

Concerning the Material of the Stone

This treatise is the first item in MS. 3027 in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. It is entitled 'De la matière de la pierre des philosophes en général'. Here it has been translated from the French by Mike Dickman.

CONCERNING THE MATERIAL OF THE STONE IN GENERAL

The primary and remote material of the Stone is triple, to wit, Mercury, Silver and Gold, in that all perfection consists in triplicity, and that all that is triune is perfect. There is but one sovereign and independent perfection and that is God, yet nonetheless within His unity, He embodies the Trinity of persons.

Spirits separate from matter are of three kinds, men are good, bad and middling, all that is most perfect loves triplicity.

The principal members, too, are three, namely the heart, brain and liver, whence spread forth throughout the body the arteries, nerves and veins, through which stream the natural vital and animal spirits, which maintain the natural, vital and animal faculties.

On the same subject, there are in humankind three sexes, masculine, feminine and hermaphrodite. And so, too, in our work, is Gold male, Silver female and Mercury the androgyn, converging the three into one single *oeuvre*. For should others such as those holding the material of the Stone to be Tartar, vitriol, antimony, vinegar, urine, menstrual fluid, semen, after-birth, blood, the celandine, moonwort, salamander or other things similar assert the contrary; either they know not the Art, or understand some other thing, which has, either the semblance, colour, consistency or at least some other similar quality.

It is thus then that those who seek the materia without the metallic genus, and in other place than within metals, work fruitlessly and in vain. May it please God that they have firmly imprinted upon their minds this axiom of the Philosophers to wit that *like engenders like*.

Has it ever been that a bull engender a lion? Do men father trees, or plants or metals? It has ever been constant that man engender man, horse or, which is the same, that man is fathered of the human seed, horse from the seed of the horse, and that from the seed of Rue springs Rue and never Sage. The same is true of Gold, which never can he produced without gold, nor yet silver without Silver; and let those who stray from this path be forcibly persuaded that they are wasting their time and their oil, and also when that they would waste upon it all of their wealth and work at it all the time of their lives. And in that there are many who spend long years at this work at great expense to themselves, I warn them that they are off the veritable path, for it needs not so much time nor excessive expense, for there is in this work almost no other thing that costs but the fire.

OF THE MERCURY OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

Now since the principal part of our work consists in knowledge of our hermaphrodite, that is to say Mercury, guard well that you take it not for the leprous, common and vulgar mercury, in no wise proper to this subject.

But where will you then - you ask - that I seek and find it? I answer that he is imprisoned and bound by many chains, and that there be none but the Philosopher can deliver him and set him free. He sees him at all times, though his dwelling he without gate or window; but the vulgar see it not nor know it at all, though it is at all times and in all places possessed by each and everyone, rich and poor, night or day. All beings handle, touch and spurn it underfoot, and yet know it never, for as is said, its prison is void of door and window.

Now, a certain one believing, having heard that it he handled, spurned underfoot, wasted and fouled by the vulgar, set course for the mountain wherein he had heard it said that four men and two women were occupied in the digging of minerals, each carrying on his or her breast that thing which he sought. Being thus persuaded of this, he entered into the mountain, and having met with the first personage who was occupied at working and digging the earth, looking attentively upon him perceived a strong and robust man in the habit of a soldier, red in colour and returned from the war, and knowing no other trade by which to earn his bread. Now he, having regarded this traveller, spoke unto him rudely and asked of him what its was that he sought, and who had made him so hardy as to venture into these realms where no-one had ventured before.

The traveller, astonished to find himself looked upon askance and addressed in tones so brusque, replied right gently:

"O Man of strength, I have heard it told that there he four men and two women who work this mountain, and that by long travail you all possess the materia of the Philosophers' Stone. And, since I, myself, burn with ardour for this

hallowed Stone, I have no fear in coming to this place, traversing waters, mountains and rocky crags; will not you give me some hope of obtaining of one of you that which I seek?"

"You have well understood," replied the strong man, "that we are four men and two women, and that all possess in truth such that we are that which you seek, and could give it you, though I doubt that that will be, yet may you obtain it more easily of the one than the other. For my part, if you fight me not valiantly like with some greatly experienced soldier, only if you slay me, for I bear that which you seek in the depths of my heart, it being my nourishment and life; and so of us all such as we are in this mountain."

The traveller replied, "O man of great strength, you are hardy and robust, I should not at all like to fight with you, I should be like some puny Trojan against Achilles; and yet could I do all that David did against Goliath."

"I advise you," - quoth the robust man - "to lay neither no hand upon my neighbour and concubine, who also is most powerful in combat, and if I be lion, she surely is the lioness. Nor do I advise you to attack our Sovereign Chieftain and his wife, for they be the King and the Queen; they have too much of pomp and splendour; take care then to attack them not, though well you might them vanquish. But going further along, you shall come upon others whom if you subdue you shall arrive at your desired end."

