

The Stone of the Philosophers
An Alchemical Handbook

Edited by Michael R. Poll

The Stone of the Philosophers

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The Stone of the Philosophers

Edward Kelley (1555-1597)

Though I have already twice suffered chains and imprisonment in Bohemia, an indignity which has been offered to me in no other part of the world, yet my mind, remaining unbound, has all this time exercised itself in the study of that philosophy which is despised only by the wicked and foolish, but is praised and admired by the wise. Nay, the saying that none but fools and lawyers hate and despise Alchemy has passed into a proverb. Furthermore, as during the preceding three years I have used great labour, expense, and care in order to discover for your Majesty that which might afford you much profit and pleasure, so during my imprisonment - a calamity which has befallen me through the action of your Majesty - I am utterly incapable of remaining idle. Hence I have written a treatise, by means of which your imperial mind may be guided into all the truth of the more ancient philosophy, whence, as from a lofty eminence, it may contemplate and distinguish the fertile tracts from the barren and stony wilderness. But if my teaching displease you, know that you are still altogether wandering astray from the true scope and aim of this matter, and are utterly wasting your money, time, labour, and hope. A familiar acquaintance with the different branches of knowledge has taught me this one thing, that nothing is more ancient, excellent, or more desirable than truth, and whoever neglects it must pass his whole life in the shade. Nevertheless, it always was, and always will be, the way of mankind to release Barabbas and to crucify Christ. This I have - for my good, no doubt - experienced in my own case. I venture to hope, however, that my life and character will so become known to posterity that I may be counted among those who have suffered much for the sake of truth. The full certainty of the present treatise time is powerless to abrogate. If your Majesty will deign to peruse it at your leisure, you will easily perceive that my mind is profoundly versed in this study.

(1) All genuine and judicious philosophers have traced back things to their first principles, that is to say, those comprehended in the threefold division of Nature. The generation of animals they have attributed to a mingling of the male and female in sexual union; that of vegetables to their own proper seed; while as the principle of minerals they have assigned earth and viscid water.

(2) All specific and individual things which fall under a certain class, obey the general laws and are referable to the first principles of the class to which they belong.

- (3) Thus, every animal is the product of sexual union; every plant, of its proper seed; every mineral, of the mixture of its generic earth and water.
- (4) Hence, an unchangeable law of Nature regulates the generation of everything within the limits of its own particular genus.
- (5) It follows that, with reference to their origin, animals are generically distinct from vegetables and minerals; the same difference exists respectively between vegetables and minerals and the two other natural kingdoms.
- (6) The common and universal matter of these three principles is called Chaos.
- (7) Chaos contains within itself the four elements of all that is, viz., fire, air, water, and earth, by the mixture and motion of which the forms of all earthly things are impressed upon their subjects.
- (8) These elements have four qualities: heat, coldness, humidity, dryness. The first inheres in fire, the second in water, the third in air, the fourth in earth.
- (9) By means of these qualities, the elements act upon each other, and motion takes place.
- (10) Elements either act upon each other, or are acted on, and are called either active or passive.
- (11) Active elements are those which, in a compound, impress upon the passive a certain specific character, according to the strength and extent of their motion. These are water and fire.
- (12) The passive elements - earth and air - are those which by their inactive qualities readily receive the impressions of the aforesaid active elements.
- (13) The four elements are distinguished, not only by their activity and passivity, but also by the priority and posteriority of their motions.
- (14) Priority and posteriority are here predicated either with references to the position of the whole sphere, or the importance of the result or aim of the motion.
- (15) In space, heavy objects tend downwards, and light objects upwards; those which are neither light nor heavy hold an intermediate position.

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(16) In this way, even among the passive elements, earth holds a higher place than air, because it delights more in rest; for the less motion, the more passivity.

(17) The excellence of result has reference to perfection and imperfection, the mature being more perfect than the immature. Now, maturity is altogether due to the heat of fire. Hence fire holds the highest place among active elements.

(18) Among the passive elements, the first place belongs to that which is most passive, i.e., which is most quickly and easily influenced. In a compound, earth is first passively affected, then air.

(19) Similarly, in every compound, the perfecting element acts last; for perfection is a transition from immaturity to maturity.

(20) Maturity being caused by heat, cold is the cause of immaturity.

