

### THREE

## THE ALCHEMIST'S FIRST MATTER AND HOW TO OBTAIN IT

*The Adept who reveals all he knows about the First Matter is not betraying any trust, for the means by which it is obtained remain very personal, linked to nature and to the Alchemist's own individual preparation.*

Open any alchemical text you like: you will be told that the Work begins with *First Matter* whose nature no adept is empowered to reveal. He who does reveal what is only spoken of covertly, in whispers or in symbols, thereby exposes himself to dire calamities. You will be told that adepts with knowledge of the *First Matter* hold their peace, invoking the oath of secrecy. Some authors even go as far as to declare that they would prefer to die under conditions of the most appalling suffering than reveal the nature of this mysterious Matter. Is it really so important and so mysterious, and is it really so dangerous to reveal its nature to the profane? For the authors of these works also say that the *First Matter* is universally to be found in nature and that he who knows no better tramples it underfoot when he has only to bend down to pick some up.

If the *First Matter* is so zealously hidden from the un-instructed, it is because it is much more difficult to obtain

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than people are willing to admit. In addition, the constituent elements probably differ from one adept to another. I am about to solve the dilemma for my own part, for I have the firm intention of telling you what I know about the *First Matter*.

To begin with, several points concerned with the search for the *First Matter* must be considered, notably the seeker's natal chart. Study of this will indicate to the astrologer whether the person in question is a suitable candidate to complete the labours of Hermes. If the student is not himself an astrologer he must consult a master of that art. If he is, the knowledge will be useful in his work but the counsel of other masters will still be precious to him.

In this connection, it is more than likely that the ancient Magi were astrologers, alchemists and doctors. The association of these three interdependent disciplines makes for more enlightened diagnoses. Even though I had myself been initiated at an early age into astrology, it was the examination of my horoscope by a master which revealed my chances of success in the sphere of alchemy. To undertake such a task, however, I had to await inspiration, the command of higher forces. In the meantime, I was advised to content myself with study of the stars.

Here is a plan of the state of the Heavens at the time of my birth, together with an extract of the master's interpretation of it:

*Saturn occupying the centre of the sky, between 9 and 10 degrees of Pisces* has the following significance according to the translation of the *Volsafera* by the astrologer Sefarial: 'On a simple flat table are several pieces of chemical apparatus, notably a retort, a pestle and mortar, a curved tube and a crucible.'

And here is the interpretation: 'Special aptitude for studying one of the branches of chemistry. Shrewd analytic mind, able to solve problems by reference to the principles behind them, grasping the cause where others see only the effect. A character which admits no religion, yet is



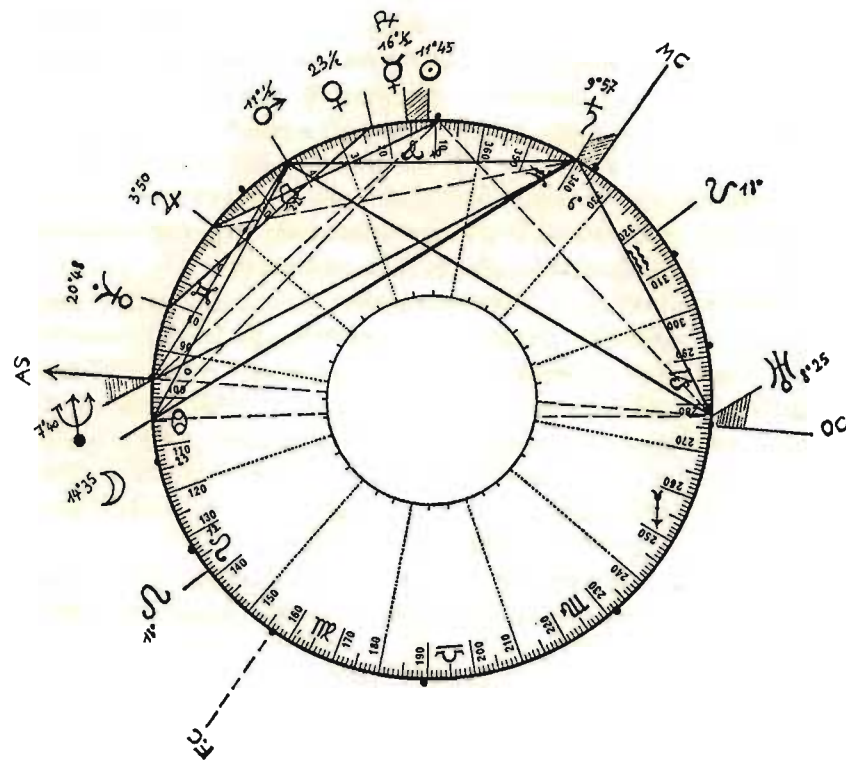


Fig. 1

Birth Chart, April 2nd, 1906 at 9.48 a.m.,  
in the Department of the Loiret

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incapable of producing thought which is not of a religious nature. In scientific research, everything is oriented towards the spiritual. Will become animated in discussing studies and subjects with which he is preoccupied.

This follows from the fact that Saturn occupies the centre of the sky and so determines my destiny. But Saturn is also Master of Capricorn situated in the eighth house and because of this can equally affect the spouse or person associated with the task undertaken. This person can, thanks to her psychic characteristics, establish contact with a higher spiritual plane and so serve as guide in fulfilling the tasks laid down by the couple's destiny.

Here, then, is one of the elementary principles concerned with the First Matter: the work unites the couple whose symbol appears, among other places, in the *Mutus Liber*.

I became interested in alchemy from the time the above information was given to me in 1935-6 and, from 1938 onwards, established a small laboratory in Paris. Then the war came and I had to abandon this early work. After that I dedicated myself to astrology, waiting for the person who should take on the role of Saturn and so become my collaborator. All these thoughts were finally shown to be accurate. Eventually, the initial revelations were given and we retired to the country to begin the task for which we were destined.

### *How we obtained our First Matter*

Not only are there times when nature's life forces are at their most intense, there are also privileged areas where these forces are concentrated. This has caused numerous adepts to declare that the First Matter should be taken from black earth where, they say, it is distinguishable by its pellet-like appearance at the moment when it should be



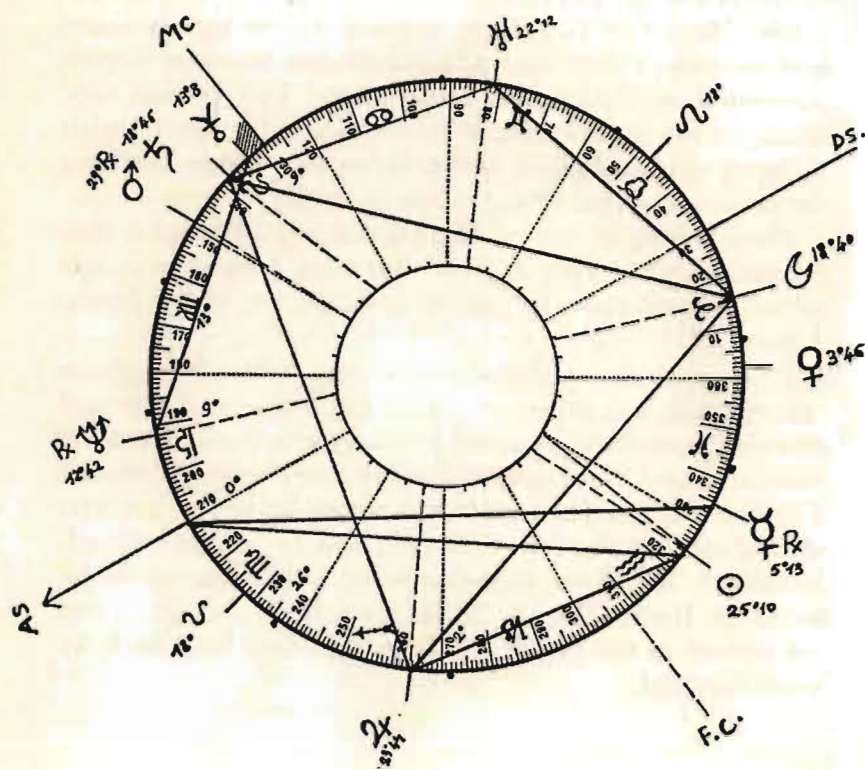


Fig. 2

Figure of the Heavens at midday on August 3rd, 1947

gathered. Some even go as far to consider searching with a hazel rod, an implement well-known to the ancients . . . Others advocate their own personal methods. In my case, I relied mostly on astrology, not only because it enabled me to fix the time and place to lift the matter, but also because it indicated how best to undertake each stage of the preparation.

On Sunday, August 3rd, 1947 I went for the first time with my female collaborator to the site in order to inspect the ground and fix the exact point at which, from that day on, intensification of certain currents should take place. These currents were destined to preside over the most daring attempt we could ever make: to seize the First Matter and capture the etheric forces, which would then gradually increase in intensity during irradiation of the Matter.

Here is the astral chart of that first sample which was obtained at midday local time on Sunday, August 3rd, 1947 (see Fig. 3). This moment coincided with the grand conjunction of Saturn and Pluto in Leo, crowned by the sun during the following days. Moreover, the full moon magnified the inspiration of the person who was guided, so that she was able to detect the earth currents more readily. This, in the traditional sense, is the true *Labour of Hercules*

Why was this particular moment chosen?

1. Firstly because the grand conjunction in Leo (the opposite sign to Aquarius), together with the crowning of the sun, signalled a very important planetary influx, one which would be earthed and so would prepare the Matter for the moment six months later when it would be taken. This would happen as the sun left Aquarius.

2. Next, because the operation had to be supported by a long lasting cycle like that of Saturn and Pluto, beginning that very day with the conjunction of the two planets. It was known that the work would be very lengthy and could not reach its first perfection until the moment Saturn had

completed one half of its revolution, i.e., had reached Aquarius.

3. Finally, allowance had also to be made for the combination of subsequent cycles, particularly the grand conjunction of Uranus and Pluto in opposition to Saturn, occurring in 1965-6, which was also to mark an important stage in the work.

That is why the *decision* was taken on Sunday, August 3rd, 1947. The following week saw intensification of the currents while the sun passed successively through conjunction with Saturn and Pluto. February 15th, 1948, night of the new moon in Aquarius, was fixed as the date of *acquisition*; the time was to be soon after midnight, at the moment when the sun passed to the depths of the sky, under the feet of the seeker. This was so that the charge, the germ, might be gathered with the portion of black soil taken from the earth. The chart of the sky at the time is attached.

The operation of extraction lasted nearly two hours. It was begun shortly before midnight and continued while Scorpio remained in the ascendant. The stars in trine with Uranus (the sun) and Pluto (the moon) reinforced the currents between these planets. They were destined to go on increasing until 1965.

