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The Alchemical Writings of Edward Kelly

Kelley, Edward

London, 1893

Biographical preface

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BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE.

“ I VENTURE to hope,” says the subject of this memoir, in his treatise entitled *De Lapide Philosophorum*, “that my life and character will so become known to posterity that I may be counted among those who have suffered much for the sake of truth.” The justification thus modestly desired by Edward Kelly has not been accorded him by the supreme court of judgment to which he appealed. Posterity continues to regard him in much the same light as he was looked at by the men of his immediate period, as a fraudulent notary who was deservedly deprived of his ears; as a sordid impostor, who duped the immeasurable credulity of the learned Doctor Dee, and subsequently involved his victim in transactions which have permanently

degraded an otherwise great name ;
 finally, as a pretended transmuter of
 metals, who was only too leniently treated
 by the emperor whom he deceived. For
 example, the astrologer depicted by
 Hudibras had read

“ Dee’s prefaces before
 The Devil, and Euclid o’er and o’er,
 And all th’ intrigues ’twixt him and Kelly,
 Lexas and th’ Emperour would tell ye.”

But to Doctor Dee, at least, this
 is demonstrably unjust. This is the
 verdict of posterity in so far as
 it has concerned itself with the subject ;
 it is the verdict of the biographical
 dictionaries, who have faithfully tran-
 scribed from one another, after the
 easy method which prevails with bio-
 graphical dictionaries when they deal
 with magicians and seers, with alchemists
 and other professors of mystic physics,
 as, generally, with all the oracles of the
 borderland ; and, in so far as it con-
 cerns itself with borderlands, unerudite
 public opinion has been led by the
 erudite ignorance of the dictionaries.

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Now, in offering for the first time to the English reader the three very curious treatises which constitute the chief literary remains of Edward Kelly, it is not necessary, as it would be in fact without reason, that the editor should accept an indiscriminate brief for the defence of the alchemist who wrote them. To the collector of curiosities in science and *choses inouies* in literature, the interest which may attach to them will be unimpaired by the mummeries or crimes of their author. For the student of Hermetic antiquities, it will become evident, and he may already be aware, that the value of the *duo tractatus* and their complement is not that they are the work of an adept, but that they comprehend a careful digest or consensus of alchemical philosophers. while the interest which attaches to the man is created by his possession for a period of the two tinctures of alchemical philosophy, and not in his ability to compose them. At the same time, the adventures and imprisonments of Kelly, with

his transitions from abject poverty to sudden wealth, from a proscribed and law hunted fugitive to a baron or marshal of Bohemia, and then again to disgrace and imprisonment, ending in a death of violence, to say nothing of his visions and transmutations, constitute an astonishing narrative, and make up the broad outlines of a life which would be possible alone in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moreover, here, as in so many other cases, the student of transcendental history will hardly need to be informed that the "skryer" of Doctor Dee and the discoverer of the so-called "Book of Saint Dunstan" has been accredited with many iniquities of which he does not seem to have been guilty.

If it be permissible to set aside for the moment the mere antiquarian interest in these remains of Edward Kelly, and to exhibit a preferential attention towards that point of view from which the Hermetic student would be disposed to regard them, it will be reason-

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able to affirm that the importance of this alchemist's history concentrates entirely in his possession of the transmuting powders, and in the manner by which he is said to have acquired them. The other episodes of his life may be treated with comparative brevity.

Edward Kelly appears to have been born at Worcester, the event occurring, according to Anthony à Wood,* about four o'clock in the afternoon on the first day of August, 1555. This was in the third year of Queen Mary's reign. He was educated in his native city until the age of seventeen, when he is supposed to have repaired to Oxford. The registers of that University contain no record of any Edward Kelly having entered at the period in question, and it is assumed that his real name was Talbot. Three persons bearing this designation were entered at Gloucester Hall about this time. Possibly the University records have not been adequately searched, and

* *Athenæ Oxoniensis*, ed. 1813, pp. 639-643.

if not, the evidence for his sojourn at Oxford is of a very slender character.* If, beyond the difficulty that has been mentioned, there are no other reasons for supposing that he changed his name, and none others seem forthcoming, there is, perhaps, more reason to discredit his university career than to accept the theory of the *alias*. If he were at Oxford, it would be only for a short period, and he is said to have left abruptly. Other narratives state that he was bred as an apothecary, and in this way acquired some skill in chemistry. It was more probably the profession of his father, of which he may have picked up some knowledge in boyhood. After the termination of his scholastic studies, whether at Oxford or elsewhere, he himself seems to have embraced the law, and to have settled in London, or, according to another account, at Lancaster, but possibly in both places. It

* The amanuensis of Thomas Allen (*temp.* Wood), of Gloucester Hall, said that Kelly spent some time in that house.