(21) It is clear, then, that the elements, or remote first principles of animals, vegetables, and minerals, in Chaos, are susceptible of active movements in fire and water, and of passive movements in earth and air. Water acts on earth, and transmutes it into its own nature; fire heats air, and also changes it into its own likeness.

(22) The active elements may be called male, while the passive elements represent the female principle.

(23) Any compound belonging to any of these three kingdoms - animal, vegetable, mineral - is female in so far as it is earth and air, and male in so far as it is fire and water.

(24) Only that which has consistency is sensuously perceptible. Elementary fire and air, being naturally subtle, cannot be seen.

(25) Only two elements, water and earth, are visible, and earth is called the hiding-place of fire, water the abode of air.

(26) In these two elements we have the broad law of limitation which divides the male from the female.

(27) The first matter of vegetables is the water and earth hidden in its seed, these being more water than earth.

(28) The first matter of animals is the mixture of the male and female sperm, which embodies more moisture than dryness.

(29) The first matter of minerals is a kind of viscous water, mingled with pure and impure earth.

(30) Impure earth is combustible sulphur, which hinders all fusion, and superficially matures the water joined to it, as we see in the minor minerals, marcasite, magnesia, antimony, etc.

(31) Pure earth is that which so unites the smallest parts of its aforesaid water that they cannot be separated by the fiercest fire, so that either both remain fixed or are volatilized.

(32) Of this viscous water and fusible earth, or sulphur, is composed that which is called quicksilver, the first matter of the metals.

(33) Metals are nothing but Mercury digested by different degrees of heat.

(34) Different modifications of heat cause, in the metallic compound, either maturity or immaturity.

(35) The mature is that which has exactly attained all the activities and properties of fire. Such is gold.

(36) The immature is that which is dominated by the element of water, and is never acted on by fire. Such are lead, tin, copper, iron, and silver.

(37) Only one metal, viz., gold, is absolutely perfect and mature. Hence it is called the perfect male body.

(38) The rest are immature and, therefore, imperfect.

(39) The limit of immaturity is the beginning of maturity; for the end of the first is the beginning of the last.

(40) Silver is less bounded by aqueous immaturity than the rest of the metals, though it may indeed be regarded as to a certain extent impure, still its water is already covered with the congealing vesture of its earth, and it thus tends to perfection.

(41) This condition is the reason why silver is everywhere called by the Sages the perfect female body.

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(42) All other metals differ only in the degree of their imperfection, according as they are more or less bounded by the said immaturity; nevertheless, all have a certain tendency towards perfection, though they lack the aforesaid congealing vesture of their earth.

(43) This congealing force is the effect of earthy coldness, balancing its own proper humidity, and causing fixation in the fluid matter.

(44) The lesser metals are fusible in a fierce fire, and therefore lack this perfect congealing force. If they become solid when cool, this is due to the arrangement of their aforesaid earthy particles.

(45) According to the different ways in which this viscous water and pure earth are joined together, so as to produce quicksilver by coagulation, with the mediation of natural heat, we have different metals, some of which are called perfect, like gold and silver, while the rest are regarded as imperfect.

(46) Whoever would imitate Nature in any particular operation must first be sure that he has the same matter, and, secondly, that this substance is acted on in a way similar to that of Nature. For Nature rejoices in natural method, and like purifies like.

(47) Hence they are mistaken who strive to elicit the medicine for the tinging of metals from animals or vegetables. The tincture and the metal tinged must belong to the same root or genus; and as it is the imperfect metals upon which the Philosopher's Stone is to be projected, it follows that the powder of the Stone must be essentially Mercury. The Stone is the metallic matter which changes the forms of imperfect metals into gold, as we may learn from the first chapter of "The Code of Truth": "The Philosophical Stone is the metallic matter converting the substances and forms of imperfect metals"; and all Sages agree that it can have this effect only by being like them.

(48) That Mercury is the first matter of metals, I will attempt to prove by the saying of some Sages.

In the *Turba Philosophorum*, we find the following words: "In the estimation of all Sages, Mercury is the first principle of all metals."

And a little further on: "As flesh is generated from coagulated blood, so gold is generated out of coagulated Mercury."

Again, towards the end of the chapter: "All pure and impure metallic bodies are Mercury, because they are generated from the same."

