

# 157 Canons

These 157 alchemical canons were published, together with the 153 alchemical aphorisms, in Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, *One hundred fifty three chymical aphorisms. Briefly containing whatsoever belongs to the chymical science. Done by the labour and study of Eremita Suburbanus. Printed in Latin at Amsterdam, Octob. 1687. To which are added, some other phylosophick canons or rules pertaining to the Hermetick science. Made English and published for the sake of the sedulous labourers in true chymistry...* by Chr. Packe. London: for the author, sold by W. Cooper. 1688.

This was included in the earlier compendium by Benedictus Figulus, *Pandora magnalium naturalium...*, Strassburg, 1608.

## To the Lovers of Hermetick Studies.

ALL the Books of Phylosophers, which treat of the abstruse Hermetick Medicine, are of nothing but a Spagyricall Labyrinth, in which, for the most part, the Disciples of Art fall into various Ambages and Deceits; so that even to this day, there are but very few who have found a true end. for if in this Labyrinth some easie Way hath shewed itself to the Erring and Straying, which seemed to extricate and lead them out, presently some impassable corners have ocured, which keep them in a perpetual Imprisonment. So, if in the Writings of Phylosophers, manifest and easie Ways sometimes offer themselves, which at the first sight seem to the Searchers to be plain according to the Letter, presently unwary Operators, being decieved by the open words of Phylosopers, are involved in innumerable

Deceits. To this may be added, That many Pseudochymists deceive many by their specious Frauds and Cheats, dispersing and selling up and down lying Operations and Processies, in which they promise Golden Mountains to the Credulous; sowing Tares and bidding them expect Wheat. Wherefore I being moved with Compassion, have offered these Rules, which are full of Physical Reasons and Truth; in which you have the whole Art perspicuously depicted, as on a Writing-Table. Examin and weigh them throughly, fence your Opinion with firm arguments, and then you cannoy err. For he that without judgement beieveth every Sophism, is willing to be deceived.-The true Art is hidden under many Coverings, by which the unwary are easily confounded. Therefore, before you begin to work, weigh well, and prudently consider the natural Causes of things; or else enter not upon the matter. It is better to employ your time in diligent Meditation and profound Judgement, than to undergo the Punishment of a foolish and inconsiderate Temerity.- Farewell.

B.D.P.

## Some Phylosophic Rules or Cannons, Concerning the Stone of Phylosophers.

What we seek, is either here, or no where.

Cannon I. That which is nearest to Perfection, is the more easily brought to Perfection.

2. Things Imperfect cannot by any Art put on Perfection, except they be first purged from their feculent Sulphur and earthly Grossness, which is mixed with their Sulphur and Mercury; the which a perfect Medicine performeth.

3. To render the Imperfect fixt, without the Spirit and Sulphur of the Perfect, is altogether impossible.

4. The Heaven of Phylosophers resolveth all the Metals into their first matter; that is, into Mercury.

5. He that endeavoureth to reduce Metals into Mercury, without the Philosophick Heaven, or Metallick Aqua-vita, or their Tartar, will be greatly mistaken, because the Impurity abounding in Mercury, from other Dissolutions, is even discernable to the Eye.

6. Nothing is perfectly fixt, which cannot be inseparably joyned with that which is fixed.

7. Fusible Gold may be changed and turned into Blood.

8. To render Silver fixt, is neither to be resolved into Powder, of Water, for that is radically to destroy it; but it ought

necessarily to be reduced into Mercury.

9. Luna cannot be transmuted into Sol, except it return into running Mercury (but by the physical Tincture) the same is to be judged of the other Metals.

10. The imperfect Bodies together with Luna are brought to perfection, and converted into pure Gold, if they be first reduced into Mercury; and that by a white or red Sulphur, by the vertue of an appropriate Fire.

11. Every imperfect Body is brought to perfection by its reduction into Mercury; and afterwards, by decocting with Sulphurs in an appropriate Fire: For of those are generated Gold and Silver; and they are deceived, and labour in vain, who endeavor to make Gold and Silver after another manner.

12. The Sulphur of Mars is the best, which being joyned to the Sulphur of Gold, bringeth forth a certain Medicine.

13. No Gold is generated, but what was first Silver.

14. Nature compoundeth and cocteth her Minerals by a gradual process; and so from one Root only procreateth all the Metals, even to the Ultimate end of Metals, which is Gold.