What is this First Matter hidden several centimetres under the turf? Is it not—at least as far as the layman is concerned—plain ordinary earth? For the initiated person it is something quite different: it is *living* earth, seized from the ground by a very special process belonging to the sphere of High Magic, which allows the adept assigned to the task to gain possession of an entire collection of physical and metaphysical principles. It is indeed physically earth, but charged with the forces of life which would instantly be returned to the ground if someone unaware of the necessary preparation sought to imitate our actions. With regard to the processes of acquisition, to the magical ceremonies which precede them and even to the reasons

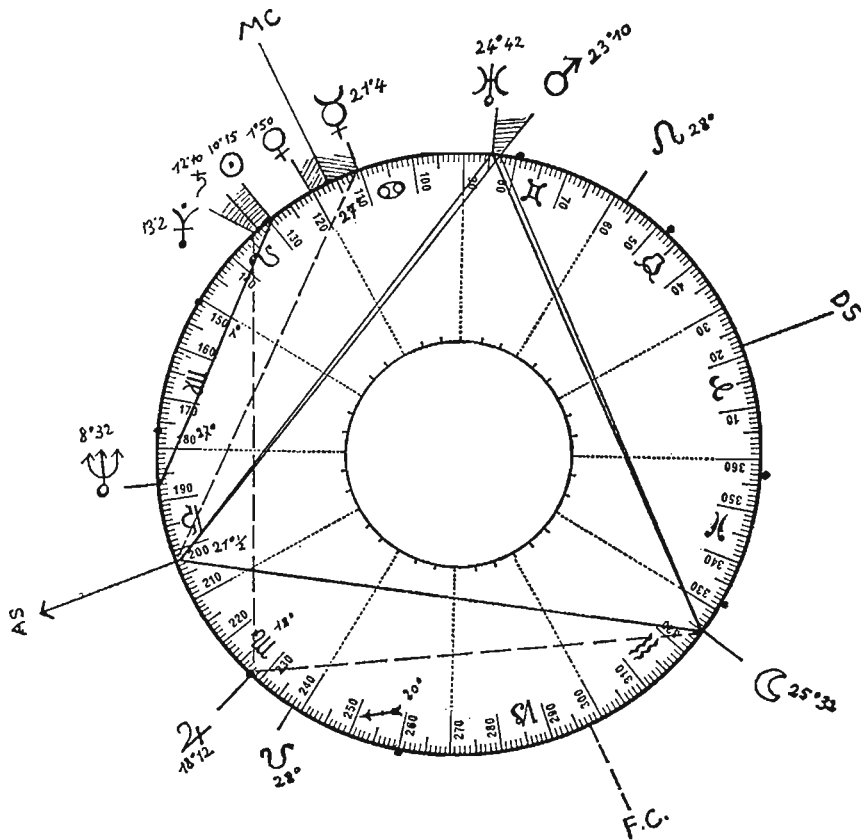


Fig. 3

Figure of the Heavens at midnight on February 15th, 1948  
at Champignelles in the Department of Yonne

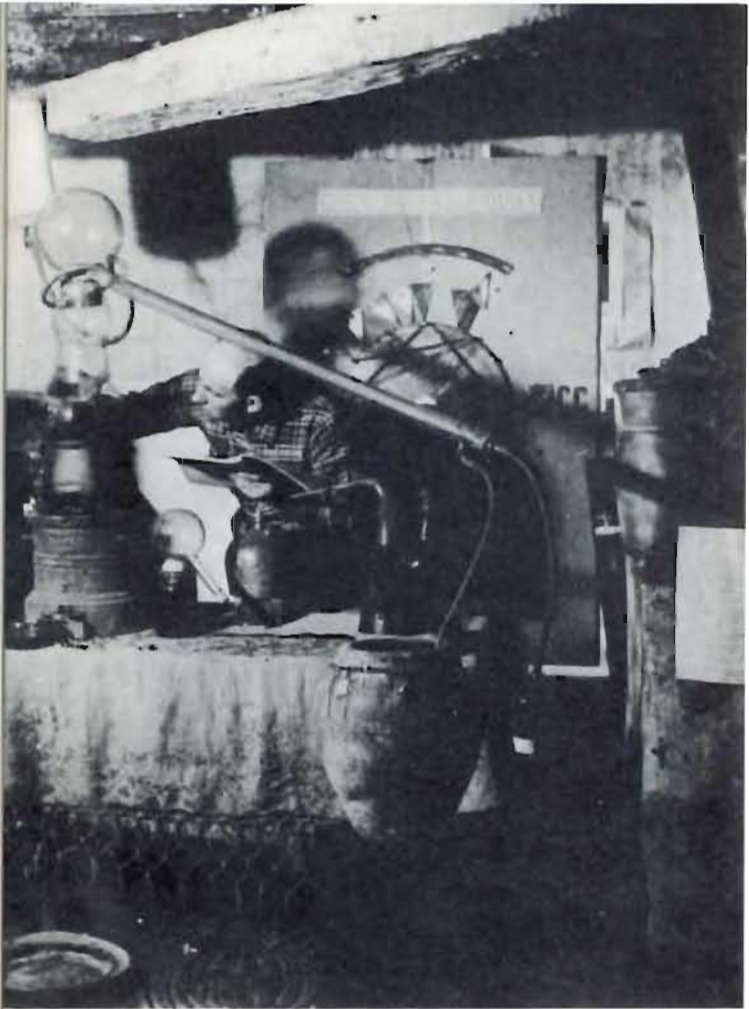


behind the exact choice of day and hour, the alchemists are silent. These conditions cannot be enunciated like those in a simple chemical experiment. The zodiacal symbolism which we have studied explains firstly the choice of Aquarius as the most favourable period for acquisition. In addition, though, personal planetary correspondences must be taken into account and it is these which will determine the exact day and hour of operation. To this end, the student's horoscope must be studied and, on the basis of this, choice made of the most favourable moment while the sun is in Aquarius.

Apart from this rather individual nature of the choice, there is the preparation of the would-be adept himself. So that he may work under the best conditions, he has to observe very strict rules of purity and hygiene. He has to know how to avoid maleficent forces and how to accumulate an intensity of psychic energy. He has to observe the necessary isolation and be, as it were, in a state of grace. To reach this high spiritual level, interior prayer is essential. The days preceding acquisition, therefore, are marked by ceremonies whose secret the student guards jealously, so that no one may come and defile the place or divert the energy source. For the same reason, that part of the ground from which the Matter will be taken is itself prepared, encircled and isolated from outside currents. If, then, no adept can reveal his procedure, it is not because of some 'dangerous' secret which must be strictly preserved, but so that no desecration may compromise the success of the operation. Further, if the *modus operandi* follows clearly defined rules, it nevertheless varies according to the adept's horoscope, following the goal he has set himself and the commitment he has made. For, once on the Path and in possession of the magic charge, he may no longer go back. He must enter a spiritual course which demands a search for the highest perfection. It is known that the condition of progress in this sphere is that the seeker and his matter evolve together towards perfection.

## Initial Researches





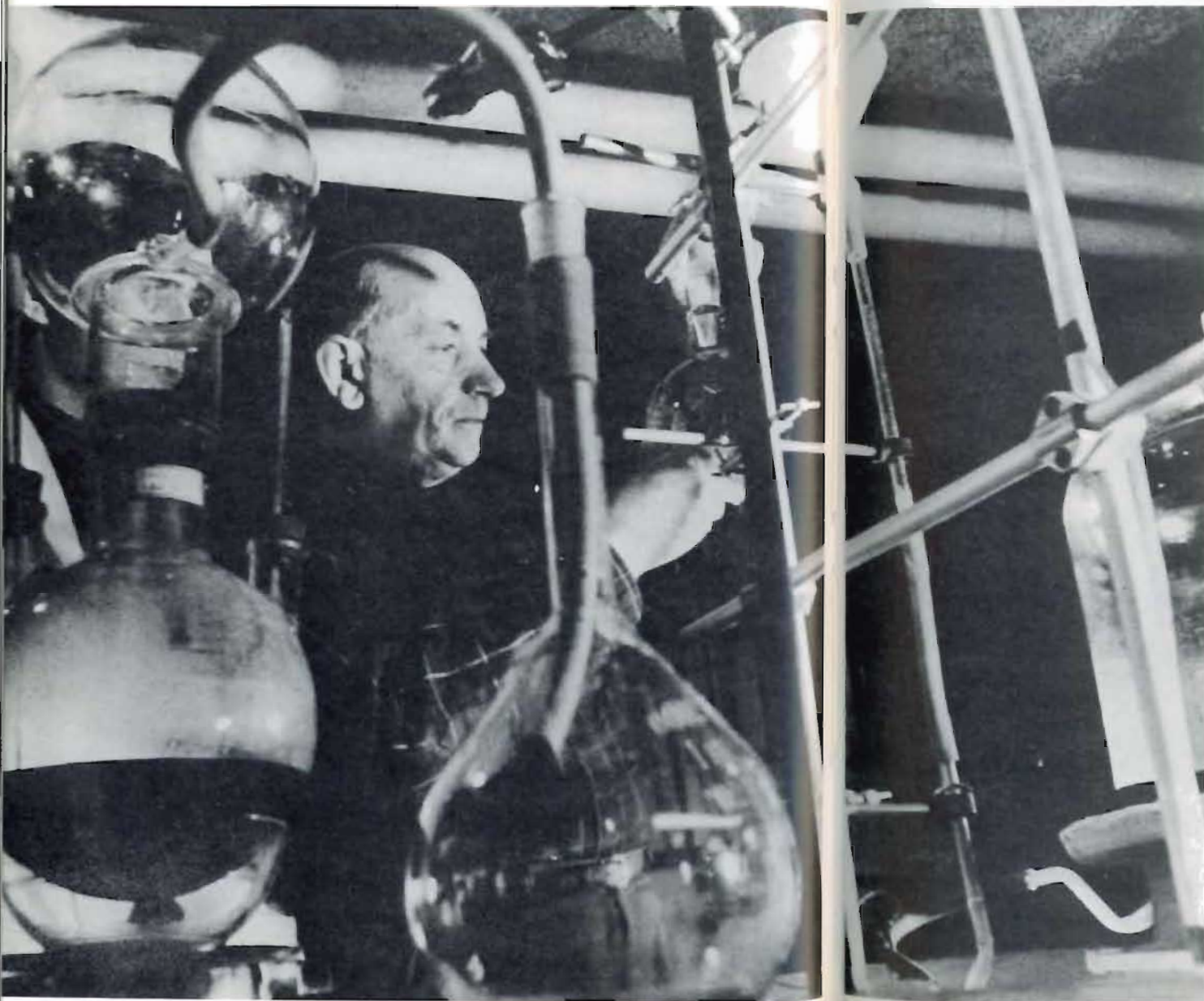
**1948. Armand Barbault experiments** (*above and preceding page*). He distills dew in which plants are steeped. At that time his laboratory was installed in a barn.

