its back, containing some bread and a red, elongated object, which is perhaps a glass filled with wine. The basket carried by the fish is the same hieroglyph depicted on the galette des rois, as it is made of intertwined wicker. So as not to dwell further on these comparisons, we will simply draw the attention of the curious to the basket of Bacchus, called a cista, which was carried by the cistophorae in the Bacchanalian processions and "in which - we

(8) Martigny, Dictionnaire des Antiquités chrétiennes, art. Eucharistie, 2nd ed., page 291. Fr.

Noel says (9) - it contained all that was most mysterious.

Even the dough of the galette is in accordance with the laws of traditional symbolism. This dough is flaky, and our little bather is inserted into it in the manner of bookmarks. Here we have an interesting confirmation of the subject represented by the Twelfth Night cake. Sendivogius tells us that prepared mercury has the appearance and shape of a stony, crumbly, flaky mass. 'If you look closely,' he says, 'you will notice that it is all shaped like leaves.' Indeed, the crystalline layers that make up its substance are superimposed like the pages of a book, which is why it has been given the epithets of leafy earth, earth of leaves, book of leaves, and so on. Thus, we see the first matter of the Work symbolically expressed by a book, sometimes open, sometimes closed, depending on whether it has been worked or simply extracted from the mine. Sometimes, when this book is represented closed—which indicates the raw mineral substance—it is not uncommon to see it closed with seven ribbons; these are the marks of the seven successive operations that allow it to be opened, each one breaking one of the seals that keep it closed. Such is the Great Book of Nature, which contains within its pages the revelation of the profane sciences and the sacred mysteries. Its style is simple and easy to read, provided, however, that one knows where to find it—which is very difficult—and, above all, that one knows how to open it, which is even more laborious.

Let us now visit the interior of the palace. At the back of the courtyard, open the semicircular archway that leads to the apartments. There are some very beautiful things there, and lovers of our Renaissance will find plenty to delight them. Let us cross the dining room, whose coffered ceiling and tall fireplace, bearing the coats of arms of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany, are marvels in themselves, and cross the threshold of the chapel, a true jewel, lovingly chiselled and carved by

(9) Fr. Noel, Dictionnaire de la Fable, Paris, Le Normant, 1801.

adorable artists, this small, elongated room has little in common with a chapel, except for the window with three pointed arches in the ogival style. All the ornamentation is secular, and all its motifs have been taken from hermetic science. A superb painted bas-relief, executed in the manner of Saint Christopher in the loggia, has as its theme the pagan myth of the Golden Fleece. The coffered ceiling frames numerous hieroglyphic figures. A beautiful 16th-century credenza poses an alchemical enigma. Not a religious scene, not a verse from a psalm, not a parable from the Gospel; only the mysterious word of the priestly art... Is it possible that this cabinet, so unorthodox in appearance but so appropriate, was used for

Mystical intimacy, for meditation and reading, that is, for the philosopher's prayer? Chapel, study or oratory? We do not know how to answer this question.

The bas-relief of the Golden Fleece, the first thing you notice upon entering, is a beautiful landscape on stone, enhanced by colour but dimly lit, and full of curious details that are difficult to study due to the patina of time. In the centre of a circle of moss-covered rocks and vertical walls, a forest consisting mainly of oak trees raises its rough trunks and spreads its foliage. In several clearings, we see various animals that are difficult to identify—a dromedary, an ox or a cow, a frog on top of a rock, etc.—which enliven the wild and unattractive environment of the place. Flowers and reeds of the fragmita genus grow on the grassy ground. On the right, the lamb's skin appears placed on a rock ledge and guarded by a dragon whose menacing silhouette is silhouetted against the sky. Jason himself was depicted at the foot of an oak tree, but this part of the composition, undoubtedly not very adherent, detached itself from the rest (Iám. XLIII).