15. Mercury corrupteth Gold, resolveth it into Mercury, and maketh it volatile.

16. The Stone is compounded of Sulphur and Mercury.

17. If the preparation of Mercuries be not taught by some skillful Artist, it is not to be learned by the reading of Books.

18. The preparation of Mercury for the Philosophick Menstruum, is called Mortification.

19. The Praxis of this great Work exceedeth the highest Arcanum of Nature; and except it be shewed by Divine Revelation, or the Work it self, by an Artist, it is never obtained from Books.

20. Sulphur & Mercury are the matter of the Stone: therefore the knowledge of Mercuries is necessary, that a good Mercury may be taken, by which the Stone may be the sooner perfected

21. Indeed there is a certain mercury hidden in every Body, being fitted without other preparation; but the Art of Extracting it is very difficult.

22. Mercury cannot be converted into Sol or Luna, and fixed, but by a Compendium of the Abreviation of the great Work.

23. To congeal, to fix, is one Work; of one thing only, in the Vessel.

24. That which congealeth and fixeth Mercury, that also tingeth the same, in one and the same Praxis.

25. The degrees of Fire to be observed in the Work, are four: In the first, the Mercury dissolveth its own Body; in the second, the Sulphur dryeth up the Mercury; in the third and fourth, the Mercury is fixed.

26. The matters being radically permixed in their profundity, through their most minute parts, are afterwards made inseparable, as Snow mix'd with Water.

27. Divers Simples being put into putrefaction, proauce divers others.

28. It is necessary, that the form and the matter be of the same Species.

29. An homogeneous Sulphur is of the same Mercurial nature, which produceth Gold and Silver; and this pure Sulphur is gold and silver, although not discernable to the Eye, in that form, but inasmuch as it is dissolved into Mercury.

30. There may be a certain fixed Unctuousity extracted from gold, with out a Philosophick Dissolution of the Gold into Mercury, which serveth instead of a ferment generating Sol and Luna; and that is performed by way of abbreviating the Work, which Geber calleth Rebis.

31. The metals being resolved into Mercury, are again reduced into a body, a small quantity of the Ferment being admixed, otherwise they alwaies retain the form of Mercury.

32. The Heaven or Tartar of Philosophers, which reduceth all the metals into Mercury, is the metalline Aqua-vita of Phylosophers, which they also call their dissolute Feces.

33. Sulphur and Mercury consist in the same homogeneous nature.

34. The Stone of Phylosophers is nothing but gold and silver, endow'd with an Excellency and more than perfect Tincture.

35. Sol and Luna, in their own proper species, have no more than what is sufficient for themselves, which it behoveth to reduce into the nature and power of a Ferment, by preparation, and to gigest, whereby the mass may be multiplied.

36. The chief Extremities in Mercury are two, viz. too much Crudity, and too exquisite a Decoction. [The words in the Original are nimis exquisita; but the word nimis, I judge, should have been minus; forasmuch as that agrees well with Crudity, no Crude subjected being well decocted.]

37. Phylosophers observe this for a maxime; that every dry thing whatsoever quickly drinketh up a moisture of its own species.