was in the latter certainly that his troubles began. He was a skilful penman, who had been at the pains to acquaint himself with archaic English, and, as a Worcester man, not improbably with Welsh, and by the help of these accomplishments he was accused of producing forged title deeds in the interests of a client. The indictment is very vague, and does not rest upon anything which can be termed evidence. He is said, however, but upon equally uncertain grounds, to have been pilloried at Lancaster, and to have been also deprived of his ears. There is no doubt that he fell into grievous trouble, for to his life's end he was always less or more in fear of English law, and sometimes seems to have preferred a foreign prison to the uncertain reception which was to be anticipated on his return home. But that the penalty which his biographers have meted out to him, whether deserved or not by his misdeeds, was in some way evaded, it seems more reasonable to think. The

distinguished position which he held subsequently at the Court of the Emperor Rodolph, would have scarcely been possible to a man who had lost his ears. The credulity of royal personages at the end of the seventeenth century may have facilitated many impostures on the part of the alchemists whom they protected, but could scarcely have extended to accepting the philosophical illumination of an adept who had been branded by law. The alternative story is, then, apparently preferable, and this says that Kelly sought refuge in Wales. Here it is exceedingly probable that he adopted an assumed name, but whether Talbot became Kelly or whether Kelly merged for a moment into Talbot, or some other designation, is a mystery of modification in Alchemy which the past is not likely to give up. In Wales he would seem to have embraced a nomadic life, staying at obscure inns, and after a time he must have worked his way down into the neighbourhood of the historic abbey of

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2 Glastonbury.* What occurred to him here, what was destined, in fact, to be the turning point in the life of this fugitive, has been recited by more than one of his biographers; and if, in the present narrative, it be based on the record of the French scientific *littérateur*, Louis Figuier, that is not because his account is specially preferable, but because it is nearest at the moment.†

He put up, among other places, at a lonely hostelry in the mountains, and there it came to pass that he was shewn an old manuscript which no one in the village could decipher. Kelly had good, if somewhat mournful reason to be well acquainted with the mysteries of ancient writing,‡ and he saw at a glance not only that it was in the old Welsh language,§ but

* It is about 35 miles from Glastonbury to the nearest part of South Wales.

† *L'Alchimie et les Alchimistes*. Troisième édition Paris, 1860, p. 232, et seq.

‡ The insinuation is that Edward Kelly, as above indicated, had been concerned in the fraudulent manufacture of ancient legal documents.

§ Outside M. Figuier's imagination there does not seem to be any reason for supposing that the manuscript was in Welsh.

that it treated of the transmutation of metals. He made inquiries as to the history of this bibliographical rarity, and learned that its discovery was due to one of those outbursts of religious fanaticism which were common enough in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The sepulchre of a departed bishop interred in a neighbouring church had been violated, the zeal of the Protestant being not unmixed with the desire of obtaining hidden treasures. However, the sacrilegious act was only rewarded by the alchemical manuscript which the despoilers could not read, and by two small ivory caskets, containing respectively a red and a white powder, which in their eyes were equally useless. The receptacle of the red powder was shattered in their fury, and much of its contents were lost. What remained of it, together with the second casket and the accompanying document, they readily disposed of to the innkeeper, who seems to have had a hand in the discreditable transaction, in exchange for a flagon of wine. The

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manuscript was retained as a curiosity to be exhibited to strangers frequenting the hostelry; the intact casket was a plaything for the innkeeper's children; the remnant of the red powder seems to have remained by chance in its shattered receptacle; and it came to pass, in due time, that Kelly, in his capacity as a stranger, examined the entire treasure-trove. If Kelly had begun life as an apothecary, he had doubtless a smattering of chemistry,* and there would have been few educated persons at that period who, in connection with Alchemy, had heard nothing of the red and white tinctures which were the instruments of the *Magnum Opus*. He knew enough to be anxious to possess them, and for the whole archaic collection he offered one guinea to the innkeeper, who accepted these terms.

* Figuier observes that he was devoid of the most elementary conception of chemistry or of transmutatory philosophy, but then Figuier was a Frenchman and drew largely upon those interior resources which economise documentary research.

Such is the narrative of the discovery, stripped of a few elaborations, which are due to Gallic insight. Now, Nash,* who is responsible for the story of the pillory, assigns no date for the supposed mutilation of Edward Kelly, but it may be regarded as having taken place, if at all, about 1580. If the mutilation in question be rejected, the same date will serve us as the commencement of the Welsh wanderings. After he had secured the Hermetic treasures his occupations for a time are uncertain; when he reappears it is in company with Dr. John Dee. Figuier, still elaborating upon the outlines of unfanciful and ineffective biographers, recounts how, being unable to make use of his treasures, through his alleged ignorance of chemistry, he had recourse to his old friend Dee, wrote to him on the subject, received a favourable reply, and forthwith betook himself to London. Whether he wrote or not, there he was

* *History and Antiquities of Worcester*, 2 vols., London, 1781, etc., Fol.