The fable of the Golden Fleece is a complete enigma of the hermetic work that must lead to the attainment of the Philosopher's Stone (10). In the language of the Adepts, the matter prepared for the Work is called the Golden Fleece, thus

(10) See Alchimie, op. cit.

as the final result. This is entirely accurate, since these substances differ only in their purity, fixity and maturity. The Philosopher's Stone and the Philosopher's Stone are therefore similar in kind and origin, but the former is raw, while the latter, derived from the former, is perfectly cooked and softened. The Greek poets tell us that "Zeus was so pleased with the sacrifice made by Phrixus in his honour that he wanted those who had the Golden Fleece to live in abundance while they kept it in their possession, and that everyone should be allowed to try to conquer it". We can safely say that very few people make use of this authorisation. It is not that it is an impossible task, nor does it involve extraordinary danger—for those who know the dragon also know how to defeat it—but there is great difficulty in interpreting the symbolism. How can we establish a satisfactory concordance between so many diverse images and so many contradictory texts? However, it is the only means we have to recognise the right path among all the dead ends and insurmountable obstacles that stand in our way and tempt the impatient neophyte to continue on his journey. For this reason, we will never tire of exhorting disciples to direct their efforts towards solving this obscure point—albeit material and tangible—the axis around which all the symbolic combinations we study revolve.

Here, the truth appears veiled under two different images, that of the oak tree and that of the lamb, which, as we have just said, represent the same thing under two different aspects. In fact, the oak tree was always adopted by the ancient authors to designate the common name of the initial subject, as we find it in the mine. And it is by a little-more-or-less, whose equivalent corresponds to the oak tree, that the Philosophers instruct us on this matter. The phrase we use may seem ambiguous; we regret this, but we could not express ourselves better without overstepping certain limits. Only those initiated into the language of the gods will understand without any effort, because they possess the keys that open all doors, whether in science or religion. But among the supposed Kabbalists, Jews or Christians, richer in vanity than in knowledge, how many Melampus, Tiresias, or Thales are there who are capable of understanding these things? Certainly, it is not for them, whose illusory combinations lead to nothing solid, positive, or scientific, that we take the trouble to write. Let us therefore leave these doctors of Kabbalah in their ignorance and return to our subject, hermetically characterised by the oak tree.

Everyone knows that oak trees often have small, round, rough growths on their leaves, sometimes perforated, which are called galls (Latin: gana). Now, if we combine three words from the same Latin family: gallia, Gallit, gallus, we get agalla, Galia, gallo. The rooster is the emblem of Gaul and an attribute of Mercury, as Jacob Tollius expressly states (1 l); it crowns the bell towers of French churches, and it is not without reason that France has been called the Firstborn Daughter of the Church. We need only take one more step to discover what the masters of art so jealously concealed. Let us continue. Not only does the oak provide us with gall, but it also gives us kermes, which has, in *The Gay Science*, the same meaning as Hermes due to the permutation of the initial consonants. Both terms have the same meaning: that of Mercury. However, just as the gall gives us the name of the raw mercurial matter, kermes (in Arabic girmiz, which stains scarlet) characterises the prepared substance. It is important not to confuse these things, so as not to get lost when moving on to the essays. Remember, then, that the mercury of the philosophers, that is, their prepared matter, must possess the virtue of dyeing, and that it only acquires this virtue through prior preparations.

As for the crude subject of the Work, some call it Lunar Magnesia, others, more sincere, call it Lead of the Wise, Vegetable Satumia. Philaléthe, Basilio Valentin and the Cosmopolitan give it the name Son or Child

of Satumo. With these names, they refer either to its magnetic and sulphur-attracting properties, or to its quality as

(11) *Manuductio ad Coelum chemicum Amstelodami*, S. J. Waesbergios, 1688.

fuse and its easy liquefaction. For all of them, it is the Holy Land (Terra Sancta): and, finally, this mineral has as its celestial hieroglyph the astronomical sign of the Lamb (Aries), Gala means milk in Greek, and mercury is also called Virgin's Milk (*lac virginis*). If you pay attention, my brothers, to what we have said about the galette des rois, and if you know why the Egyptians deified the cat, you can no longer have any doubt about the subject you must choose; its common name will appear to you with complete clarity. Then you will possess that Chaos of the Wise "in which all hidden secrets are potentially found," as Philaléthe asserts, and which the skilled artist takes very little time to activate. Open—that is, break down—this matter, try to isolate its pure portion, or its metallic soul, according to the established expression, and you will obtain the Quermes, the Hermes, the tincture mercury that carries within itself the mystical gold, in the same way that Saint Christopher carries Jesus, and the lamb its own fleece. Then you will understand why the Golden Fleece hangs from the oak tree, in the manner of the gall and the quermes, and you will be able to say, without straying from the truth, that the hermetic oak tree acts as the mother of the secret mercury. By comparing legends and symbols, light will dawn in your spirit and you will understand the close affinity that unites the oak with the lamb, Saint Christopher with the Child King, the Good Shepherd with the sheep, the Christian version of Hermes the bearer, etc.