The traveller thus continued on his way, until he met with a most comely man, well-dressed and right splendid, with whom he spoke as before. This man replied that in no wise would he give him something from which he, himself, drew nourishment and life, and that he would go not only unto his own death, but to that also of the King and Queen, were he to grant what he asked of him.

The traveller spied on every side to assure that no-one watched, for it was his intention to slay him and take from his breast that which he there had so well conserved. And since he had said that on his death depended also that of the King and Queen, he rejoiced also already, in the hope that he would kill them straight way, and take from them that which he sought.

Seeing thus that no-one appeared, he made attack on that splendid man, taking him by the throat, but he cried him mercy swearing that in that case he would reveal unto him the secret he demanded.

The traveller having thus released him, he replied, "If you go further along, you shall come upon a dotard possessing the treasure that you seek in more abundance than I, and, he being old, you shall easily overcome him. And inasmuch as he is most close to our King and Queen, as their porter and he who carries the keys, when once you have cast him down you shall easily approach unto the King and Queen, and slay them also."

The traveller thus continued on his way, and came finally upon a certain ancient, a man of poorly mien and ill-clothed, the most miserable and despised of them all in that he seemed sad and melancholy, and he held with him the same discourse as before. But the old man answered:

"O goodly man who seeks here a thing neither Kings nor Queens may obtain, it is indeed true that you may easily find it in me, and that you nay also easily vanquish me in combat, for I am old and feeble and do not carry in the depths of my heart that which you seek as do the first with whom you spoke or his concubine. But do I keep it only in the ventricle, for that my body and that of others do there take ever their nourishment.

"Nonetheless must I lose my life, if you would take from me that which you seek. But, prithee, spare me for I am old, poor and despicable, and you may find better treasure in my brilliant and magnificent neighbour who is related by marriage to our Queen. Were you to vanquish him you would have a treasure more precious than from me who is so poor, for never does one find the beautiful and bright in the poor and despised."

The traveller taking pity on the poor dotard whom he might easily have slain, believed then that it would be more worth to seize the more precious treasure from the greybeard's neighbour, be it by force of arms would he not give it up voluntarily.

How so be it, as he was departing, the old man commenced to smile the more especially that being the possessor of so precious a treasure he had tricked the traveller, which same perceiving this on turning about, immediately retraced his steps in a fine fury.

"Is it thus," demanded he, "you wicked old man, that you would make mock of me? I know now that you pretend only to be poor, and that it is you who hold the greatest treasure, just as your neighbour told me. Take now the punishment for your laughter and receive your death at my hand." And thus was the old man slain.

It is easily understood by all that has gone above, where to find and take the Mercury. Now must we declare how it is to be brought to birth and taken from the corporeal belly in which it be enclosed. It is this that all Philosophers make well enough known and all books on chemistry relate to the point of importunity. Whence this saying common to Philosophers:

Mercury is to be made by Mercury,
the which being well known to many, we shall no longer tarry over it here.

ON THE PREPARATION AND PURIFICATION OF THE MERCURY

Take then your Mercury and purify it well by passing it several times through a cloth folded in three, and until it seem pure as clear and crystalline water.

All other methods of purifying Mercury, such as those making use of vinegar, salt, urine, quick lime, vitriol or other all corrosives such as destroy rather than exalt the humidity of the Mercury, thus harming more than they serve we deny.

OF THE SUN AND THE MOON AND THEIR PREPARATION

The second material of the Stone, the so-called female, is the Moon which is to be taken very pure, as it comes from the mine, the which has never been put to any other use, nor too much suffered the violence of fire, which is unmixed with any foreign body and easily malleable. In a word, let it be of the most excellent to be found of its kind, and this should you hammer into leaf of the very finest, though others again reduce it simply to a lime; that which I say of the Moon say I also of the Sun, that one take the highest coloured there may be, for as is the seed, so shall be the harvest reaped.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE WORK

Here note first that depending upon whether one would make the White Stone or the Red a different material is to be used. This being as it may, the manner of working for the one and the other is exactly the same and so is here said for the operation of the white should be understood as concerning also the operation of the red.

We shall speak first of the putrefaction of the materia, which is to be followed by a resurrection and exaltation, which will not occur but that the action has preceded them, the corruption of the one being the generation of the other. The seed of an herb soever, thrown upon the ground, putrefies first and loses form, following which the virtue hid within it, favoured by the warmth of the heavens, makes itself manifest, and the earth containing this seed being dampened by heavenly rain and dews, makes it to take on more noble and more perfect form, subsequently causing it to bear forth fruit in abundance.