**The first drops of Gold.** In 1960 the first drops of Potable Gold were extracted, using this oven. Armand Barbault mixed incinerated ash, powdered Gold and distilled dew. Charcoal was used for heating and decoction, blown with bellows as in the Middle Ages. Heating had to be carried out for seven periods of four hours each, with four hours rest between each period.

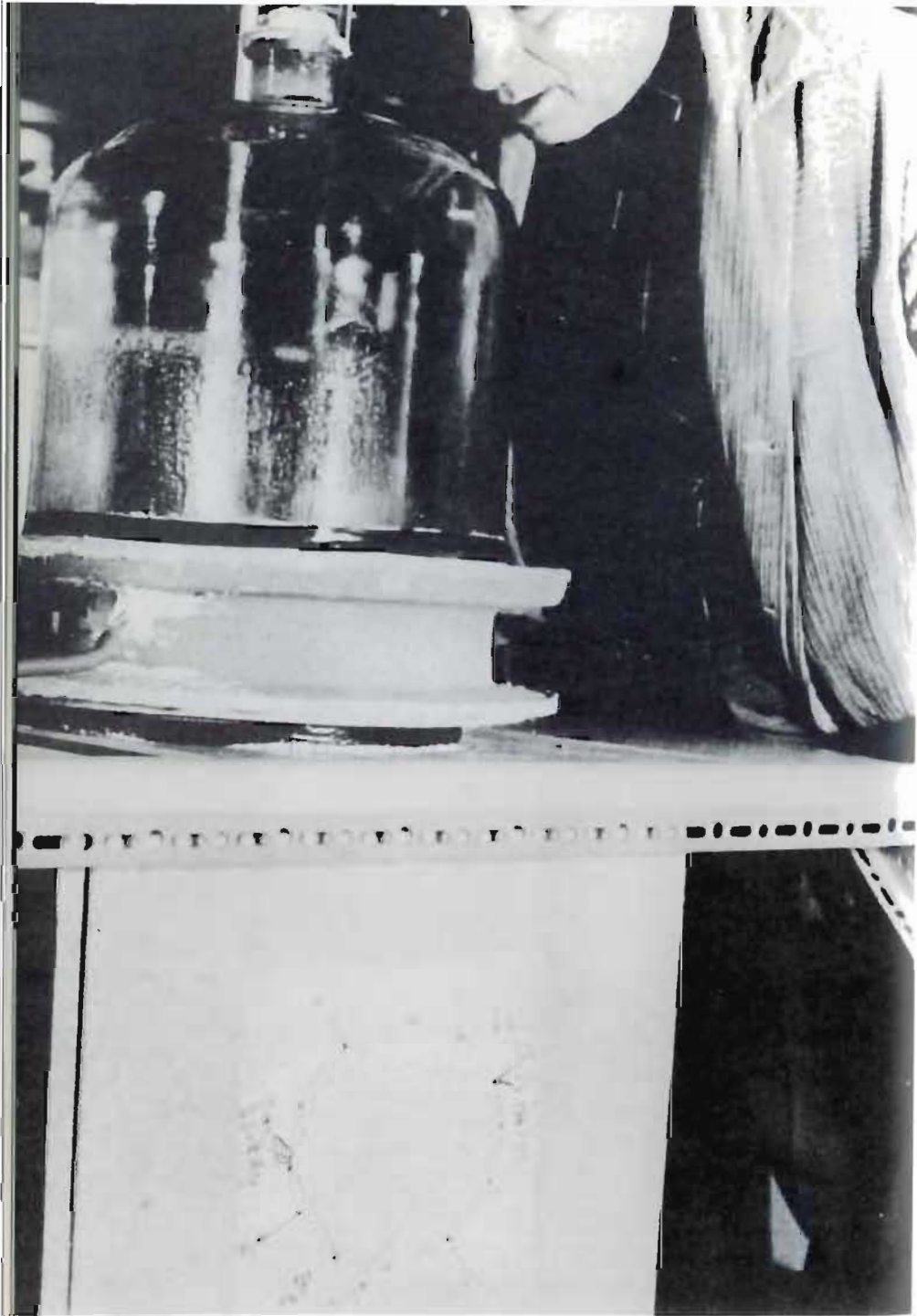




**The new laboratory.** The laboratory is transformed. All the heating is controlled by thermostats and many operations are fully automatic. Armand Barbault now lived in the Munster valley, in Alsace.



**The importance of astrology.** 31st May, 1950: the birth of Alexandre Barbault. Armand immediately casts his son's horoscope. Alexandre now continues his parents' work. The principal alchemical operations are always carried out when astrological configurations offer the chance of success. Nature and the movement of the stars are inextricably linked. Thus a conjunction (joining two elements together) always takes place at a new moon, and a separation at a full moon.



**The importance of astrology.** Crucial operations are always carried out in harmony with the astrological configuration.

**Collecting dew.** This is done before sunrise on fine Spring mornings. Lengths of canvas are dragged over the grass for a distance of about fifty metres. This gives about a litre of dew.





**Collecting dew.** The dew-soaked canvasses are then wrung out. The quality of dew depends on the kind of grass on which it is found: fields of wheat, barley, oats or clover. But this difference has only to be taken into account when preparing special spagiric remedies.



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Thus the acquisition of the *Materia Prima* cannot be reduced to a search for earth or specially selected minerals, having regard to the goal to be reached. It consists rather in taking hold of universal forces which participate invisibly in the life process. It is this spark of life, visible to the adept at the time of the operation, in the altered state in which he then is, yet invisible to the uninitiated, which is the real object of the acquisition. Here, too, certain mysteries are forbidden the non-initiate, for the manner of operation is expressed in a struggle between the alchemical student and the forces of the earth which watch over this spark of life, preserving it from all attempts at theft.

I do not therefore think that anyone who is not prepared or guided or who has not received the command of spiritual forces, can ever gain possession of the *Integral Matter*. The seeker, as in a dream or in some secondary state, has symbolically to engage the Dragon in combat. He must pierce it with his lance and so transform his prey into a majestic lion, symbolising total success of the operation.

Between August 3rd, 1947, when the decision was made and February 15th, 1948, date of the actual acquisition, a whole series of tasks had therefore to be carried out. This consisted principally of purification, of cleansing and of tracing a circle round the chosen point. This latter was situated in a sunlit spot, in the middle of a clearing. The vegetation here was healthy, abundant and well away from cultivated land—i.e. it was a place to which no one went. Situated at the foot of a little valley hidden by surrounding shrubs, it was easily accessible yet one could work there without being disturbed or even seen. Everything, then, was ideal with regard to the nature of the work to be carried out.

In spite of the silence which I maintain over certain essential operations (for they are unique to the participant and have no bearing on the general rule), it must be admitted that knowing or having a presentiment of the nature of the First Matter is insufficient to acquire it. As

already stated, the acquisition demands special preparations. These must be carried out simultaneously on the Matter prior to extraction and on the person carrying out the extraction. This individual must himself be prepared so that he carries out the operation under the best physical, moral, psychological and spiritual conditions. He must be able to evolve to the level of the various manifestations if he wants the acquisition to reach the desired state of perfection.

For a full understanding of this first preparation, it is necessary to consider three very different stages. These demand in particular fairly detailed knowledge of the Quabalah and understanding that the Great Work relates from beginning to perfect ending to the *seven days of the Book of Moses called Genesis*.

But to return to the original subject: either the alchemist or his guide (whose role I shall explain shortly), must make contact with a higher spiritual plane so that they may serve as vehicle for the currents which will subsequently be made manifest. Which of the two shall fulfil this function is determined by examination of the alchemist's horoscope. I have said that in my own case the position of Saturn, master of the Eighth House in the centre of the sky and in exact trine with the ascendant moon in its own home, Cancer, allowed the Guide, represented by Saturn, to make the contact.

Because of this natal chart the guide was able to visualise the living and spiritual forces held at her feet. In fact, while Saturn, in my chart, is situated in the centre of the sky, that is to say at its highest point, by analogy this same Saturn enables one to situate the depths of the sky, the lowest point inhabited by the guide, which in my chart would correspond to the Fourth House. In this way the point of fixation was determined, the currents passing through the guide in her state of spiritual elation. This corresponds to the *first stage, to the conception of the Germ, which is determined in principle by the fertile*

*irradiation of the Word*. In short, this point sees the birth of the *pre-matter* whose source is in the absolute principle, defined by the Word and fertilised by successive exteriorisations. These enable the principle to pass to the radical essence. This, in turn, will undertake the process of multiplication inherent in the genesis of life.

At precisely this moment the Guide, in contact with a higher spiritual plane, was inspired by the operation's presiding divinity. Through the power of the Word, the Guide perceived the living colours which, in the form of globes, were fixed under her feet for the entire duration of the first magical ceremony, devised for that very end. *In this way the birth of the germ of the Germ, or pre-matter, is brought about.*

At the same time each day during the following fortnight, that is until the appearance of the new moon, when the sun crossed the upper meridian, we had to be at the designated spot so as to catch the evolution of the colours. At the end of this process the earth would be able to receive the spark of life, prime condition of the Great Work.

From then until acquisition, frequent visits to the chosen site characterised the second stage, *the stage of irradiation*. Now the externalised currents pass from Principle to Essence or the generic power of Being. The Guide was gradually able to judge the evolution of colours until the germ of the Germ became the true germ, destined to be imprisoned in the now sacred earth which we would then extract.

Raymond Lully, in his *Theory* refers to this point, comparing the preparation of the Work to the birth of a child. 'Nature', he says, 'has fixed a time for conception (the first stage), a time for gestation (the second stage) and a time for birth (the third stage). Thus the alchemist, having once fertilised the First Matter, must await the moment of birth. Once the Stone is born, he must nourish it as he would a child, until such time as it is able to bear the heat of a great fire.'



Just as the mother-to-be chooses new and varied food for herself, in order that her child might be born under the best possible conditions, so I had to watch carefully over the spot which we had chosen and encircled. Meanwhile the Guide meditated and visualised the colours, following as closely as possible the evolution of the 'philosophic embryo' which was waiting for the sun to pass from its conjunction with Saturn in Leo to its opposition in Aquarius with these same two planets. At this point things reached maturity and the moment arrived at which the Matter could favourably be extracted.

Too little attention is sometimes paid to this second stage by the adepts, particularly those not versed in the art of astrology. It is very necessary to stress that astrology constitutes one of the fundamentals in this field.