Arnold writes thus to the King of Aragon: "Know that the matter and sperm of all metals are Mercury, digested and thickened in the womb of the earth; they are digested by sulphureous heat, and according to the quality and quantity of the sulphur different metals are generated. Their matter is essentially the same, though there may be some accidental differences, such as a greater or less degree of digestion, etc. All things are made of that into which they may be resolved, e.g., ice or snow, which may be resolved into water; and so all metals may be resolved into quicksilver; hence they are made out of quicksilver."

The same view is set forth by Bernard of Trevisa, in his book on the "Transmutation of Metals": "Similarly, quicksilver is the substance of all metals; it is as a water by reason of the homogeneity which it possesses with vegetables and animals, and it receives the virtues of those things which adhere to it in decoction." A little further on the same Trevisan affirms that "Gold is nothing but quicksilver congealed by its sulphur."

And, in another place, he writes as follows: "The solvent differs from the soluble only in proportion and degree of digestion, but not in matter, since Nature has formed the one out of the other without any addition, even as by a process equally simple and wonderful she evolves gold out of quicksilver."

Again: "The Sages have it that gold is nothing but quicksilver perfectly digested in the bowels of the earth, and they have signified that this is brought about by sulphur, which coagulates the Mercury, and digests it by its own heat. Hence the Sages have said that gold is nothing but mature quicksilver."

Such also is the consensus of other authorities. "The Sounding of the Trumpet" gives forth no uncertain note: "Extract quicksilver from the bodies, and you have above the ground quicksilver and sulphur of the same substance of which gold and silver are made in the earth."

The "Way of Ways" leads to the same conclusion: "Reverend Father, incline they venerable ears, and understand that quicksilver is the sperm of all metals, perfect and imperfect, digested in the bowels of the earth by the heat of sulphur, the variety of metals being due to the diversity of their sulphur."

We find in the same tract a similar canon: "All metals in the earth are generated in Mercury, and thus Mercury is the first matter of metals."

To these words Avicenna signifies his assent in chapter iii.: "As ice, which by heat is dissolved into water, is clearly generated out of water, so all metals may be resolved into Mercury, whence it is clear that they are generated out of it."

This reasoning is confirmed by "The Sounding of the Trumpet": "Every passive body is reduced to its first matter by operations contrary to its

nature; the first matter is quicksilver, being itself the oil of all liquid and ductile things."

So also the third chapter of the "Correction of Fools": "The nature of all fusible things is that of Mercury coagulated out of a vapour, or the heat of red or white incombustible sulphur."

In chapter i. of the "Art of Alchemy" we read: "All Sages agree that the metals are generated from the vapour of sulphur and quicksilver."

Again, a passage in the *Turba Philosophorum* runs thus: "It is certain that every subject derives from that into which it can be resolved. All metals may be resolved into quicksilver, hence they were once quicksilver."

If it were worth while, I might adduce hundreds of other passages from the writings of the Sages, but as they would serve no good purpose, I will let these suffice.

Those persons make a great mistake who suppose that the thick water of Antimony, or that viscous substance which is extracted from sublimed Mercury, or from Mercury and Jupiter dissolved together in a damp spot, can in any case be the first substance of metals.

Antimony can never assume metallic qualities, because its water and moisture are not tempered with dry, subtle, earth, and want, moreover, that unctuousness which is characteristic of malleable metals. But, as Chambar well says in the "Code of Truth": "It is only through jealousy that Sages have called the Stone Antimony."

In the same way, those who destroy the natural composition of Mercury, in order to resolve it into a thick or limpid water, which they call the first matter of metals, fight against Nature in the dark, like blinded gladiators.

As soon as Mercury loses its specific form, it becomes something else, which cannot thenceforth mingle with metals in their smallest parts, and is made void for the work of the Philosophers. Whoever is taken up with such childish experiments, should listen to the Sage of Trevisa in his "Transmutation of Metals":

"Who can find truth that destroys the humid nature of Mercury? Some foolish persons change its specific metallic arrangement, corrupt its natural humidity by dissolution, and disproportionate quicksilver from its original mineral quality, which wanted nothing but purification and simple digestion. By means of salts, vitriol, and alum, they destroy the seed which Nature has been at pains to develop. For seed in human and sensitive things is formed by Nature and not by art, but by art it is united and mixed. Seed needs no addition, and brooks no diminution. If it is to produce a new thing of the same genus, it must remain the very same thing that was formed by Nature. All teaching that changes Mercury is false and vain, for this is the original sperm of metals, and its moisture must not be dried up, for otherwise it will not dissolve. Too much fire will cause a morbid heat, like that of

a fever, and change the passive into active elements, thus the balance of forces is destroyed, and the whole work marred. Yet these fools extract from the lesser minerals corrosive waters, into which they project the different species of metals, and thus corrode them.