Once you have crossed the threshold of the chapel, stand in the centre and look up to admire one of the most beautiful collections of emblems to be found anywhere (12). The ceiling, composed of coffers arranged in three longitudinal rows, is supported, halfway along its length, by two square columns attached to the walls and featuring four grooves on their front face.

The one on the right, facing the only window that illuminates the small room, displays a skull among its volutes.

(12) Two priceless coffered ceilings, with initiatory themes, can be compared to it

: one, in Dampierre-sur-Boutonne, also sculpted, from the 16th century (*Les Demeures Philosophales*); the other, in Plessis-Bourré, composed of paintings, from the 15th century (*Deux Logis Alchimiques*).

human, with two wings and supported by a pedestal of oak leaves. An expressive image of a new generation, sprouting from the putrefaction that follows death, suffered by mixed bodies when they have lost their vital and volatile soul. The death of the body produces a dark blue or black colouring, characteristic of the Raven, the hieroglyph of the *caput mortuum* of the Work. Such is the sign and the first manifestation of dissolution, of the separation of the elements and of the future regeneration of sulphur, the colouring and fixed principle of metals. The two wings are placed there to teach us that when the volatile and aqueous parts flee, the parts become dislocated and cohesion is broken. The mortified body falls into black ashes that look like coal dust. Then, under the action of the intrinsic fire developed by this disintegration, the ashes, calcined, lose their coarse and combustible impurities, and a pure salt is born, which is gradually coloured by the firing, coating it with the hidden power of fire (*Iám. XLIV*).

The capital on the left shows us a decorative vase whose mouth is flanked by two dolphins. A flower, which seems to emerge from the vase, opens in a shape reminiscent of heraldic lilies. All these symbols refer to the solvent, or common mercury of the philosophers, a principle contrary to that of sulphur, whose emblematic elaboration we have seen in the other capital.

At the base of these two supports, a large crown of oak leaves, crossed vertically by a bundle of identical foliage, reproduces the graphic sign corresponding, in spagyric art, to the common name of the subject. The crown and capital thus form the complete symbol of the raw material, that globe held in the hands of the images of God, Jesus and some great monarchs.

It is far from our intention to analyse in detail all the images that adorn the coffers of this ceiling, which is exemplary in its genre. Its theme, which is very extensive, would require a special study and would force us to make frequent repetitions. We will therefore limit ourselves to describing them briefly and summarising the meaning of the most original ones. Among these, we will first point out the symbol of sulphur and its extraction from the raw material, whose graphic appears, as we have just said, on each of the embedded columns. It is an armillary sphere, placed on a burning stove, which bears a strong resemblance to one of the engravings in the treatise on Azoth. Here, the brazier takes the place of Atlas, and this image of our practice, highly instructive in itself, dispenses us from any comment. Not far from there, we see a common straw beehive surrounded by bees; this is a frequently reproduced theme, particularly in the alchemical stove of Winterthur. There we see—a singular motif for a chapel!—a child urinating into one of his clogs. Further on, the same child, kneeling

Next to a pile of flat ingots, he holds an open book, while a dead snake lies at his feet.