In an analogous fashion, certain spagiric preparations must be left standing for forty days in the course of their fermentation or corruption, to allow for the completion of the process. Just as the conjunction of heavenly bodies is an auspicious occasion for *collection*, so the time of the full moon, in other words the opposite, favours *separation*. For this reason, many preparations require one and a half times the interval between two new moons.

We now reach the third stage: *acquisition of the germ*. The germ, imprisoned in matter to be extracted from the ground according to the relevant magical process, is the knot which unites matter and life, the sensible world to the world of hyper-sensitivity. It is the organic cell in which is imprisoned the vital soul. The acquisition of this constitutes one of the most important operations, for every ensuing stage depends on the successful completion of this one.

As may be guessed, this process is outside the scope of the uninitiated; it is an act of high magic, accessible only to initiates and to Rosicrucians who have been prepared accordingly. Silence is usually observed, not because of the existence of some general rule but following given and known laws whose effectiveness largely depends on their

being adapted to the astral make-up of the individual participants. It is the presence or absence of a harmonic relationship between the actual positions of the stars and their positions in the seeker's birth chart which determine which operations this person may proceed with and the precautions he should observe.

It must be remembered that only when all conditions of the middle stage have been fulfilled does the germ become individualised.

The Tradition has always veiled the secret nature of all these operations from the neophyte. The tale of fighting with the Dragon to wrest from him the Philosophers Stone is nearer to legend than to reality. Many people believe that it is simply a question of a symbol dissimulating the truth. In fact, the combat between the Dragon and the adept takes place as if in a dream, for the adept is in a state of altered reality. His state of exaltation is peculiar to perception of a world different from the one we normally know. It is on this astral level that the battle takes place. There is no really sincere alchemist who, on approaching the Work, would deny this. If he keeps silent it is because the guides who have helped him have also commanded him to keep silent, or else because he lacks the vocabulary to describe the state.

Cast an eye over the Alchemists' Bible, the *Mutus Liber*,\* more particularly at the first plate (see Fig. 4). You will see a curious figure there, asleep in the hollow of a little hill. In a dream he discerns the sound of an angel's trumpet, bringing him news of the Annunciation. This angel, standing on Jacob's Ladder, hears the echo of a sound made by another angel standing at the top of the ladder. It is from this angel's trumpet that the 'sound' which is eventually transmitted to the sleeper, emanates. This entire picture, encircled by a crown of roses, must be meditated upon by all who wish to enter the alchemical

\* 1. *Altus*; *Mutus Liber*, in quo tanem tota Philosophia hermetica, figuris hieroglyphicis depingitur, *Rupellae*, 1667.



citadel. If one is not called, urged on, informed by a guide in a dream, that is, if one experiences no revelation, it is useless to embark on the great venture. It is simply that you are not ready, even though you might think you possess the necessary intellectual knowledge. In this case it is essential that knowledge be at the same level as moral and spiritual evolution. It is a kind of entrance examination, like the French Baccalaureat, where a good mark in mathematics cannot compensate for a failure in another paper; the pass mark must be reached in every case.

The next plate in the *Mutus Liber* shows the seeker's vision: on earth (the lower part of the plate) is the completed work, in the image of its celestial archetype (seen in the upper part). It follows that one must work on oneself at all levels in order to find the real way in. Once committed, one is alone on a long, hard road.

Without dwelling too long on the choice and preparation of the exact point of extraction, I want nevertheless to describe that part of the operation which constitutes the second stage mentioned above. This is the stage of irradiation, which comes between the choice of site and acquisition of the Matter.

My companion was at this time in a state of high exaltation. She existed for long periods in a trance-like condition and carried out her functions as guide in the fullest possible manner. It was she who chose the exact location for the acquisition. When she had almost reached the spot, she was ordered to take another thirteen paces forward. This she did. She had in her hand a large peasant's stick. On reaching the indicated place she threw the stick into the ground in front of her with such force that it shattered into three pieces.

From this point on I can only repeat, with complete accuracy, what she said, or the impression she conveyed to me during the days of irradiation which followed:

'A Dragon must be overcome who will show himself to be more dangerous than ever before. Only by your

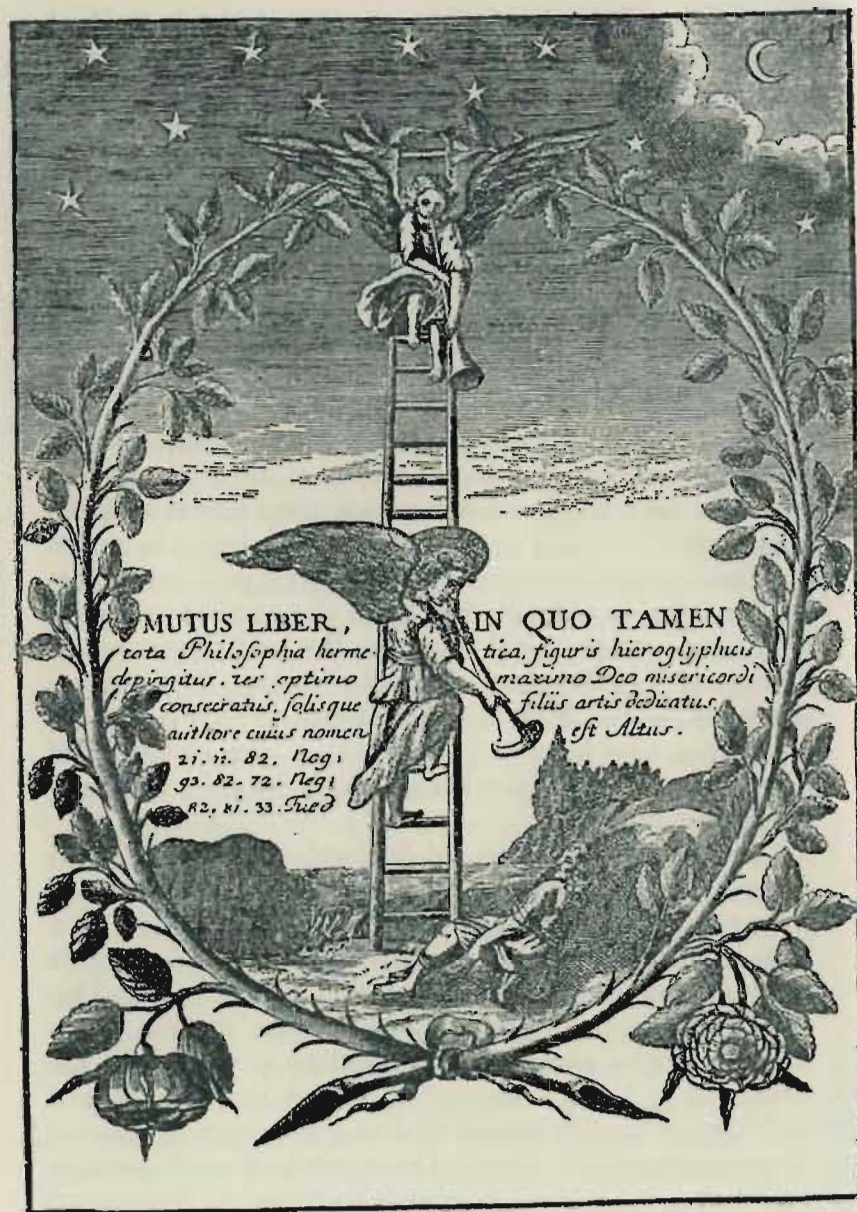


Fig. 4  
*Mutus Liber*, Plate I



courage, your strength and your will can you succeed in slaying him. I can do nothing for you. I am there to guide you, for now you have passed victoriously the tests of your initiation . . . The Lord who is my inspiration says "You will return in three weeks".' (This alludes to the moment of revelation, to the exact time and place at which the first currents were fixed, thus conceiving the germ of the Germ.)

From this day on, she felt irresistibly attracted to the spot where the evolution of the philosophic germ was taking place. The very next day she ascertained that a change in the active mass had occurred and that it now formed a sphere. This she saw evolving, growing and changing colour—becoming green—while two currents crossed it. Foreseeing danger from outside which could threaten the life of the germ, she traced a large circle round the chosen spot, according to the teaching of magic.

It must be understood that after the revelation, whenever the medium is on the site with feet firmly on the point from which the Matter will be extracted, she has a perception of the primary colours in the shape of a ball or globe; this globe is set in the ground under the medium's feet. The succession of metamorphoses is visible only to the medium. Those not prepared see nothing.

On the second day she ascertained that there had been another transformation of the germ which was growing ever-larger. She therefore traced a second circle round the first. During the night she had a new dream in which she was being assailed from all sides, as if notice was being given that I should prepare myself for a battle. On the third day she discovered that the germ had changed in both form and colour. It now resembled a sort of foetus encircled with gold. I intensified the two magic circles and, a little further towards the south, traced another one at a point where she presumed the existence of a vitalising current.