“The only natural solution is that by which out of the solvent and the soluble, or male and female, there results a new species. No water can naturally dissolve metals except that which abides with them in substance and form, which also the dissolved metals can again congeal; this is not the case with aqua fortis, seeing that it only destroys the specific arrangement. Only that water can rightly dissolve metals which is inseparable from them in fixation, and such a water is Mercury, but not aqua fortis, or any thing else which those fools are pleased to call Mercurial Water.” Thus far Trevisan.

Persons who have fallen into this fatal error may also derive benefit from the teaching of Avicenna on this point: “Quicksilver is cold and humid, and of it, or with it, God had created all metals. It is aerial, and becomes volatile by the action of fire, but when it has withstood the fire a little time, it accomplishes great marvels, and is itself only a living spirit of unexampled potency. It enters and penetrates all bodies, passes through them, and is their ferment. It is then the White and the Red Elixir and is an everlasting water, the water of life, the Virgin’s milk, the spring, and that Alum of which whosoever drinks cannot die, etc. It is the wanton serpent that conceives of its own seed, and brings forth on the same day. With its poison it destroys all things. It is volatile, but the wise make it to abide the fire, and then it transmutes as it has been transmuted, and tinges as it has been tinged, and coagulates as it has been coagulated. Therefore is the generation of quicksilver to be preferred before all minerals; it is found in all ores, and has its sign with all. Quicksilver is that which saves metals from combustion, and renders them fusible. It is the Red Tincture which enters into the most intimate union with metals, because it is of their own nature, mingles with them indissolubly in all their smallest parts, and, being homogeneous, naturally adheres to them. Mercury receives all homogeneous substances, but rejects all that is heterogeneous, because it delights in its own nature, but recoils from whatsoever is strange. How foolish, then, to spoil and destroy that which Nature made the seed of all metallic virtue by elaborate chemical operations!”

The “Rosary” bids us be particularly careful, lest in purifying the quicksilver we dissipate its virtue, and impair its active force. A grain of wheat, or any other seed, will not grow if its generative virtue be destroyed by excessive external heat. Therefore, purify your quicksilver by distillation over a gentle fire.

Says the Sage of Trevisa: “If the quicksilver be robbed of its due metallic proportion, how can other substances of the same metallic genus be generated from it? It is a mistake to suppose that you can work miracles with a

clear limpid water extracted from quicksilver. Even if we could get such a water, it would not be of use, either as to form or proportion, nor could it restore or build up a perfect metallic species. For as soon as the quicksilver is changed from its first nature, it is rendered unfit for our operation, since it loses its spermatic and metallic quality. I do, indeed, approve of impure and gross Mercury being sublimed and purified once or twice with simple salt, according to the proper method of the Sages, so long as the fluxibility or radical humour of such Mercury remains unimpaired, that is to say, so long as its specific mercurial nature is not destroyed, and so long as its outward appearance does not become that of a dry powder."

In the "Ladder of the Sages" we are told to beware of vitrification in the solution of bodies, with the odour and taste of imperfect substances, and also of the generative virtue of their form being in any way scorched and destroyed by corrosive waters.

If you have been trying to do any of these things, you may see how grievous your mistake has been. For the water of the Sages adheres to nothing except homogeneous substances. It does not wet your hands if you touch it, but scorches your skin, and frets and corrodes every substance with which it comes in contact, except gold and silver (it would not affect these until they have been dissipated and dissolved by spirits and strong waters), and with these it combines most intimately. But the other mixture is most childish, it is condemned by the concert of the Sages, and by my own experience.

I now propose to shew that quicksilver is the water with which, and in which, the solution of the Sages takes place, by putting before the reader the opinions of many Philosophers living in different countries and ages.

Says Menalates in the Turba: "Whoever joins quicksilver to the body of magnesia, and the woman to the man, extracts the hidden nature by which bodies are coloured. Know that quicksilver is a consuming fire which mortifies bodies by its contact."