Should we stop or continue? We hesitate. A detail, located in the shadows of the mouldings, determines the meaning of the small bas-relief; the highest piece of the ensemble features the starry seal of King Solomon. Below, Mercury; above, the Absolute. A simple and complete procedure that allows only one path, requires only one material, requires only one operation: "He who knows how to do the Work with only mercury has found all that is most perfect." Such, at least, is what the most celebrated authors affirm. It is the union of the two triangles of fire and water, or sulphur and mercury, brought together in a single body, that engenders the six-pointed star, the hieroglyph of the Work par excellence and of the Philosopher's Stone realised. Next to this image, another shows us a forearm in flames, whose hand grasps some large chestnuts; not far from it, the same hieroglyph, emerging from the rock, holds a burning torch; here, see the horn of Amalthea, overflowing with flowers and fruits, which serves as a perch for a hen or a partridge, as the bird in question is not very clearly defined; but whether the emblem is a black hen or a red partridge, it does not alter the hermetic meaning it conveys. Now see an overturned glass, escaped from the mouth of a decorative lion that held it in balance: it is an original version of the solve et coagula of Notre Dame de Paris. A second theme, unorthodox and rather irreverent, follows closely behind: a child trying to break a rosary over his knee. Further away, a large shell, our shell, has a mass on top of it, held in place by spiral phylacteries. At the bottom of the coffered ceiling where this image is found, the graphic symbol is repeated fifteen times, allowing the exact identification of the shell's contents. The same sign—as a substitute for the name of the material—appears again not far from there, this time in large size and in the centre of a lit oven. In another figure, we see the child again—we believe he represents the role of the artist—with his feet in the concavity of the famous shell and throwing other small shells in front of him, apparently coming out of the large one. We also see the book abietio decorated by fire; the haloed dove, radiant and flaming, emblem of the Spirit; the fiery raven, perched on a skull which it pecks at, figures representing death and decay; the angel "who makes the world go round" like a spinning top, a theme taken up and developed in a small book entitled *Typus Mundi* (13), the work of several Jesuit fathers; philosophical calcination, symbolised by a pomegranate subjected to the action of fire in a goldsmith's glass; above the charred body, we can see the number 3 followed by the letter R, indicating to the artist the need for three repetitions of the same procedure, to which we have already alluded on several occasions. Finally, the following image represents the *ludus puerorum* discussed in Trismosin's *Toison dor* and presented in an identical manner: a child makes his wooden horse prance, with his whip raised and a joyful expression on his face (plate XLV).

This concludes our list of the main hermetic emblems carved into the chapel ceiling. Let us end this study with an analysis of a very curious and singularly rare piece.

Embedded in the wall, near the window, a small 16th-century credenza attracts attention, both for the beauty of its decoration and for the mystery of an enigma

(13) *Typus Mundi in quo ejus Calamitates et Pericula nec non Divini, humane Amoris antipathia. Emblematicae proponuntur a RR. C. S. I. A. Antuerpiae. Apud Joan. Cnobbaert, 1627.*

considered indecipherable. According to our guide, no visitor has ever been able to explain it. This gap undoubtedly stems from the fact that no one understood the purpose of the symbolism of the entire decoration, nor what science was hidden behind its multiple hieroglyphics. The beautiful bas-relief of the Golden Fleece, which could have served as a guide, was not understood in its true sense, but remained, for everyone, a mythological work in which the Eastern imagination ran wild. However, our credence bears the alchemical mark whose particularities we have described in this work (Iám. XLVI). Indeed, on the embedded pillars that support the architrave of this tiny temple, we discover, immediately below the capitals, the emblems consecrated to philosophical mercury, the shell of St. James or holy water font, topped by wings and the trident, the latter being an attribute of the god of the sea, Neptune. Always the same indication of the watery and volatile principle. The pediment consists of a large decorative shell supporting two symmetrical dolphins tied together at the centre by their tails. Three flaming pomegranates complete the ornamentation of this symbolic credence.

As for the enigma itself, it consists of two terms: RERE and RER, which seem meaningless and are repeated three times on the concave background of the niche.

Thanks to this simple arrangement, we discover, from the outset, a valuable clue: that of the three repetitions of a single technique, hidden under the mysterious expression RERE, RER. Now, the three fiery pomegranates on the pediment confirm this triple action of a single procedure, and, given that they represent fire materialised in the red salt that is philosophical sulphur, we can easily understand that it is necessary to repeat the calcination of this body three times in order to carry out the three philosophical works, according to the doctrine of Geber. The first operation leads first of all to Sulphur, or medicine of the first order; the second, in all respects similar to the

first, provides the Elixir, or medicine of the second order, which differs from Sulphur in quantity and not in nature; finally, the third operation, performed like the first two, gives us the Philosopher's Stone, medicine of the third order, which contains all the virtues, qualities and perfections of Sulphur and Elixir multiplied in power and scope. If we are asked, in addition, what the triple operation consists of and how it is performed, whose results we have explained, we will refer the researcher to the bas-relief on the ceiling where a pomegranate is seen roasting in a certain vessel.