38. The Calx of Luna being altered, hastily drinketh up its own Mercury; the Phylosophers Foundation of Minerals.

39. Sulphur is the Anima, but Mercury the matter.

40. Mercury is stayed or detained by the Sulphur of imperfect Bodies, and is coagulated into an imperfect Body, and passeth into the same metallick species of the imperfect Body, by whose sulphur it was congealed and concreted.
41. To make Sol and Luna of the imperfect bodies, by sulphur, is altogether impossible; for nothing can give or afford more than it hath.
42. The Mercury of all the Metals is their Feminine seed, and their Menstruum, being brought so far by the Art of a good Operator: For by the projection of the great Work, it receiveth and passeth through the qualities of all the Metals, even unto Gold.
43. That a red Tincture may be elicited, the Mercury is to be animated with the Ferment of Sol only; but for the white, with the Ferment of Luna only.
44. The Work of Phylosophers is perfected by a very easie Labour, and performed without great Costs, and that at any time, and in any place whatsoever, and by all men, provided they have the true and sufficient matter.
45. The Sulphurs of Sol and Luna stay or retain the spirits of their own species.
46. Sol and Luna are the true sulphurs, sperms, or Masculine feeds of the Stone.
47. Every thing which has a power of retaining and fixing, ought necessarily to be stable and permanent.
48. The Tincture which giveth perfection to the imperfect Metals, floweth from the Fountain of Sol and Luna.
49. Whosoever take the Sulphur of Venus, are deceived.
50. There is nothing given to Venus by Nature, which is necessary to the great Spagyrick Work, or that can serve for the making of Sol and Luna.
51. Note, the Gold converted into Mercury, before it Conjunction with the Menstruum, can be neither Anima, nor Ferment, nor Sulphur, nor doth it any way profit.
52. The Work being brought to the end, may be rendred fiery, by Reiteration.
53. In the Abreviation of the Work, the perfect bodies ought to be reduced into running Mercury, and a dry Water, whereby they may rightly receive a Ferment.
54. The Preparation of Mercury, which is performed by sublimation, (being adhibited after revisication) is better than that which is done by Amalgamation.
55. The Anima cannot impress the form, except the spirit Intervene, which is nothing else but the Sol turned into Mercury.
56. Mercury receiveth the form of Gold by the mediation of the Spirit.
57. Sol being resolved into Mercury, is the spirit and anima.
58. The Sulphur and Tincture of Phylosophers design one and the same (F?)erment.
59. The Mercury of the vulgar is rendred equal to all the Mercuries of bodies, and cometh very near to their likeness and nature.
60. A Ferment rendreth Mercury more ponderous.
61. If the common Mercury be not animated, or wanteth an anima, it affords nothing of moment, either to the universal or particular Work.
62. Mercury being rightly mortified, is then impressed with an anima.
63. Sol may be prepared into a Ferment, so that one part may animate ten parts of common Mercury; but this Work hath no end.
64. The Mercury of the imperfect bodies stand in a medium between the common Mercury, and the Mercury of the perfect bodies; but the Art of extracting it, is very difficult.
65. Seeing that the common Mercury, by projection of the Stone, is changed into Sol or Luna, therefore it may ascend higher, be exalted, and rendred equal to all the Mercuries of bodies.
66. Common Mercury animated, is a very great Arcanum.
67. The Mercuries of all Bodies are changed into Gold or Silver, by an Abreviation of the Work.
68. A moist and gentle heat is called by the Name of the AEGyptian Fire.
69. It is worthy to be noted, that Luna is not the mother of common silver, but a certain Mercury, endowed with the quantity of the Coelestial Luna.
70. Metallick Luna is of a masculine nature.
71. The Mercury of the vulgar, through coldness, putteth on the nature of a barren Woman.
72. The Mercuries of Semi-minerals resemble the nature of Luna in likeness.
73. All things whatsoever are produced of Sol and Luna; to wit, of two substances,
74. Male and Female; that is Sol and Mercury grow together into one.
75. Common Mercury without Preparation, is remote from the Work.
76. Four of Mercury, and one of Sol; that is, of the ferment, Constitute a true matrimony of male and female.
77. The Solution is performed, when the Sol is resolved into Mercury.
78. Without Putrefaction no Solution is perfected.