Another Sage, in the Turba, says: "Divide the elements by fire, unite them through the mediation of Mercury, which is the greatest arcanum, and so the magistry is complete, the whole difficulty consisting in the solution and conjunction. The solution, or separation, takes places through the mediation of Mercury, which first dissolves the bodies, and these are again united by ferment and Mercury."

Rosinus makes Gold address Mercury as follows: "Dost thou dispute with me, Mercury? I am the Lord, the Stone which abides the fire." Says Mercury: "Thou sayest true; but I have begotten thee, and one part of me quickens many of thee, since thou art grudging in comparison with me. Whoever will join me to my brother or sister shall live and rejoice, and make me sufficient for thee."

In the 5th chapter of the "Book of Three Words," we read: "I tell thee that in Mercury are the works of the planets, and all their imaginations in its pages."

Aristotle says that the first mode of preparation is that the Stone shall become Mercury; he calls Mercury the first body, which acts on gross substances and changes them into its own likeness. "If Mercury did nothing else than render bodies subtle and like itself, it would suffice us."

Senior: "Our Stone, then, is congealed water, that is to say, Mercury congealed in gold and silver, and, when fixed, resistant to the fire."

"The Sounding of the Trumpet": "Mercury contains all that the Sages seek, and destroys all flaky gold. It dissolves, softens, and extracts the soul from the body."

"The Book on the Art of Alchemy": "The Sages were first put upon attempting to clothe inferior bodies in the glory and splendour of the perfect body when they discovered that metals differ only according to the greater or smaller degree of their digestion, and are all generated from Mercury, with which they extracted gold and reduced it to its first nature."

The "Correction of Fools": "Observe that crude Mercury dissolves bodies and reduces them to their first matter or nature. Being made of clear water, it always strives to corrode the crude, and especially that which is nearest to its own nature, viz., gold and silver." The same book observes: "You can make use of crude Mercury as follows - to seal up and open natures, since similar things are helpful one to another." Once more: "Quicksilver is the root in the Art of Alchemy, for the Sages say that all metals are of it, and through it, and in it - it follows that the metals must first be reduced to Mercury, the matter and sperm of all metals."

Again: "The reason why all metals must be reduced to the nature of vapour is because we see that all are generated of quicksilver, though the mediation of which they came into being."

Gratianus: "Purify Laton, i.e., copper(ore), with Mercury, for Laton is of gold and silver, a compound, yellow, imperfect body."

"The Sounding of the Trumpet": "Common Mercury is called a spirit. If you do not resolve the body into Mercury, with Mercury, you cannot obtain its hidden virtue."

"Art of Alchemy," chapter vi.: "The second part of the Stone we call living Mercury, which, being living and crude, is said to dissolve bodies, because it adheres to them in their innermost being. This is the Stone without which Nature does nothing."

"Rosary": "Mercury never dies, except with its brother and sister. When Mercury mortifies the matter of the Sun and Moon, there remains a matter like ashes."

The Sage of Trevisa: "Add nothing above ground for digesting and thickening Mercury into the nature of gold or of metals." Again: "This solu-

tion is possible and natural, that is to say, by Art as handmaid to Nature, and is unique and necessary in the work; but it is brought about only by quicksilver, in such proportions as commend themselves to a good workman who knows the inmost properties of Nature."

"Art of Alchemy": "Who can sufficiently extol Mercury, for Mercury alone has power to reduce gold to its first nature?"

From these quotations it is clear what the Sages meant by their water, and what they thought of this wonderful liquid, viz., Mercury, to which they ascribed all power in the Magistery, for nothing can be perfected outside its own genus. Men digest vegetables, not in the blood of animals, but in water which is their first principle, nor are minerals affected by the vegetable liquid. In the words of the "Sounding of the Trumpet": "The whole Magistery consists in dividing the elements from the metals, and purifying them, and in separating the sulphur of Nature from the metals."

Furthermore, as Hermes says, only homogeneous substances cohere, and only they can produce offspring after their own kind, i.e., if you want a medicine which is to generate metals, its origin must be metallic, since "species are tinged by their genus," as the philosopher testifies.

In short, our Magistery consists in the union of the male and female, or active and passive, elements through the mediation of our metallic water and a proper degree of heat. Now, the male and female are two metallic bodies, and this I will again prove by irrefragable quotations from the Sages:

Dantius bids us prepare the bodies and dissolve them.

Rhasis: "Change the bodies into water, and the water into earth: then all is done."