But how can we decipher the enigma of words devoid of meaning? Very simply, RE, the ablative of the Latin noun res, means the thing, considered in its matter; and, as the word RERE is the sum of RE, one thing plus RE, another thing, we can translate it as two things in one, or as a double thing. In this way, RERE is equivalent to RE BIS. Open any hermetic dictionary, leaf through any work on alchemy, and you will see that the word REBIS, often used by philosophers, defines their compost, or compound about to undergo successive metamorphoses under the action of fire. In short, RE, a dry matter, philosophical gold; -RE, a wet matter, philosophical mercury; -RERE or REBIS, a double matter, both wet and dry, an amalgam of philosophical gold and mercury, a combination that has received from Nature and art a double hidden and exactly balanced property.

We would like to be able to explain the second term, RER, with the same clarity, but we are not permitted to lift the veil of mystery that shrouds it. However, in order to satisfy, as far as possible, the legitimate curiosity of the children of art, we will say that these letters contain a secret of paramount importance and that it refers to the vessel of the work. RER serves to cook, to unite radically and indissolubly, to bring about the transformations of the compound RERE. How can we give you sufficient information without committing perjury? Do not believe what Basilio Valentin says in his Twelve Keys, and be very careful not to take his words literally when he states that 'whoever has the matter will undoubtedly find a vessel to cook it'. We affirm, on the contrary—and you can believe in our sincerity—that it is impossible to achieve the slightest success in the Work without perfect knowledge of what the Vessel of the Philosophers is and what matter is needed to make it. Pontano confesses that, before learning about this secret vessel, he had unsuccessfully attempted the same work more than two hundred times, using the appropriate and suitable materials and following the correct method. The artist must make his own vessel: this is a maxim of art. Therefore, do not attempt anything before receiving full enlightenment about this eggshell, described as *secretum secretorum* by the masters of the Middle Ages.

So what is RER? We have already seen that RE means one thing, one substance; R, which is half of RE, means half of a thing, half of a substance. RER is therefore equivalent to one substance increased by half of another substance or of itself. Note that this is not a question of proportions, but of a chemical combination independent of relative quantities. To understand this better, let us take an example and suppose that the matter represented by RE is realgar or natural arsenic sulphide. R, half of RE, could therefore be the sulphur in realgar or its arsenic, which are similar or different depending on whether we consider sulphur and arsenic separately or combined in realgar. Thus, RER will be obtained with realgar *by adding* sulphur, which is considered to constitute half of realgar, or arsenic, considered to constitute the other half of the same red sulphide.

I will add some advice: seek first RER, that is, the glass. RERE will then be easily recognisable to you. When asked what a philosopher was, the Sibyl replied: He is the one who knows how to make the glass. Apply yourselves to making it according to our art, without worrying too much about the procedures for making glass. The potter's craft would be more instructive to you; look at Piccolpassi's plates (14) and you will find one depicting *a dove with its feet tied to a stone*. Should we not seek and find the magisterium, according to Tollius' excellent advice, in something volatile?

(14) Claudius Popeli, *Les Trois Livres de l'Art du Potier*, by Sir Cyprian Piccolpassi. Paris, Librairie Internationale, 1861.

Volatile substance? But if you do not have a vessel to contain it, how will you prevent it from evaporating, from dissipating without leaving the slightest residue? Make your vessel, then, and afterwards your compound; seal it tightly so that the spirit cannot escape; heat it all according to the art, until it is completely calcined. Put the pure portion of the powder obtained back into your compound, and seal it tightly in the same vessel. Repeat the operation a third time, and do not thank us. Thanksgiving should be directed solely to the Creator. We claim nothing for ourselves, a mere milestone on the great road of esoteric Tradition; we do not want your gratitude without your remembrance; we only wish that you take on for others the same work that we have taken on for you.

Our visit is over. To our admiration, thoughtful and silent, we once again question those marvellous and surprising paradigms, whose author was for so long unknown to our people. Is there anywhere a book written by his hand? Nothing seems to indicate it. No doubt, following the example of the great Adepts of the Middle Ages, he preferred to entrust to stone, rather than parchment, the irrefutable testimony of an immense science, of which he possessed all the secrets. It is therefore only fair and just that he should be revived among us, that his name should finally emerge from obscurity and shine like a star of the first magnitude in the hermetic firmament.