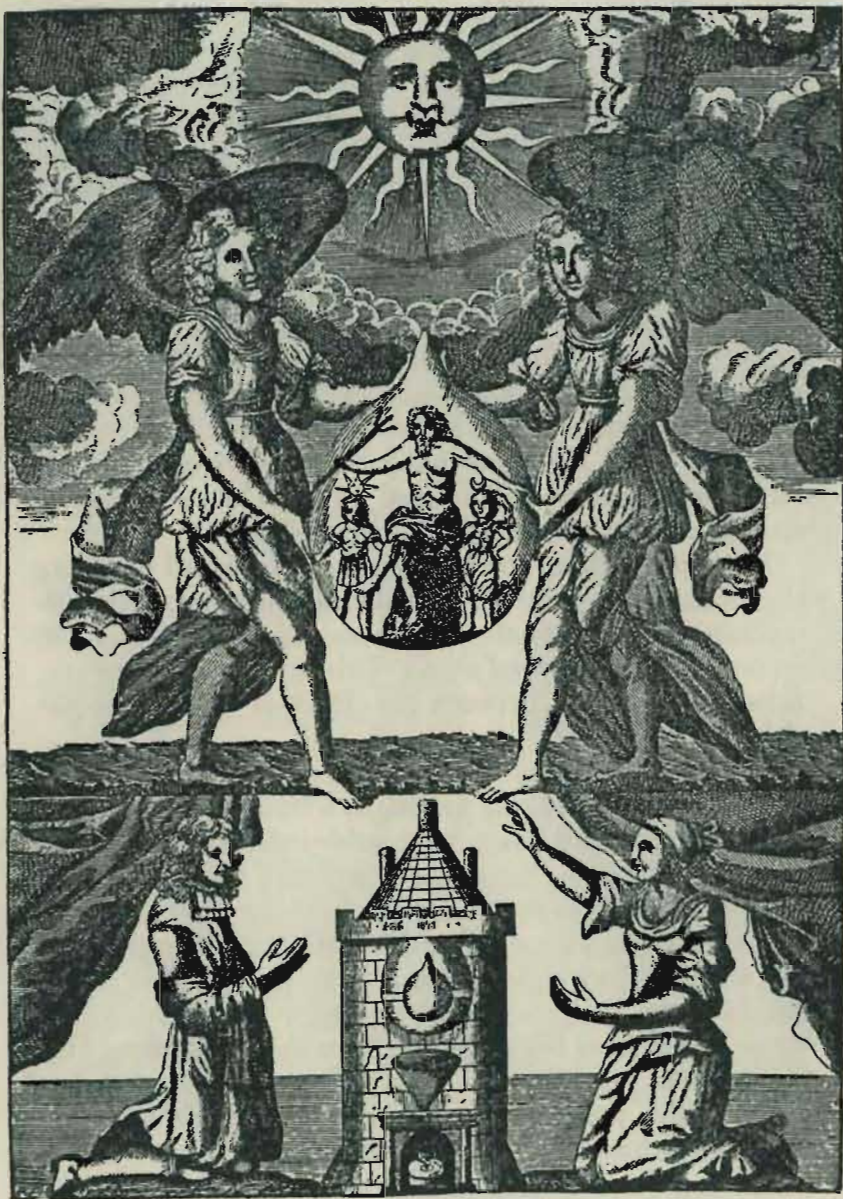


Fig. 5  
*Mutus Liber*, Plate II



On the fourth day we arrived at the place in the middle of a snow storm. After having traced a third circle around the second, she set to meditating on the centre. She saw two alchemists treating a stone which was gradually transformed into gold.

This perception is all the more curious in that it took place at the beginning of our labours, at a time when our knowledge of what we should do was scant. We saw these two alchemists several times more. One of them guided the medium in those operations which were of the greatest importance by showing his laboratory to her, as if some invisible correspondence had been established between our operations and those of the alchemist.

On the fifth day, almost before she had reached the place, she saw two stars casting thousands of rays on the metallic foetus which, after passing through all the colours of the rainbow, finally became a vivid red. She saw the globe changing in the air. It took the form of a recumbent body, while the medium felt the immediate presence of the two alchemists, hard at work.

On the sixth day, she perceived a further transformation of colours. During the night she found herself, in a dream, in dreadful combat with strange animals of prehistoric appearance.

On the seventh and eighth days the battle continued against the forces defending the elements of the earth.

On the ninth day, at the actual spot where germination was taking place, she witnessed a battle between a lion and fearful beasts which were determined not to abandon the philosophic germ. Then, in the evening, a dream revealed to her a whole spectrum of colours whose source was the sun, concentrated exactly where the germ of our Matter was. She reports that she saw for the space of a minute the most beautiful colours in the world. I believe that at this moment the stone was fertilised.

On the tenth day she again saw a well-defined red globe at the chosen spot. The struggle against the forces of earth

had been completed. She calculated that she must have triumphed in seven combats.

Finally, on the eleventh day, the red globe gained steadily in power and in the heart of it two little stars threw off thousands of incredible sparks.

This continued for the next ten days until the time of extraction. The irradiation became more intense, displaying ever more vivid colours.

The foregoing will be familiar to those versed in the ways of alchemy. It was necessary, though, to underline particularly the process of irradiation. This has remained little known, because the ancient authors kept silent about it. It is equally important to note that what was revealed at this stage only acquired significance later, when results had been obtained—and this was a long way off. The Guides had simply put us on the right road, leaving us to discover the techniques and sleights of hand which, after all, were not devoid of danger, particularly that of explosion.

I want to return for a moment to the role of the female guide, as illustrated in the second plate of the *Mutus Liber*. We see her at the foot of the picture, kneeling by the side of the athenor,\* head and arms upraised to explain to the man her vision of the forces above. The man keeps his head lowered to the physical world. This symbolises the two aspects of the work. The woman's presence is absolutely necessary, just as it is in everyday life, for the gestation of the child.

Through her extreme sensibility and the mobility of her own bodily fluids, the woman is to a certain extent in a favourable position to cross to higher levels and so receive instructions for her partner. His role, on the other hand, is far more earth-bound. He constructs the work on the material plane, at which level the woman stays in the

\* Athenor is a word which comes from Hebrew and Arabic. It was used by alchemists of the Middle Ages to designate their furnace.



background. She stands, therefore, on the right-hand side of the arcana, the 'passive' side, the side of the psyche.

The currents showed themselves to be at maximum vitality and of most vivid colour at the new moon of February 10th, 1948. This showed that the moment of acquisition was approaching. From midnight on February 15th we prepared ourselves for this operation, continually making sure that it might be accomplished according to the rights, signs and principles which had been transmitted to us.

At midnight on February 10th we embarked on the first operation. This consisted in gauging the scale of the currents, in fixing their position and then in clearing the area around the point chosen for the extraction of the *sacred earth*. This operation was scheduled for five days later, without digging, striking or using any kind of implement on the ground. Everything had to be done by hand. Additionally, it was presupposed that we would be in a perfect state of exaltation and cleanliness, in conformity with the instructions in the traditional texts. We eliminated every possibility of pollution. Then, inside the circles, we placed the glass vessel in which the Matter would be put after extraction. All this was carried out during that moonless night, right in the heart of the old quarry which we had chosen.

I do not want to go into details of this operation, which lasted for around two hours. Suffice it to say that we had to take ritual baths and carry out minute preparations. We had also to place the capsules of sacred earth on a wooden support, so that it was raised well above the ground. We had then to purify the spot, clearing it particularly of little stones and all other elements unsuitable for the preparation of the Philosopher's Peat.

We were lucky enough that year to have an early spring. So, soon after acquiring the Matter, we were able to start collecting the first few drops of dew each morning. We moistened the Earth with this, impregnating it with the

required vital forces, then dried it. We moistened and dried alternately and as frequently as possible until we could begin collecting the first plants and herbs with which to nourish it. In doing this, we proceeded to the stage of *treatment* of the Matter. It is about this that I now want to speak.



FOUR

TREATMENT OF THE FIRST  
MATTER

*A repeated series of operations should bring the Matter to the state of Leaven, the only state conducive to the 'opening' of gold.*

Treatment of the First Matter consists of four operations.

1. Cleansing and purification of the First Matter itself;
2. Nourishing and enriching of the Matter using plants and dew;
3. Distillation, corruption and incineration of the ensuing mixture;
4. Acquisition of the Leaven and its use in 'dissolving' the Gold.

There is no doubt that all plants of a medicinal nature may be used in preparing the Philosopher's Peat; the greater the variety, the more the First Matter is enriched. There are many analogies in Alchemy which underline what I have already said: nourishing the Matter is tantamount to nourishing a child.

However, before nourishing the First Matter, one must remember to purify it, ridding it of all foreign bodies such as small stones which might find their way into it at the time of acquisition, especially if this took place on a moon-

*Treatment of the First Matter*

less night. It must also be washed, and this is done by adding dew collected during the first few days of spring. Only after having carefully washed, dried and pulverised the Matter may one very gradually add to it small plants, buds and a thousand other natural items. It is important to use very young plants, full of sap and dew. This mixture is left to steep slowly at a low temperature until a deposit is formed. The mixture is then gently heated in an especially prepared alambic, ensuring that the temperature never rises above 40°C. In this way, one can begin very slowly to feed the Matter, moistening, leaving to stand in the cold, then drying and so on, without break, for weeks, months or even years, depending on the goal in sight and the method adopted. Gradually, one chooses stronger and stronger plants.

In that year, 1948, the buds burst exceptionally early and the first shoots soon appeared. Every morning, at dawn, we were out searching for the vegetable matter we required: a great variety of buds, young shoots just emerging from the ground, white flowers found on certain trees at the start of spring and so on.

Any sort of plant may be picked, but we looked above all for the truly beautiful, those which grew at random in wild areas, in the forests or the mountains and in those areas not over-populated and hence free of chemical additives.

It is better to pick very healthy, small plants than larger, apparently more beautiful specimens full of non-assimilable chemicals.

Particular importance is attached to plants which stay green for a long time, and also to pine buds and certain evergreens such as broom.

At the same time, when the weather was fine and still, we set about collecting morning dew. As will be seen, we did not exactly follow the procedure indicated in the fourth plate of the *Mutus Liber*; what we did was to choose a field of green, yet fairly stiff corn and then slide a very