79. Putrefaction endureth, and extendeth it self even to whiteness.
80. So the great Secret is the mundification of the Spirit, whereby the Menstruum is prepared, for by it the Gold is resolved.
81. Mercury resolveth Gold into a Water of its own form; that is, into a running Mercury, as it self is.
82. Dissolution is the beginning of Congelation.
83. Sol being converted into a running Mercury, remaineth in the same form for a little time.
84. The Ferment dryeth up the Mercury, and rendreth it more ponderous, retaineth and fixeth it.
85. The Sol of Phylosophers is called their Fountain.
86. The matter is converted by the power of Putrefaction, into a Pultis or Lute, which is the beginning of Coagulation.
87. There is a certain Compendious, by which the Sulphur is taken from Sol and Luna, whereby every Mercury may be fixed into gold and silver.
88. The matter ought never to be removed from the fire, nor suffered to cool, otherwise the work will be destroyed.
89. When the matter attaineth the colour of blackness, then it is necessary to give the second degree of fire.
90. The lotion or washing of Philosophers, is a similitude; for the fire alone performeth and perfecteth all things.
91. The Venome and Fetor is taken away, without the addition of anything, by the force of the Fire, which alone performeth all things.
92. The Fire, by its acute and penetrating Vertue, purgeth and cleanseth an hundred times more than any whatsoever.
93. In the generation and vegetation of any thing whatsoever, the heat being extinct, death presently invadeth the growing matter.
94. The Spirit is heat.
95. The matter being brought to whiteness, cannot be corrupted and destroyed.
96. Every Corruption of matter is impressed with a deadly Venome.
97. The Glass or Vessel is called the Mother.
98. The vertue of Sulphur is not extensive beyond the term or limit of a certain proportion, neither can it exceed unto an infinite weight.
99. This question is to be observed, Wherefore the Phylosophers call their Menstruum the matter of the stone?
100. Sulphur meriteth the name of the form, but the Menstruum, of the matter.
101. The Menstruum representeth the lesser and lower Elements, viz. Of Earth and Water; but Sulphur the two superiours, to wit, Fire and Air, as a masculine Agent.
102. If you should break an Eggshell, so that the Chicken should come out, it could never be hatched, nor if you open the Vessel, and the matter shall seel the Air, you can perform nothing.
103. The Calcination which is made with Mercury, in a Furnace of Reverberation, is better than others.
104. The Physlosophers manners of speaking are studiously to be noted, for by sublimation they understand the dissolutions of Bodies into Mercury by the first degree of Fire; the second Operation followeth, which is the Inspissation of the Mercury with the Sulphur; the third is the Fixation of the Mercury into a perfect and absolute body.
105. The number of those which err, is infinite, who do not allow Mercury as it is in its own form, and amalgamated with the Calx of the per fect bodies, to be the subject and matter of the stone.
106. The white Medicine is brought to perfection in the third degree of Fire; and this degree is not to be exceeded in the preparation of the white Medicine; for if you do otherwise, you will destroy the work for the white.
107. The fourth degree of Fire bringeth forth the matter Red, where appeareth also divers colours.
108. The work after it hath attained the degree of whiteness, not being carried on to a perfect redness, remaineth imperfect, not only for the white, but also for the red Tincture; therefore it is left dead till it endeth in a perfect redness.
109. After the fifth degree of Fire to perfect it, the matter acquireth new Virtues.
110. The Work hath not attained perfection, except the Medicine shall be incerated, and rendred subtile, like Wax.
111. The Work of Inceration is perfected by a double or triple quantity of Mercury, to that which gave the Stone its Original.
112. The Inceration of the white Medicine is performed by the white water, without the animation of the Mercury by Luna, but the Inceration of the red Tincture is done with Mercury animated with Sol.
113. It sufficeth, that the matter after Inceration remain like a Pultis or Paste.
114. Repeat the Inceration till it will bear a perfect Proof.
115. If the Mercury with which the Medicine is incerated being converted to a Fume, shall fly away, it avaieth nothing; wherefore do not manage it ill, for the matter by that means will go backward.
116. The medicine being rightly incerated, will explain to thee that Enigma, of the King returning from the Fountain.

117. Sol being reduced into his first Water or Mercury, if he shall be refrigerated or cooled by the help of common Mercury, the work perisheth.

118. Phylosophers take the matter prepared and cocted by Nature, and reduce it into its Prima materia; foreasmuch as every thing it hath its Original, even as snow is resolved inseparably in water.

119. The wise men reduce years into months, months into weeks, and weeks into days.

120. The first decoction of Mercury which Nature performeth, is the only Cause of its own single perfection, beyond which it cannot ascend of it self; for it behoveth to help its simplicity, by sowing Gold in its proper Earth, which is nothing else but a pure Mercury, which Nature hath a little, but not perfectly digested.

121. But in the second decoction of Mercury, besides the first of Nature, the vertue of the Mercury is multiplied ten-fold.

122. And the Stone is made of Mercury by reiterating the Decoction, Sol being admixed, for by this means the male as well as the female are twice decocted.

123. Sol ought to be put to Mercury, that he may be dissolved into Sulphur, and then cocted into the stone of Phylosophers.

124. Every Phylosopher in all times contemplated Mercury, when nevertheless he neither knew nor understood it.

125. Every Mercury of whatsoever Original, being rightly taken in a due manner, exhibiteth the matter of the stone.

126. Everything from which Mercury may be elicited, is the subject of the Phylosophic medicine.

127. Whosoever taketh or understandeth the writings of Phylosophers, according to the Letter, is grievously decieved, when they affirm their Mercury to be one.