Galienus: "Prepare the bodies, and purify them of the blackness in which is corruption, till the white becomes white and red, then dissolve both, etc."

Calid (chapter i.): "If you do not make the bodies subtle, so that they may be impalpable to touch, you will not gain your end. If they have not been ground, repeat your operation, and see that they are ground and subtilized. If you do this, you will be directed to your desired goal."

Aristotle: "Bodies cannot be changes except by reduction into their first matter."

Calid (chapter v.): "Similarly, the Sages have commanded us to dissolve the bodies so that heat adheres to their inmost parts; then we proceed to coagulation after a second dissolution with a substance which most nearly approaches them."

Menabadus: "Make bodies not bodies, and incorporeal things bodies, for this is the whole process by which the hidden virtue of Nature is extracted."

Ascanius: "The conjunction of the two is like the union of husband and wife, from whose embrace results golden water."

“Anthology of Secrets”: “Wed the red man to the white woman, and you have the whole Magistry.”

“The Sounding of the Trumpet”: “There is another quicksilver and permanent tincture which is extracted from perfect bodies by dissolution, distillation, sublimation, and subtilization.”

Hermes: “Join the male to the female in their own proper humidity, because there is no birth without union of male and female.”

Plato: “Nature follows a kindred nature, contains it, and teaches it to resist the fire. Wed the man to the woman, and you have the whole Magistry.”

Avicenna: “Purify husband and wife separately, in order that they may unite more intimately; for if you do not purify them, they cannot love each other. By conjunction of the two natures you get a clear and lucid nature, which, when it ascends, becomes bright and serviceable.”

“Art of Alchemy”: “Two bodies provide us with everything in our water.”

Trevisanus: “Only that water which is of the same species, and can be thickened by bodies, can dissolve bodies.”

Hermes: “Let the stones of mixture be taken in the beginning of the first work, and let them be equally mixed into earth.”

“Mirror”: “Our Stone must be extracted from the nature of two bodies, before it can become a perfect Elixir.”

Democritus: “You should first dissolve the bodies over white hot ashes, and not grind them except only with water.”

“Rosary” of Arnold: “Extract the Medicine from the most homogeneous bodies in Nature.”

I have thus proved the number of the bodies from which the Elixir is obtained. I will now shew by quotations what these bodies are.

“Exposition of the Letter of King Alexander”: “In this art you must wed the Sun and the Moon.”

“The Sounding of the Trumpet”: “The Sun only heats the earth and imparts to it his virtue through the mediation of the Moon, which, of all stars, most readily receives his light and heat.”

“The Correction of Fools”: “Sow gold and silver, and they will yield to your labour a thousandfold, through the mediation of that thing which alone has what you seek. The Tincture of gold and silver exhibits the same metallic proportions as the imperfect metals, because they have a common first matter in Mercury.”

Again: “Tinge with gold and silver, because gold gives the golden and silver the silver colour and nature. Reject all things that have not naturally or virtually the power of tinging, as in them is no fruit, but only waste of money and gnashing of teeth.”

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Senior: "I, the Sun, am hot and dry, and thou, the Moon, art cold and moist; when we are wedded together in a closed chamber, I will gently steal away thy soul."

Rosinus to Saratant: "From the living water we obtain earth, a homogeneous dead body, composed of two natures, that of the Sun and that of the Moon."

Again: "When the Sun, my brother, for the love of me (silver) pours his sperm (i.e. his solar fatness) into the chamber (i.e. my Lunar body), namely, when we become one in a strong and complete complexion and union, the child of our wedded love will be born."

Hermes: "Its humidity is of the empire of the Moon, and its fatness of the empire of the Sun, and these two are its coagululum and pure seed."

Astratus says: "Whoever would attain the truth, let him take the humour of the Sun and the Spirit of the Moon."

Turba Philosophorum: "Both bodies in their perfection should be taken for the composition of the Elixir, whether orange or white, for neither becomes liquid without the other."

Again, Gold says: "No one kills me but my sister."

Aristotle: "If I did not see gold and silver, I should certainly say that Alchemy was not true."

The Sage: "The foundation of our Art is gold and its shadow."

"Art of Alchemy": "We have already said that gold and silver must be united."

"Rosary": "There is an addition of orange colour by which the Medicine is perfected from the substance of fixed sulphur, i.e., both medicines are obtained from gold and silver."