Jean Lallemand, alchemist and knight of the Round Table, deserves to occupy a place around the Holy Grail, and to commune there with Geber (Magister magistrorum) and Roger Bacon (Doctor admirabilis). Even the powerful Basilio Valentin and the charitable Flamel, with their vast knowledge, are surpassed by him in two eminently scientific and philosophical qualities, which he brought to the highest degree of perfection: modesty and sincerity.

THE CYCLICAL CROSS OF HENDAYA

A small border town in the Basque Country, Hendaye clusters its little houses at the foot of the first foothills of the Pyrenees. It is framed by the green ocean, the wide, sparkling and fast-flowing Bidasoa River, and the grassy mountains. The first impression made by contact with that rough and rugged soil is rather painful, almost hostile. On the marine horizon, the tip of Fuenterrabia, ochre under the harsh light, sinks into the glaucous and reverberating waters of the gulf, barely breaking the natural austerity of the wild landscape. Except for the Spanish style of its houses, the character and language of its inhabitants, and the very special appeal of a recent beach, bristling with proud palaces, Hendaye has nothing to hold the attention of the tourist, archaeologist or artist. Upon leaving the station, a rugged path runs alongside the railway line and leads to the parish church, located in the centre of the village. Its bare walls, flanked by a massive, square, truncated tower, rise above an atrium raised a few steps and surrounded by dense foliage. It is a vulgar, heavy, renovated building, lacking in interest. However, near the south side of the transept and hidden under the green masses of the square, stands a modest stone cross, as simple as it is curious. It used to be in the communal cemetery, and it was not until 1842 that it was moved to its current location next to the church. At least, that is what an elderly Basque man who had served as sacristan for many years told us. The origin of this cross is completely unknown, and we were unable to obtain any information about when it was erected. However, based on the shape of the base and the column, we do not believe that it can date back to earlier than the late 17th or early 18th century. Whatever its age, the cross of Hendaye, due to the decoration of its pedestal, is the most unique monument of early millenarianism and the rarest symbolic expression of Chiliasm that we have ever seen. It is well known that this doctrine, first accepted and later combated by Origen, St Dionysius of Alexandria and St Jerome, although not condemned by the Church, was part of the esoteric traditions of the ancient philosophy of Hermes.

The naivety of the bas-reliefs and their crude execution lead us to believe that these lapidary emblems were not the work of a professional chiseller and engraver; but, aesthetics aside, we must recognise that the obscure creator of these images embodied a profound science and true cosmographic knowledge.

On the crossbar of the cross—a Greek cross—we find the customary inscription, strikingly carved in relief and in two parallel lines, with the words almost welded together and arranged as follows, which we have preserved:

OCRUXAVES
PESUNICA

Certainly, the phrase is easy to decipher, and its meaning is well known: O crux ave spes unica. However, translating it as a novice, we would not understand very well what we should choose, whether the foot or the cross, and that invocation would be surprising. We would, in fact, have to take our carelessness and ignorance to the point of disregarding the basic rules of grammar, since the masculine nominative pes requires the adjective unicus, which is of the same gender, and not the feminine unica. It would seem, then, that the deformation of the word spes, hope, into pes, foot, by the removal of the initial consonant, was the unintentional result of a complete lack of practice on the part of our stonemason. But does inexperience really explain such a rarity? We cannot accept this. In fact, a comparison of the motifs executed by the same hand and in the same manner shows an evident concern for normal placement and great care in their arrangement and balance. Why would the inscription have been made less scrupulously? A careful examination of it allows us to affirm that its characters are

clear, if not elegant, and not intertwined (Íám. XLVII). Undoubtedly, our craftsman first designed them with chalk or charcoal, and this sketch necessarily rules out any idea of an error made during the carving. However, since this error exists, we must conclude that it was an apparent error. And a deliberate one. And the only reason we can invoke is that it is a sign placed deliberately, disguised as an inexplicable clumsiness and intended to arouse the curiosity of the observer. We will say, then, that, in our opinion, the author arranged the epigraph of his disturbing work in this way, knowingly and voluntarily. The study of the pedestal had enlightened us, and we now knew how and with what key we should read the Christian inscription on the monument; but we wanted to show researchers the great help that common sense, logic and reasoning can give us in solving hidden mysteries.