128. One Mercury exceedeth another, in a greater heat, dryness, decoction, purity and perfection, which ought to be prepared without the corruption and loss of its form, and to be purged from all its superfluities, in which the treasure and secret of the stone consisteth.

129. If the preparation of common Mercury were known to the Notastudious of Phylosophy, they would have no need to search after any bene.other Mercury of Phylosophers, nor another metallick and mercurial Aqua-vita, nor another Water of the stone; because the preparation of vulgar Mercury containeth all those in it self.

130. Every Mercury of Metals and Minerals may by successive degrees be cocted and exalted unto the quality of the Mercuries of all the other bodies, even to a solar body, and therefore be deduced to the degree and vertue of what metallick body you please.

131. Common Mercury before a Legitimate Preparation, is not the Mercury of Phylosophers, but after preparation, it is called by the name of the Mercury of Phylosophers; containing in it self the true way and method of extracting the Mercury from the other Metals: And it is the beginning of the greater Work.

132. Common Mercury being prepared, is taken for a metallick Aqua-vita.

133. The passive Mercury and Menstruum ought by no means to lose the External form of Mercury.

134. Whosoever useth sublimate, or calcined, or precipitated Powder, instead of running Mercury, (for the Compleating the Work of Phylosophers) erreth, and is wholly deceived.

135. Whosoever resolveth Mercury into a clear water, for the perfecting of the Phylosophick Work, erreth grievously.

136. To compose or make Mercury of a Limpid water, is in the power of none but Nature.

137. In the great Physical Work, it is necessarily required, that the crude Mercury should resolve the Gold into Mercury.

138. If the Mercury be reduced into water, it dissolveth the Gold into water: And in the work of the Stone it is highly necessary, that the Gold should be dissovled into Mercury.

139. The Sperm and the Menstruum ought to have the same external form.

140. It is the Doctrine of the Phylosophers, that it is necessary for us to irritate or stir up Nature; therefore if the Menstruum be dry, it will be in vain to hope for a solution.

141. The seed of the Stone ought to be taken in a form like and near to the metals, and which cometh very near to metals.

142. It is highly necessary to take a seed of the Phylosophick Medicine, which resembleth common Mercury.

143. It is the secret of all secrets, to know the Mercury and matter to be the Menstruum of the Stone, and the Mercury of the perfect Bodies to be the form.

144. Mercury by it self only, affords nothing of moment to generation.

145. Mercury is the Element of Earth, in which the Grain of Gold ought to be sowed.

146. The seed of Gold is not only put into a multiplication of its quantity, but also of its vertue.

147. A perfect Mercury requireth a female for the work of generation.

148. Every Mercury ariseth from and partaketh of two Elements; the crude of Water and Earth, that which is concocted of Fire and Air.

149. If any man would prepare and exalt Mercury into a Metal, let him add a little Ferment to it, that it may be exalted to such a metallick degree as he would have it.
150. The great Arcanum of the whole Work is the Physical Dissolution into Mercury, and reduction into the first matter.
151. The Dissolution of Sol ought to be perfected by Nature, not by the work of hands.
152. When Sol is conjoynd or married to its Mercury, it will be in the form of Sol, but the greater Preparation will be in the Calx.
153. It is a Question among the wise, Whether the Mercury of Luna, being conjoynd with the Mercury of the Sol, may be taken instead of the Phylosophick Menstruum.
154. The Mercury of Luna is of masculine nature, but two males can no more generate than two females.
155. The Elixir consisteth in this, that it be elicited and chosen from a most pure Mercury.
156. He that desireth to operate, let him work in the Solution and Sublimation of the two Luminaries.
157. Gold giveth a golden colour; Silver a Silver colour; but he knoweth how to tinge Mercury with Sol or Luna, hath arrived to a great Arcanum.

#### FINIS.

Here thou hast (friendly Reader) those Phylosophick Cannons without which, whosoever thou art, thou wilt hardly attain thy willed end: If thou receive these Hermetick Fundamentals with a grateful mind, and exercise thy Self in this Theory with a pious Meditation, time may hereafter bring forth the Praxis of those Rules, not that imperfect or mained one, which I have schewed to some, but Intire and Compleat, confirmed by many Arguments, and solid Reasons. In the mean time,

Farewel.