The Sage: "Whoever knows how to tinge sulphur and quicksilver has reached the great arcanum. Gold and silver must be in the Tincture, and also the ferment of the spirit."

"Rosary": "The ferment of the Sun is the sperm of the man, the ferment of the Moon, the sperm of the woman. Of both we get a chaste union and a true generation."

"The Sounding of the Trumpet": "You want silver to subtilize your gold, and make it volatile by removing its impurity, since the silver has a greater need of the light of gold. Therefore Hermes, as also Aristotle in his treatise on Plants, says that gold is its father, and silver its mother; nothing else is needed for our Stone. Silver is the field in which the seed of gold is sown." And a little further on: "In my sister, the Moon, grows your wisdom, and not in any other of my servants, saith the Lord Sun. I am like seed sown in good and pure soil, which sprouts and grows and multiplies and yields great gain to the sower. I, the Sun, give to thee, the Moon, my beauty, the light of the Sun, when we are united in our smallest parts." And the Moon says to the Sun: "Thou hast need of me, as the cock has need of the

hen, and I need thy operation, who art perfect in morals, the father of lights, a great and mighty lord, hot and dry, and I am the waxing Moon, cold and moist, but I receive thy nature by our union."

Avicenna: "In order to obtain the red and the white Elixir, the two bodies must be united. For though gold is the most fixed and perfect of the metals, yet if it be dissolved into its smallest parts, it becomes spiritual and volatile, like quicksilver, and that because of its heat. This tincture, which is without number, is called the hot male seed. But if silver be dissolved in warm water, it remains fixed as before, and has little or no tincture, yet it readily receives the tincture in a temperament of hot and cold, and is called the cold, dry, female seed. Gold or silver by themselves are not easily fusible, but a mixture of the two melts readily, as is well known to goldsmiths. Hence if our Stone did not contain both gold and silver, it would not be liquid, and would yield no medicine through any magistry, nor tincture, for if it yielded tincture it would still have no tinging power."

And a little further on: "Take heed, then, and operate only on gold, silver, and quicksilver, since all the profit of our Art is derived from these three."

I may add that crude Mercury is the water which the Sages have used for the purpose of solution. I have proved that two bodies must be dissolved, and that they are no other than gold and silver. Now I will describe the conjunction of these two bodies by means of the crude Mercury of the Sages.

"The Light of Lights": "Know that it is gold, silver, and Mercury that whiten and redden within and without. The Dragon does not die, unless he be killed with his brother and sister, and it must be not by one, but by both together."

"The Ladder of the Sages": "Others say that a true body must be added to these two, to strengthen and shorten the operation."

"Treasury of the Sages": "Our Stone has body, soul, and spirit, the imperfect body is the body, the ferment the soul, and the water the spirit."

"The Way of Ways": "The water is called the spirit, because it gives life to the imperfect and mortified body, and imparts to it a better form; the ferment is the soul, because it gives life to the body, and changes it into its own nature."

Again: "The whole Magistry is accomplished with our water, and of it. For it dissolves the bodies, calcines and reduces them to earth, transforms them into ashes, whitens and purifies them, as Morienus says: "Azoth and fire purify Laton, that is to say, wash it and thoroughly remove its obscurity; Laton is the impure body, Azoth is quicksilver."

"The Sounding of the Trumpet": "As without the ferment there is no perfect tincture, as the Sages say, so without leaven there is no good bread. In our Stone the ferment is like the soul, which gives life to the dead body through the mediation of the spirit, or Mercury."

"The Rosary" and Peter of Zalentum say: "If the ferment, which is the medium of conjunction, be placed in the beginning, or in the middle, the work is more quickly perfected."

"The Sounding of the Trumpet": "The Elixir of the Sages is composed of three things, viz., the Lunar, the Solar, and the Mercurial Stone. In the Lunar Stone is white sulphur, in the Solar Stone red sulphur, and the Mercurial Stone embraces both, which is the strength of the whole Magistry."

Eximenus: "The water, with its adjuncts, being placed in the vessel, preserves them from combustion. The substances being ground with water, there follows the ascension of the Ethelia and the imbibition of water is sufficient by itself to complete the work."

Plato: "Take fixed bodies, join them together, wash the body in the bodily substance, and let it be strengthened with the incorporeal body, till you change it into a real body."