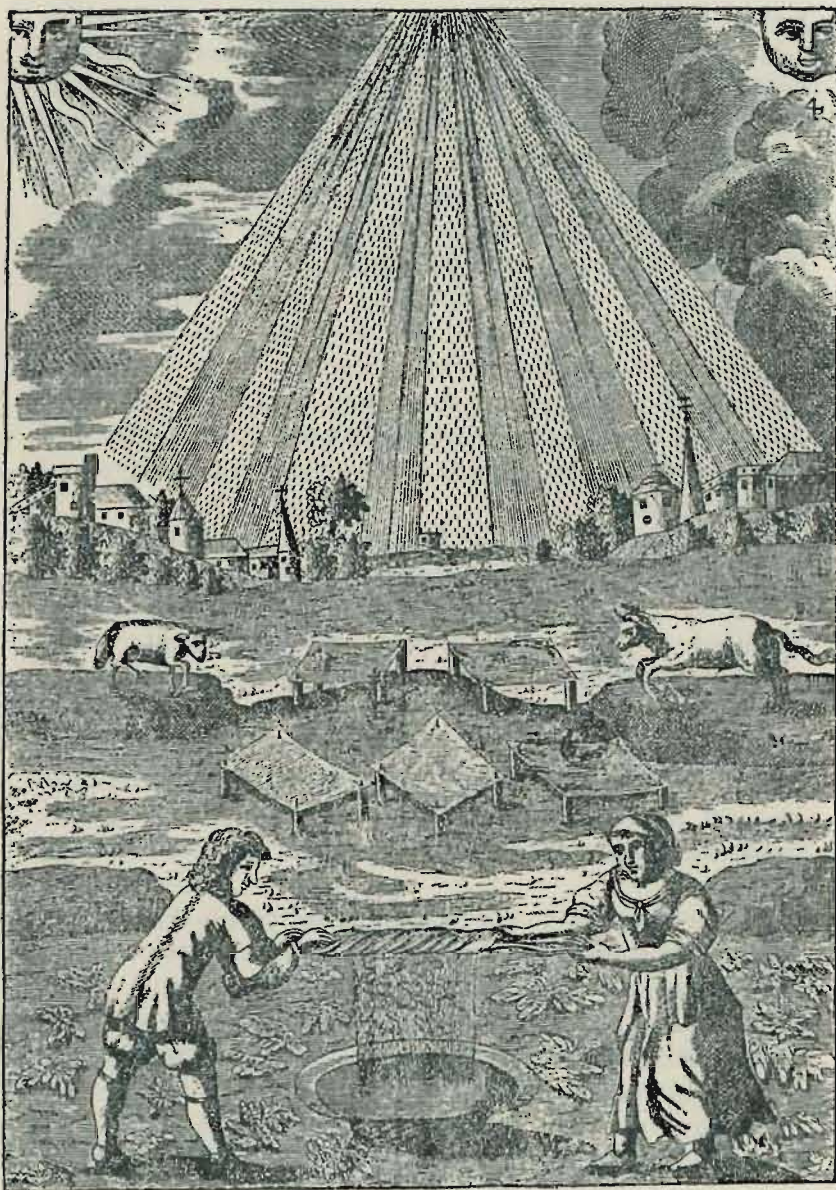


Fig. 6  
*Mutus Liber*, Plate IV

fine yet porous canvas up and down the rows. The canvas became saturated with dew drops which formed at the tips of the plants and every twenty metres or so we would stop and squeeze the canvas out over a vessel, gaining several glasses of dew each time. The method shown in the *Mutus Liber* (lengths of canvas spread out on the grass) is definitely preferable, the dew so gathered being of a purer, more etheric composition. Our method, however, had the advantage of yielding greater quantities. After having filtered and purified this fresh dew, we steeped the buds and small plants, which we had gathered, in it. This continued from the beginning of spring until Midsummer—March 21st—June 24th, the best period for gathering these items. Sometimes we began collecting two hours before sunrise and in any case finished one hour after it. We have followed this pattern every year since. The work, however, is tricky. Some years, there have been no more than ten or fifteen days during the whole of spring when the weather has been really cloudless and still and the dew abundant and strengthened by a good aspect of the moon. Plants, green shoots, buds, small flowers and other perfectly formed dynamic elements of vegetable matter collected in this way were put into earthenware vessels.

These had previously been filled with dew and were then sealed hermetically and put into cold store.

As and when needed, the contents of the vessels were used in the following way: the vessel selected was brought to a temperature of  $40^{\circ}\text{C}$ . and kept there for forty days, so that fermentation took place and also thorough mixing together of the sap and dew. After refrigeration, the contents were put into the capsule containing the sacred Earth; the capsule was finally placed in an alambic, to bring about the process of *first digestion*—so called since plants sap and dew serve as nourishment to the Matter.

Then, gradually, the mother plants are added and rapidly digested; things become easier as the process continues, for the Matter concentrates its salts and retains the



etheric forces to an ever-increasing degree; in this way it assures itself of easy nourishment.

*How each Drying Operation turns  
the Peat one stage blacker*

We had to build for ourselves a piece of apparatus capable of holding the mixture of earth, plants and dew and to which could be added, without opening, further vital solutions of dew or other useful mixtures. In addition, we had to ensure that the preparation could safely be brought, by gentle heating, to a temperature of 40°C., so that the drying would take place. In this way the successive processes of moistening, nourishing, fermentation and drying could be accomplished in the best conditions, the earth in the vessel becoming ever-richer.

For three years we ensured the continuation of this process, thus reaching the initial stages of corruption. This was a much longer period than we had at any time envisaged. It really meant that it took three years to *achieve the first degree of corruption*, that which is seen on the surface but does not yet penetrate the whole. We were unable to work for the full twelve months of the year, for our reserves of plants and dew became exhausted, at first after five or six months, later after seven or eight. We learnt from this experience that we had to gather a larger quantity of vegetable matter than at first supposed, bearing in mind that this harvest was only feasible during the three spring months.

I think it would be useful to provide a description of one of our earliest pieces of apparatus, basically two glass containers. The bottom half holds the sacred earth, the top half is a condenser. Between the two is a conical binding of iron. The lower vessel is immersed in a pan brought to a temperature of 40°C. It has a nozzle joined to it which means that it can be fed without being opened. A second

nozzle or tube joined to the top half leads off the moisture which has condensed. This arrangement, then, allows for moistening and drying in a sealed vessel, the temperature being maintained at a steady maximum of 40°C.

No such item is to be found amongst the ancient pieces of chemical apparatus; in this case it fulfils the function of the alambic as described in the *Mutus Liber*. However, it does seem probable that something similar did exist in the past, traces having been found in certain ancient texts.

John Dee, Astronomer Royal to Elizabeth I, wrote as follows around 1564: 'All generation, germination, seed growth and nutrition is nothing but the product of the reaction of the hot and the humid, both enveloping a germ animated by a spark of the unquenchable essence of life. Vegetable matter will only grow in a combination of solar heat and earthly moisture. This great law of the hot and humid, the generators of the world, is the alchemist's ultimate secret.' Following his own ideas, John Dee gave his apparatus the form of a figure of eight, the lower container representing the earth, the upper vessel the heavens. Matter can thus live, evolve and be transformed in a closed circuit. With a little imagination, one is able to grasp the nature of the process which takes place during these operations. I would add that one must ensure most carefully that the entire apparatus is hermetically sealed, for the gases given off are dangerous. It is preferable that the still be set up in an isolated and well-guarded spot. The first three years, that is from 1948 to 1952, saw our most important work; for the delicacy required, they were comparable to the care of a mother for a young child. Remember that the first years of life are the most vulnerable. A great variety of plants had to be chosen and prepared for future assimilation by being kept for forty days at 40°C. The plants had then to be mixed, pounded, dried and watched over to see that the remains fully underwent the process of corruption and so provided the sacred earth with everything it required. If, for some reason, the vegetable matter



was insufficiently digested or assimilated at the end of an operation, we had to wait, then add further quantities of dew to repeat the moistening stage, and leave the whole thing to stand for a while at a low temperature. This ensured that impregnation and internal activity were properly accomplished. Only then could reheating begin. One also had to synchronise one's actions with the great clock (i.e. the sky) since certain rhythms of the processes involved followed the phases of the moon. Thus it seemed right to us to introduce new elements at the time of a new moon, to leave everything to steep for a fortnight, then to begin heating again at the full moon. The length of time the matter was left to soak could also be increased and the entire operation set to a new cycle of forty days. In connection with this, note that numerous old texts dealing with spagiric preparations count on a period of forty days as necessary for reaching the state of corruption indispensable to the separation of mixtures.

However, what must be grasped is that the length of time varied according to the 'hardness' of the elements included. The shoots of pine trees, for instance, called for a long period of work, while the little rosy-coloured shoots, such as those found in hedges cut during winter, needed much less. Similarly, very small plants needed only a little work done on them. It is possible to encourage the process of assimilation by pounding the plants, so leaving only a thick, greenish-coloured gruel to be added to the Matter. In that case, though, one runs the risk of dispersing the etheric forces needed to maintain the vitality of the sacred earth. In our opinion, it is preferable to let nature work in her own way and not ill-treat the plants. If desired, during the autumn period one can also add fresh algae gathered from the sea. The corruption of these is more difficult to bring about, but once obtained, acts as a catalyst and allows the state of absolute black to be reached more rapidly. This process should not, however, be misused. In general terms, whilst all nature's elements should be taken

into account, particular attention must be paid to plants taken from the ground. I refer here to the directions of the Ancients: they recommended that plants be picked with the greatest possible delicacy, so that they yield their properties in toto. This, again according to the Ancients, is not possible if they have been maltreated before reaching the stage of corruption. I myself will shortly deal with this matter in detail. For a long time I thought that my operations could be speeded up if I pounded the plants before putting them into the container; however, I abandoned this method in favour of allowing nature to accomplish her own task in her own time.

It is easy to imagine how continual addition of vegetable substances leads to *blackening* of the Matter, since the corrupted organic remains mix with the earth to produce a sort of humus. But beyond this phenomenon, there is another: as one saturated the Matter with fresh dew in such a way as to leave a small excess of the latter, it became apparent that the dew was becoming intensely black, as if absorbing the floating organic residue. Very tricky operations finally yielded this black water; after it had been collected and left for a certain time, a new black matter gradually appeared as a deposit on the bottom of the vessel in which it was standing. As it increased in volume, this produced an excellent ferment for the next stage of the process. At this point I kept to the instructions given by Cyliani in his little book *Hermes Unveiled*. The method of collecting and withdrawing the black water which I found there greatly helped the internal work of corruption. After five or six years I reached the *second degree of corruption*. From this time on, the Matter began to blacken, not only on the surface as it had up till then, but right the way through. I dared to hope that I might reach the *third degree of corruption*, or Absolute Black, by following particular courses of action which experience and observation had taught me. After a while a steadily increasing quantity of whitish strands appeared at the drying stage.



These gave way to wool-like flakes, while the final distillations produced a greenish water smelling fairly strongly of ammonia. All this indicated the imminence of the third degree of corruption and the end of the first stage of the work. This indeed ought to culminate in the total incineration of the matter transformed during it.

That summarises the essential operations concerned in preparing the Philosopher's Peat. In the next stage this will become the *Leaven* which should elevate the gold to its first crown, that is to say bring into being the elixir of the first order, or first medicine. Before going any further, however, I want to discuss several points relating to the gathering of plants.

#### *Acquisition of Mother Plants*

In his work entitled *Herbarius*, A. Delatte has assembled a whole range of information on the ceremonial which the Ancients used in gathering both ordinary plants and also those reputed to be magical. Ovid describes with meticulous care the rites observed by Medea when she undertakes to rejuvenate her father Eson: the essential task consists not in discovering plants whose juices will replace the old man's worn-out blood, but rather in choosing a day when there is a full moon and in carrying out complicated instructions. She turns round three times on her own axis, sprinkles herself with water drawn from a river, gives vent to the three-fold ritual cry, and so on. It is not the plants themselves which one seeks to acquire but the properties which they conceal and which the egregoric divinities retain. Ovid, and also Sophocles who describes the same scene, insists that a sickle of brass be used. A great deal of literature on this subject has reached us from antiquity but even so, this is only a fraction of what was available to the Ancients themselves.

In any case, correspondences between plants and astro-

logical signs have long inspired books, attributed amongst others to Hermes Trismegistus, Solomon, Ptolemy and Alfred the Great. The *Herbarius* contains a whole host of information and references for each plant. These have been very precious to me and will usefully be referred to again in the completion of the next stages, even though the author, concerned exclusively with plants, does not add that the most important thing is to mix them with sacred earth, thus fulfilling the law in the *Emerald Tablet*: 'The earth shall be its wet-nurse.'

Here is a summary of the rules which should be followed when acquiring mother plants. These are basic plants which yield not only their sap and juices but also the vital, life-giving fluid whose energy value will be crystallised in our preparations. This, hopefully, will provide them with the expected medicinal power.