The letter S, which takes the sinuous form of a serpent, corresponds to the Greek letter xi (X) and derives its esoteric meaning from it. It is the helical trail of the sun reaching the zenith of its curve through space, as the cyclical catastrophe occurs. It is a theoretical image of the beast of the Apocalypse, of the dragon that vomits fire and brimstone upon the macrocosmic creation in the days of the Last Judgement. Thanks to the symbolic value of the letter S, deliberately displaced, we understand that the inscription must be expressed in secret language, that is, in the language of the gods or of birds, and that we must discover its meaning using the rules of diplomatics. Some authors, and in particular Grasset d'Orcey, in his analysis of Poliphilo's Dream, published by the Revue Britannique, have explained them clearly enough for us to discuss them. We will therefore read, in Fiancés, the language of diplomats, the Latin as it is written, and then, using the permutable vowels, we will obtain the assonance of new words that make up another phrase, whose spelling and vowel order we will restore, as well as its literary meaning. In this way, we receive this singular warning: Il est écrit que la vie se réfugie en un seul espace (1), and we learn that there is a region where death will not reach man when the terrible time of the double cataclysm comes. As for the geographical location of this promised land, where the elect will witness the return of the golden age, it is up to us to seek it out. For the chosen ones, the children of Elijah, will be saved according to the words of Scripture. Because their deep faith and tireless perseverance in their efforts will make them worthy of their elevation to the rank of disciples of Christ-Light. They will bear his sign and receive from him the mission of connecting regenerated Humanity to the chain of traditions of vanished Humanity.

The front of the cross—the one on which the three horrible nails fixed the Redeemer's suffering body to the cursed wood—is defined by the inscription INRI, engraved on its crossbar. It corresponds to the schematic image of the cycle that we see at the base (plate XLVIII). We have here, then, two symbolic crosses, instruments of the same torment: above, the divine cross, an example of the means chosen for atonement; below, the cross of the globe, determining the pole of the northern hemisphere and situating in time the fatal epoch of this atonement. God the Father has in his

(1) In Latin, spatium, with the meaning of place, site, location, given to it by Tacitus. It corresponds to the Greek Xo)ptav' root Xwpa, country, region, territory.

(In Spanish: "It is written that life takes refuge in a single space." N. de 1,a T)

This globe topped by the fiery sign, and the four great centuries—historical figures from the four ages of the world—represent their sovereigns with the same attribute: Alexander, Augustus, Charlemagne, and Louis XIV (2). This is what the inscription INRI teaches, translated exoterically as Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum, but borrowing its secret meaning from the CROSS: Igne Natura Renovatur Integra Because it is through fire and in fire itself that our hemisphere will soon be put to the test. And, in the same way that gold is separated from impure metals by fire, Scripture tells us that the good will be separated from the bad on the great day of the Last Judgement.

On each of the four sides of the pedestal, we see a different symbol. On one of them we see the image of the sun; on another, that of the moon; the third shows us a large star, and the last, a geometric figure which, as we have just said, is nothing more than the diagram adopted by the initiates to characterise the solar cycle. It is a simple circle divided into four sectors by two diameters that intersect at right angles. In each of the sectors there is an A, which marks them as the four ages of the world, in this complete hieroglyphic of the universe, formed with conventional signs of heaven and earth, of the spiritual and the temporal, of the macrocosm and the microcosm, and where we find again, associated, the major emblems of redemption (cross) and the world (circle).

In medieval times, these four phases of the great cyclical period—whose contiguous rotation was expressed by the ancients by means of a circle divided by two perpendicular diameters—were generally represented by the four Evangelists or by their symbolic letter, which was the Greek alpha, and, even more frequently, by the four evangelical animals surrounding Christ, the human and living figure of the cross.

(2) The first three are emperors; the fourth is only a king, the Sun King, and signifies the decline of the star and its last rays. It is the twilight heralding the long cyclical night, full of horror and terror. "the abomination of desolation".

This is the traditional formula often found on the tympanums of Romanesque porticos. Jesus appears seated, with his left hand resting on a book and his right hand raised in a gesture of blessing, separated from the four animals that accompany him by the ellipse called *the Mystical Almond*. These groups, generally isolated from the other scenes by a garland of clouds, always have their figures placed in the same order, as can be seen in the cathedrals of Chartres (royal door) and Le Mans (western door), in the Templar church of Luz (Hautes-Pyrénées), in Civray (Vienne), in the portico of Saint Trophime in Arles, etc. (plate XLIV).