Pandulphus: "The fixed water is pure water of life, and no tinging poison is generated without gold and its shadow. Whoever tinges the poison of the Sages with the Sun and its shadow, has attained the highest wisdom."

Again: "Separate the elements with fire, unite them by means of Mercury, and the Magistry is complete."

Exercit, 14: "The spirit guards the body and preserves it from fire, the clarified body keeps the spirit from evaporating over the fire, the body being fixed and the spirit incombustible. Hence the body cannot be burnt, because the body and spirit are one through the soul. The soul prevents them from being separated by the fire. Hence the three together can defy the fire and anything else in the world."

Rhasis ("Book of Lights"): "Our Stone is named after the creation of the world, being three and yet one. Nowhere is our Mercury found purer than in gold, silver and common Mercury."

When bodies and spirits are dissolved, they are resolved into the four elements, which become a firm and fixed substance. But when they are not both dissolved, there is a particular mixture which the fire can still separate."

Rosinus: "In our Magistry are a spirit and bodies, whence it is said: It rejoices being sown in the three associated substances."

Calid: "Prepare the strome bodies with the dissolves humidity, till either shall be reduced to its subtle form. If you do not subtilize and grind the bodies till they become impalpable, you will not find what you seek."

Rosinus: "The Stone consists of body, soul, and spirit, or water, as the Philosophers say, and is digested in one vessel. Our whole Magistry is of, and by, our water, which dissolves the bodies, not into water, but by a true philosophical solution into the water whence metals are extracted, and is calcined and reduced to earth. It makes yellow as wax those bodies into

whose nature it is transformed; it substantialises, whitens, and purifies the Laton, according to the word of Morienus.”

Aristotle: “Take your beloved son, and wed him to his sister, his white sister, in equal marriage, and give them the cup of love, for it is a food which prompts them to union. All pure things must be united to pure things, or they will have sons unlike themselves. Therefore, first of all, even as Avicenna advises, sublime the Mercury, and purify in it impure bodies. Then pound and dissolve. Repeat this operation again and again.”

Ascanius: “Stir up war between copper and Mercury till they destroy each other and devour each other. Then the copper coagulates the quicksilver, the quicksilver congeals the copper, and both bodies become a powder by means of diligent imbibition and digestion. Join together the red man and the white woman till they become Ethelia, that is, quicksilver. Whoever changes them into a spirit by means of quicksilver, and then makes them red, can tinge every body.”

As to the nature of this copper, Gratianus instructs us in the following words: “Make Laton white, i.e., whiten copper with Mercury, because Laton is an orange imperfect body, composed of gold and silver.”

I advise all and sundry to follow my teaching, as to the correctness of which my quotations from the ancients can leave no doubt, which also has received further confirmation from my own experiments. Any deviation from this course leads to deception, except only the work of Saturn, which must be performed by the subtilization of principles. The Sages say that homogeneous things only combine with each other, make each other white and red, and permit of common generation. The important point is that Mercury should act upon our earth. This is the union of male and female, of which the Sages say so much. After the water, or quicksilver, has once appeared, it grows and increases, because the earth becomes white, and this is called the impregnation. Then the ferment is coagulated, i.e., joined to the imperfect prepared body, till they become one in colour and appearance: this is termed the birth of our Stone, which the Sages call the King. Of this substance it is said in the “Art of Alchemy” that if any one scorches this flower, and separates the elements, the generative germ is destroyed.

I conclude with the words of Avicenna: “The true principle of our work is the dissolution of the Stone, because solved bodies have assumed the nature of spirits, i.e., because their quality is drier. For the solution of the body is attended with the coagulation of the spirit. Be patient, therefore, digest, pound, make yellow as wax, and never be weary of repeating these processes till they are quite perfect. For things saturated with water are thereby softened. The more you pound the substance, the more you soften it, and subtilize its gross parts, till they are thoroughly penetrated with the spirit and thus dissolved. For by pounding, roasting, and fire, the tough and viscus parts of bodies are separated.”

The Stone of the Philosophers

Finally, I do you to wit, sons of knowledge, that in the work of the Sages there are three solutions.

The first is that of the crude body.

The second is that of the earth of the Sages.

The third is that which takes place during the augmentation of the substance. If you diligently consider all that I have said, this Magistry will become known to you. As for me, how much I have endured on account of this Art, history will reveal to future ages.