#### 1. *Qualities of purity and cleanliness; the Herbalist's knowledge*

It is not enough, as one might think, to have a knowledge of the plants and of their special properties. The herbalist must be initiated into a knowledge of all the phenomena of the natural world and be aware of the two-fold nature—physical and psychic—of plants. To do this, he has to be of an evolved nature and to be healthy and right-living. He has to possess particular gifts of perception and sensibility so that he not only sees a plant but perceives its power, its psychic vigour and the intensity of its vital fluid. The herbalist must therefore often undergo self-purification, withdrawing from impure contacts, so that he finds himself to some extent in a 'state of grace' as he confronts nature and the spiritual forces which radiate over all her kingdoms. The methods of purification vary according to the birth charts of those concerned. Some take ritual baths, others do breathing and yoga exercises, others again



practise meditation and isolate themselves from the outside world. Whatever the circumstances, the aim is to develop the psychic personality and the capacity to come out of oneself.

One must, of course, avoid the trap set by the forces of evil who seek to take over the vital fluid and vampirise it for their own ends. It is doubtless always dangerous to make contact with life—whether human, animal, vegetable or even mineral.

One has only to read certain books on alchemy to discover the symbols which relate to all this: the danger which exists in trying to secure the First Matter is represented by combat between the Adept and the Dragon who guards it. The symbolism of the earth is equally valid for plants, whose nourishment comes from the earth. The simple act of picking plants, as we do every day, is only free of danger because the vital fluid which they contain returns to the earth at the very moment they are picked.

## 2. *The choice and preparation of plants*

As far as the preparation of our elixir is concerned, the essential is to obtain mother plants from outside those areas soiled by man and by chemical agents. One looks for plants in clearings, along little used paths and in a variety of places exposed to the rising sun. During walks in these places, the herbalist learns to recognise a plant as robust and vigorous, capable of yielding a very large quantity of the sought-after universal fluid.

As soon as he spots such a plant, he approaches it and begins to free it from any grass or branches which might be interfering with it. Next he encircles it, that is he traces round it a symbolic circle which marks out the area granted to him. He then purifies it of any element which could jeopardise the operation. It is common to find herbalists speaking to plants as to beings endowed with

judgement and sensibility. As soon as it has been located, the plant is shown what is expected of it. It is ordered to draw greater force from the ground and incorporate this into itself, so that the force may subsequently be available to the herbalist. Really what is occurring is an operation to make contact, a magical operation which can only be carried out by qualified individuals.

The initiate will often return to this place, gauging how things are coming along, experiencing the power which is present, moving aside plants which might get in the way of the one he has chosen. Other plants could also exhaust the forces which he counts on concentrating round this elected one. He will discover the astrological affinities of this plant and the nature of its spiritual forces and harmonise with them so as to acquire them. He will also, of course, choose a variety of plants which he will remove from the ground without ceremony and as occasion dictates, to augment the vital, nutritious element of his preparations. The leaven requires varying amounts of plants, sap and dew for its making. Finally, when he knows the day and hour at which acquisition is to be made, the alchemist will install a makeshift piece of apparatus allowing him to gain the vital forces of the plant without touching it with his fingers and without the plant touching the ground. Here, too, several sleights of hand known only to the specialist are involved. One can, for example, take a bush growing near the chosen plant but outside the circle, bend it over and attach it to the plant by a cord. In this way the roots of the plant may be freed as the bush is allowed to straighten up, finally drawing the whole plant with it. The adept will then plunge the plant into an earthenware vessel of dew standing well off the ground.

Touching the plant is judged to be inauspicious. There is a risk that the vital fluid will return to the ground, since the human body is a conductor. The resultant discharge could have unfortunate results on the organism. This is why it is preferable to make use of the bush, or of some

piece of flexible equipment serving the same purpose. All this must be prepared before the chosen plant is extracted. It will soon be seen why the operation can only take place at dawn, in the silence of nature and away from all external intervention.

### 3. *Preparation of the recipient vessel and of the First Water in which the plant is soaked and broken down*

The aim is to prepare a vessel for the plants so that collection can be made of the vital fluid. This is then used to prepare the elixir. One's preference will be for a vessel of baked clay or glass. It is essential that it can be sealed hermetically. The required liquid is dew, gathered from the grass at daybreak on a spring morning. A propitious day is decided upon by consideration of astral details. In addition, the day should be perfectly cloud-free. Great vigilance must therefore be shown at every moment, for even in spring the good days are sometimes few and far between.

Just as there exists a whole tradition of cures using plants, so one finds through the ages a whole mythology attached to dew. In his book *Deux logis alchimiques*, Eugène Canseliet, though judging that the fourth plate of the *Mutus Liber* is to be taken symbolically, gives abundant documentation of the hermetic significance of dew. In his *Revelations cabalistiques d'une medecine universelle tiree du vin* (1735) Dr. Gosset explains how he extracts the 'salts of dew' according to the method of Van Helmont and uses them in his medicines. He also mentions the ancient Egyptians; he says that the women used to bathe in morning dew to make their breasts firm and to get rid of their stretch marks.

There are many ways of collecting dew. The most traditional and the best is that described in the *Mutus Liber*: lengths of canvas are fixed by stakes above the grass during

the time of Aries or Taurus. Their symbols are the two animals who preside over the collection of dew. The canvas soaks up the fine droplets which form at the tips of the blades of grass and which generally evaporate when the sun rises above the horizon. Once this canvas has been impregnated, it is squeezed into a vessel in which the mother plant will be put. One can also do as I do and drag lengths of canvas over the grass. This has the disadvantage, though, of mixing certain impurities with the dew, which have then to be separated out. One must also see that the dew collected on the cloth does not touch the ground, or all etheric forces will immediately return to earth. The specialists are well aware of these precautions but there is little mention of them. In any case, all the above operations must be carried out before the gathering of the plants with medicinal properties.

### 4. *Establishing the exact moment to acquire a plant and its vital fluid*

One must observe nature and be able to read her secret book in all its aspects if one is to find the exact moment when the chosen plant—prepared, energised and ready to yield its properties—will be at its most powerful. Once this moment is known, the lifting of the plant can be carried out under the best possible conditions.

Generally speaking, this moment occurs at sunrise. The sap is then in full spate, particularly in spring time. Choose a really fine day, free of cloud and astrologically favourable. The law of analogy must always be observed and so on the day preceding the extraction of the plant, the herbalist should visit the spot and arrange the next day's meeting with it. At the same time he should retrace the circle designed to banish impurities. He will then perform the customary acts of purification, putting himself into a completely receptive state, so that the operation may pro-



ceed as laid down. The dew will have been collected as recently as is practicable, the vessel got ready and placed on a stand isolating it from the ground. The stand should also be sealed with a circle.

##### 5. *The nature of the offerings*

As a rule, when one pulls a plant out of the ground the vital fluid involved in its life process returns to the earth, just as, on the death of a human being the soul returns to purgatory to be purified. But when one carries out an operation such as the one we have described, taking over both the physical and psychic energies of a plant, it is possible to retain that which would normally return to the ground. Furthermore, it is possible to do this without producing an imbalance in the life surrounding the chosen plant. In books on magic one finds mention of gnomes and astral entities which seek to vampirise the vital fluid. So that these entities, whether or not they really exist, should not manifest themselves, grain is smeared with honey and inserted in the hole in the ground from which the plant has been removed. This is called the offering, in a sense an exchange designed to maintain an equilibrium of forces and to allow the operation to proceed under the best fluidic conditions. Some experimenters go so far as to put grain round the outline of the sealing circle, to keep the attention of the earth elements. Personally, I think that one should try and avoid falling into base magical practices.

##### 6. *Acquisition of the Mother Plant*

The plant must be one which is sensitised to a high degree and with sap in full spate. Choose a fine, clear day. The vessel, the dew and the grain are offered to nature. The herbalist, in a state of grace, will have devised a way of

uprooting the plants without touching them by hand. All the foregoing should be prepared before entering the circle. Once inside, the herbalist will prepare his own psyche and intone the ritual incantations. Then he will free the roots, preferably with a wooden object, being careful not to damage them. Slowly he will see the plant straighten up. Only at the moment when the bending of the bush causes the plant to lose contact with the ground will he introduce the compensating grain. He will then manipulate the plant so that it can be put into the dew-filled capsule. He will detach the plant, close up the capsule and retire, the operation complete. If the operator possesses special faculties, or if he is helped by a companion who does, he or she will, on the sublunary plane, see all that is forbidden to the uninitiated. In this way he will learn whether or not his operation has been blessed with success.

So that the plant may live and increase its concentration of material elements (sap, juices, chlorophyll etc.), the next step is to gather little plants from all around as required to fill the vessel and produce a compact mass of vegetable matter for subsequent operations. This last step is carried out in the same conditions as before but without special ceremony since the experimenter is now sufficiently sensitised to obtain both plant and vital elements.

This sequence of operations is repeated as often as necessary, according to the importance of the task to be accomplished.

##### 7. *Sealing the vessel hermetically and leaving it to stand*

Once one or more vessels, each containing a mother plant and filled with dew and other compressed plants, has been obtained, a certain quantity of leaven is introduced. As has been seen, the leaven is a preparation drawn from earth and certain minerals. The vessel is next sealed hermetically

and placed over a gentle heat which maintains it at a temperature of 40°C. for at least forty days. Note that this stage may last for varying lengths of time but that the details never change. It is essential that the vessel is not in contact with the ground for, as always, there is a risk that the vital fluid will return there.

Some authors fear what they describe as the phenomenon of 'demagnetisation'. Only later, during the summer, does one reach the drying stage. It is in any case always possible at this time to moisten the preparation with reserves of dew or rain water, or else with the contents of vessels which have been filled with plants and dew but not leaven. One should measure the quantity of leaven to be prepared or regenerated by the stage of preparation reached. One uses many more plants than one might at first suppose. One thing is certain: without the presence of leaven it is impossible to produce a preparation with any degree of stability. The leaven is in a sense the material support destined to be enriched by the vegetable matter. What is more, if the vegetable matter nourishes the leaven by enriching it with its own vital substances, the leaven in its turn dissolves the spiritual element of the gold which will later be placed in coction with it to produce the first elixir.

I now want to give certain details of the way in which the final coctions are produced.

### 8. *The Final Coctions*

Coctions have traditionally posed the seeker many problems. I arrived at my present method only after long experimentation.

The preparation, in twelve test tubes, is put into a circular hot air oven. A thermostat ensures that the temperature remains between 150° and 200°C., so that the preparation may boil and rhythmic vibration take place without risk

of explosion. (This has in fact been my misfortune several times.)