And Nature works in like manner in all animals; they take first nourishment, then growth and finally they engender. And if such be true among men, and animals, and plants, as may not be doubted, must one not needs be blind not to see that the same be true amongst the minerals? You will say that this thing is much different among the animals, there being necessary to the production of but one animal the semen of two, to wit the male and the female. I answer that that which is performed by the twin seed, male and female joined together to engender one, single animal, one sole seed performs in the realm of the minerals. And why should it not be so? for in the vegetable realm the seed that produces them springs not from two plants, but from one alone. For let it not be fancied that the sex, male and female, attributed to plants, by cause of their mutual love, in any wise contributes to their production of like others. But let us procrastinate no longer.

PART THE FIRST OF THE WORK

Of the very pure menstruum of a prostitute woman, take 12 parts, of the perfectly washed lower body 1 part, in a long-necked and oval vessel, mix well all together until the whole materia be amalgamated. But let first there be added to the body 2 or 4 parts of the menstruum, and allow the whole to lie for 15 days or thereabouts, during which time the dissolution of the body shall take place.

Take then this materia, and press it that there comes from it the menstruum which you shall keep. Upon the body remaining after expression, place one or two parts of fresh menstruum, and let it stand it again eight days, after which time you may proceed as you did at the beginning, and continue in the same fashion until the body in its entirety has transformed into water.

All such operation is performed with the gentle fire of ashes, the vessel well sealed and corked with pasteboard.

PART THE SECOND OF THE WORK

Take all of the *aqua vitae* and place it in a sealed vessel like unto the one above, and at the same degree which is the first degree of the fire of ashes, for 8 days and 8 days it shall form upon its surface a black skin, which is the head of the crow and this you shall gather with the black powder which is beneath it, drawing off first the *aqua vitae* by inclination.

Again place this water in the vessel and continue in like manner, until blackness no longer forms.

PART THE THIRD OF THE WORK

Take all of the dead head you have gathered, and place it upon a fire of the ashes of oak, in the Philosophic Egg which same seal hermetically at the orifice, but with paste only at the joining of the two sections of the Egg, that it may the more easily he opened.

For the first 8 days more or less shall you give unto your black and moribund earth nothing to drink, in that it is yet full drunk of humidity. Then, when it be dehydrated and parched, you shall give it to drink in equal weight. Opening the vessel to this end, mix well and then close it again and leave it thus, until it be not quite entirely dried out, but only well coagulate; continue imbibition in like manner until the materia has drunk off all of the water.

PART THE FOURTH OF THE WORK

Take now this materia and place it within an Egg upon a fire of the second degree, leaving it there for several months until finally, having passed through divers colours, it becomes white.

PART THE FIFTH OF THE WORK

The EARTH being white, is near ready to receive the seed, and this because of the fecundity it has acquired through the preceding operations. Take therefore this earth after having weighed it, and divide it into three parts. Take of the ferment one part equal in weight to one of the three parts of your divided materia, and four parts of the menstruum of a prostitute woman, make of the ferment laminated as before and the menstruum an amalgam, and work the dissolution at slow heat for 14 days, until the body be reduced to a subtle lime; for we seek not here the *aqua vitae*. Take now the menstruum with the lime of the body, and the three parts of your white earth, make of all this an amalgam in a marble mortar, and in a vessel of glass upon a fire of the second degree, for a period of one month. Finally, give it the fire of the third degree until the materia become quite white, which shall be like unto a mass, gross and hard like a pumice stone, but weighty.

Thus for the operation of the white Stone. For the red, you shall operate the same, save that at the end you are to apply the fire of the third degree for longer time and more vehemently than for the white.

PART THE SIXTH CONCERNING THE PREPARATION OF THE STONE FOR THE EFFECTING OF PROJECTION

Many have made the stone without however knowing how to prepare it so as to effect the projection. Also, the Stone although prepared and achieved will make no transmutation if one does not make it have ingress into the body. To this end, break up your Stone, grind and place in a vessel well sealed with lute right up to the neck, that it my suffer great fire such as that of the fourth degree, give it fire of charcoal so strong that the sand be that hot that when one cast upon it drops of water these last make sound, and that one dare not touch with the hand the neck of the vessel placed upon the sand, by cause of its great heat.

Keep your vessel upon this degree of heat until your material becomes a most subtle and light powder; the which occurs usually within the space of one month and a half.

PART THE SEVENTH AND LAST OF THE AUGMENTATION AND MULTIPLICATION OF THE STONE

Once made, you may multiply the Stone unto infinity, without needing to make it again.

When you have the Stone made and achieved at the fifth step of the operation, one half shall you take to serve for yourself and this prepare to effect projection, and the other shall you keep for multiplication.

Weigh then that part, and if it weigh three parts, take one part not of the menstruum but of the *aqua vitae*; you shall then have four parts the which you shall place within the Egg and upon a fire of the second degree for the space of one month, following which you shall give it the fire of the third degree until the end, as above taught by ourselves in the fifth part of the operation.

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