"Before the throne," writes St John, "was something like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle" (3). This account agrees with that of Ezekiel: "I saw... a dense cloud around which a whirlwind of fire was shining, which in the middle shone like burning bronze. In the centre of it was the likeness of four living creatures... Their faces were those of men, and the four had the right side of their faces like lions; the four had the left side like oxen; and the four had the faces of eagles on top" (4).

In Hindu mythology, the four equal sectors of the circle divided by the cross served as the basis for a rather unique mystical concept. The entire cycle of human evolution was embodied in it in the form of a cow, symbol of Virtue, which rests its hooves on each of the four sectors—representing the four ages of the world. In the first age, which corresponds to the Golden Age of the Greeks and is called Credagugán or the age of innocence, Virtue stands firm on the earth; the cow rests solidly on its four legs. In Tredagugán, or the second age,

(3) Revelation, chapter IV, verses 6 and 7.

(4) Chapter 1, verses 4, 5, 10 and 11.

which corresponds to the silver age, the cow is weaker and stands on only three legs. During the Tuvabaragugán, the third age or bronze age, it has only two legs. Finally, in the age of iron, which is ours, the cyclical cow, or human virtue, reaches the supreme degree of weakness and senility: it struggles to stand, balancing on a single leg. This is the fourth and final age, the Calgugán, the age of misery, misfortune and decrepitude.

The Iron Age bears no other mark than that of Death. Its hieroglyph is the skeleton endowed with the attributes of Saturn: the empty hourglass, symbolising time fulfilled, and the scythe, reproduced in the number seven, which is the number of transformation, destruction and annihilation. The Gospel of this ill-fated era is the one written under the inspiration of Saint Matthew. Matthaëus, in Greek Ματθαῖος, comes from Μαθητής, Μαθητής, which means science. From this word derives Μαθητής, μαθητής, es@, knowledge, from μαθητής, μαθητής, to learn, to be educated. It is the Gospel according to Science, the last of all, but the first for us, since it teaches us that, except for a small number of chosen ones, we must perish collectively. This is why Saint Matthew was given the attribute of an angel; because science, the only thing capable of penetrating the mystery of things, of beings and their destiny, can give man wings with which to rise to the knowledge of the highest truths and reach God.

CONCLUSION

Scire, Potere, Audere, Tacere
ZOROASTER

Nature does not indiscriminately open the door to its sanctuary to everyone.

Perhaps the layman will discover in these pages some proof of a true and positive science. But we do not believe that we can boast of converting him, for we are not unaware of the tenacity of prejudice and the enormous force

of suspicion. The disciple will derive greater benefit from them, provided, however, that he does not despise the works of the ancient philosophers, that he studies the classical texts carefully and thoroughly, until he acquires sufficient insight to discern the obscure points of the operating manual.

No one can aspire to possess the great Secret unless they harmonise their existence with the tuning fork of the research undertaken.

It is not enough to be studious, active and persevering if one lacks a solid principle and a concrete basis, if immoderate enthusiasm blinds reason, if pride tyrannises good judgement, if greed develops under the intense glow of a golden star.

Mysterious science requires great precision, accuracy and insight in observing facts; a sound, logical and thoughtful mind; a lively imagination without exaggeration; and a passionate and pure heart. It also demands great simplicity and absolute indifference to theories, systems and hypotheses which, relying on books or the reputation of their authors, are often accepted without verification. It wants its aspirants to learn to think more with their own brains and less with those of others. Finally, it asks them to seek the truth of its principles, the knowledge of its doctrine and the practice of its work in Nature, our common mother.

Through the constant exercise of the faculties of observation and reasoning, through meditation, the neophyte will climb the steps that lead to

KNOWLEDGE.

The naive imitation of natural processes, skill combined with ingenuity, and the insights gained from long experience will ensure his

POWER.

Even when able to act, he will still need patience, perseverance, and unshakeable will. Bold and resolute, the certainty and confidence born of a robust faith will allow him to

DARE.

Finally, when success has crowned so many years of labour, when your desires have been fulfilled, the Wise Man, despising the vanities of the world, will draw close to the humble, the dispossessed, all those who labour, suffer, struggle, despair and weep here below. An anonymous and silent disciple of eternal Nature, an apostle of eternal Charity, he will remain faithful to his vow of silence.

In Science. In Goodness, the Adept must forever

SILENT.

BERSERKER
BOOKS