The tubes should be approximately 300 mm long and have a diameter of between 27 and 30 mm. About 20 mm of ash is put into the bottom of the tube and this is then covered with 25-30 mm of dew. Around 2½ grammes of powdered gold is added to each tube at the outset. As a rule, the powdered gold is about 10 per cent of the weight of the ash.

The successive periods of boiling should each last approximately four hours and should alternate with four hours off the heat. If boiling lasts more than four hours, the ash forms into balls or in some way binds together and the coction becomes ineffectual.

In practice I work with 24 tubes, 12 in and 12 out of the oven at any one time, so that the fire never stops. During the rest period, the ash softens again and I shake the tubes regularly to ensure that the preparation is always uniformly viscous.

The tops of the tubes stick out of the oven quite a long way and are permanently cooled by air currents; the vapours are thus condensed and any over-pressurisation avoided.

Each tube is sealed with a rubber stopper kept in place by a clip. In addition, the tube is supported on a perforated disc which allows the base to enter the oven without friction. This precaution is essential, for experience has shown that otherwise the base is worn out fairly quickly by the action of the salts and the powder which attack the glass.

In addition, it should be noted that the salts must be entirely eliminated from the final preparation. For this reason the vegetabilised liquor of gold is left to mature for a certain time. Any excess salts—it is in fact rare to find any—will be deposited. The tradition states quite clearly that the liquor must be left to stand a certain time so that it may clarify. The powder, on the other hand, must be used immediately after incineration, so that the salts are



taken at maximum strength. They may otherwise lose effectiveness by that phenomenon which alchemists of former times called 'demagnetisation'.

Really, the art of alchemy consists here in choosing tubes which are not too wide, thus avoiding caking and lumping of the powder and the attendant hardening, and also tubes long enough to allow normal condensation, so avoiding the risk of explosion. It also consists in finding the ideal mode of heating. It must be sufficiently gentle to produce regular but not excessive boiling. My eventual rhythm consisted of alternating four hours of heating with four hours of cooling. I repeat this seven times when the gold is new and three or four times when the tube contains half gold residue and half new gold. If the ash is particularly rich in salts, indicating its pH value, it may be used for two or three coctions. This is done by decanting the top part carefully after the tube has stood for some hours.

There is one additional point not without importance: take some ash which has previously been used to 'open' gold and which might therefore be thought to be *exhausted* and then submit it to a supplementary series of operations. Start with a new corruption, *carried further* by the addition of sap and dew, then proceed to an incineration *longer than before and at a higher temperature*, finishing up with a further coction, also at a higher temperature. These powders which one thought finished reproduce a new liquor of gold without the addition of further metal. There is, of course, a limit to these temperature increases. If the heating is carried to excess, the ash forms into a solid mass and becomes unusable. There is also a risk of explosion at extreme temperatures.

## In search of the First Degree Elixir of long life.







**Collecting plants** (*previous page*). Just before sunrise, as with the collection of dew, one uproots the chosen plants (the choice is made the previous day).

**Mixing earth and plants** (*above*). The vat of the alambic is filled with earth to be regenerated (its vitality was removed during the previous coctions); to it are added the plants which will bring it their life force.



**Adding the dew.** The dew, which has previously been filtered, is added to the earth and plants. This produces a sort of soup, which is then put under the alambic.





**Regenerated peat.** After several months' work heating and moistening the matter in the alambic one takes out a black substance which has assimilated



**Sifting.** To eliminate the impurities which have found their way into the plants and have not been reduced in incineration, the ashes are sifted. A mask is worn, because the salts they contain are very volatile and can be harmful.





**Preparation of coctions.** In the bottom of the test-tubes is a quantity of regenerated ash, covered by an equal depth of distilled dew. At this point Armand Barbault added the powdered gold.



the plants; this is called the 'regenerated peat'. It is put to blacken in the sun.

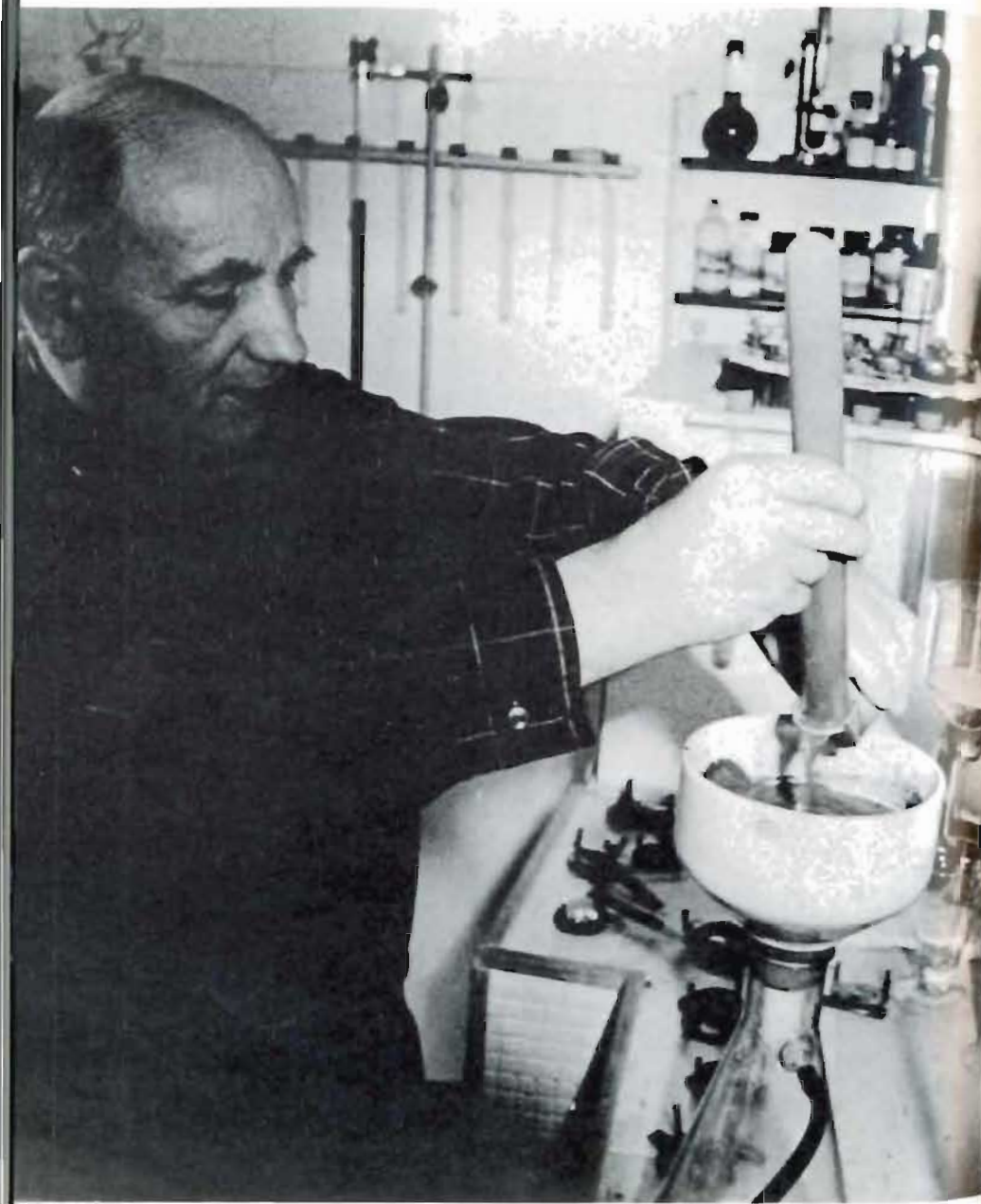




**Incineration.** Once the peat is fully dried out it is freed from any remaining deposits of carbon by incinerating it in an oven at a temperature of between 700 and 800°C. This operation takes several hours. Thus are obtained the ashes containing the vegetable salts.



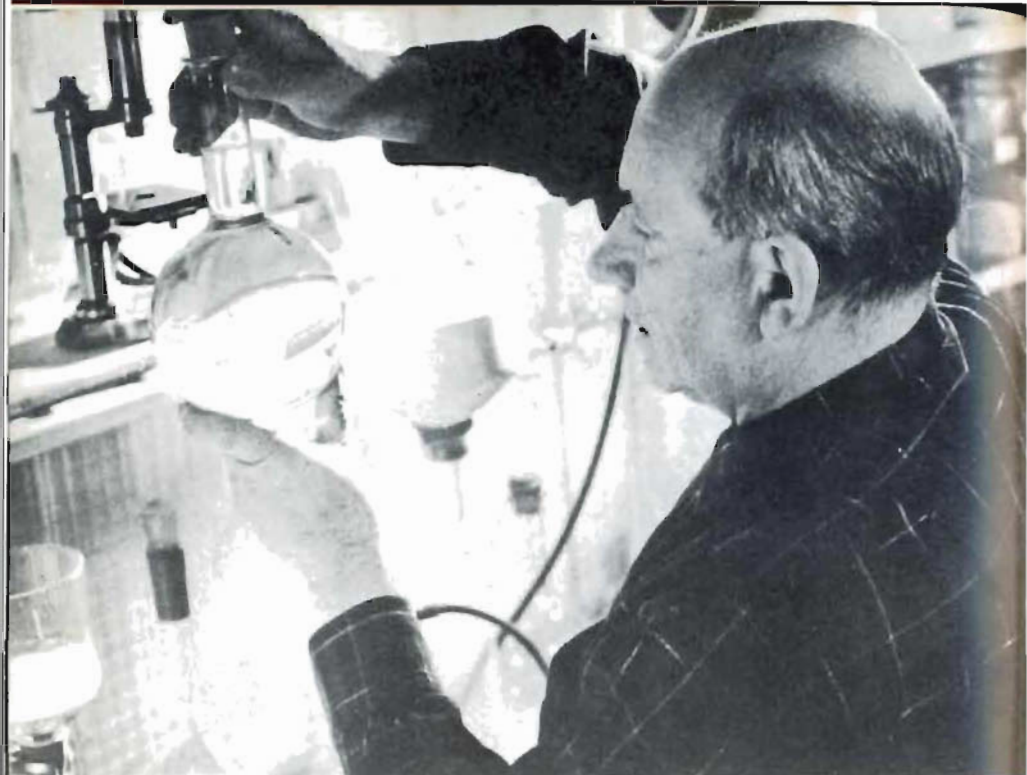
**Putting the test-tubes into a circular oven with twelve apertures.** The test-tubes are heated for four hours, then left to stand for four hours. This process is repeated seven times. The tops of the test-tubes protrude from the oven, assisting condensation of the vapours and regulating the pressure in the tubes.



**Filtering the coctions.** The coctions are filtered to retrieve the liquors and the earth, now liberated of its salts.







**Finally, the liquor of Gold.** The liquor is examined over a period of a week, to make sure it is entirely pure.