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evidently established in the autumn of 1582. It is difficult to decide whether this was a first acquaintance. Lenglet du Fresnoy, who was fairly careful in the collection of his data, states that Kelly was really a notary of London, and that Dee was his old neighbour and friend.* They are supposed to have set to work together, and in the month of December, 1579, it is said, in the

* There is a very large mass of material in existence for the life of Dr. Dee, and it has been so imperfectly investigated that the biography of this singular man is still practically unwritten. So far as it has been possible to examine it for the purposes of this notice, it does not seem to afford much assistance on this debatable point. The Autobiographical Tracts of Dr. John Dee, Warden of the College of Manchester, edited by Mr. James Crossley, were printed for the Chetham Society in 1851, but they do not contain a single reference to Edward Kelly, nor to any experiments in Alchemy. In repudiating the magical practices which were ascribed to him, he refers to certain "false information given in by one George Ferrys and Prideaux, that I endeavoured by enchantments to destroy Queene Mary," for which he was imprisoned at Hampton Court, "even in the weeke next before the same Whitsuntide that her Majesty (*i.e.*, Queen Elizabeth, before her accession) was there prisoner also." There is also a tract occasioned by the accusation that he was "a conjuror, a caller of devils, a great doer therein, and so (as some would say) the arche conjuror of this whole kingdom." Concerning which, he says that it is "a damnable

laboratory of a goldsmith, they accomplished a transmutation of metals which proved the richness of Kelly's tincture to be one upon two hundred and seventy-two thousand two hundred and thirty; but, it is added, "they lost much gold in experiments before they knew the extent of its power." If this date can be accepted, Kelly was then twenty-four years old, and his companion was his senior by something like

slander, utterly untrue, in the whole, and in every worde and part thereof: as (before the King of Kings) will appere at the dreadfull day." But, as Halliwell justly remarks, the "Compendious Rehearsall" was "written for an especial purpose, for the perusal of royal commissioners, and he has, of course, carefully avoided every allusion which could be construed in an unfavourable light. In the other, however (*i.e.*, in the 'Private Diary'), he tells us of his dreams, talks of mysterious noises in his chamber, evil spirits, and alludes to various secrets of occult philosophy in the spirit of a true believer." The "Private Diary of Dr. John Dee, and the Catalogue of his Library of Manuscripts," was edited by James Orchard Halliwell, F.R.S., for the Camden Society, in 1842. The name of Talbot is mentioned, *s.v.*, March 9th, 1582, and recurs once or twice further on, but there seems no reason for identifying it with that of Edward Kelly, whose initials are not found till November 22nd, 1582, when there is the following brief note:—"E. K. went to London, and so the next day conveyed by road toward Blakley, and within ten days to return."

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thirty years. But the dates are not easy to reconcile at this period, and the diaries of Dr. Dee make no mention of the subject till several years have elapsed.* There is naturally no reason to doubt that they soon made experiments with the powders, and as the *bona fides* of Dr. Dee cannot be seriously challenged through any of the subsequent transactions, he must have regarded the results as satisfactory; it is, further, evident from his own memoranda, made for his personal use, and not designed for publication, that he was not only convinced of the actuality of Kelly's transmutations, but that he had formed a high estimate of his companion's proficiency in Alchemy, and seems always to have received his communications on this subject with gratitude and reverence.† But it would

* After September 21st, 1583, there is a gap in the "Private Diary," which is resumed in July, 1586, and presently relates a transmutation performed by Kelly during their sojourn abroad.

† "May 10, 1588. E. K. did open the great secret to me, God be thanked." Again: "Aug. 24, 1580. *Vidi*

appear also that, both in England during the period in question, and afterwards abroad, Dr. Dee was far more profoundly and lastingly interested in the mysteries of visions in the crystal than in the accomplishment of the metallic *magnum opus*. His references to Alchemy are few and far between, but his communications with angels and planetary spirits, and indifferently with all sorts and conditions of invisible intelligences, were recorded in writing by himself with the most scrupulous and exhaustive fidelity. They were subsequently deciphered, arranged, and published in a large folio volume; and constitute to this day not only the most prolific source of information as to the relations between himself and Kelly, but, in spite of all modern marvels, remain the most curious account extant in the English language of alleged intercourse with the world of spirits. And,

divinam aquam demonstratione magnifici domini et amici mei incomparabilis, D. Ed. Kellei ante meridiem tertia hora.
Once more : "Dec. 14. Mr. Edward Kelly gave me the water, earth, and all."

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whatever has been advanced to the contrary by sensational biographers like Louis Figuier, elaborating with a view to effect, it was not in the main as an alchemist, but as a seer in the crystal that Edward Kelly posed before the doctor of Mortlake. It was also in that capacity that he chiefly influenced his companion. It is immaterial for the purposes of this notice, which, as already intimated, is not devised as an apology for its subject, to determine whether the visions of Edward Kelly were genuine or not. In the present state of psychological knowledge, imperfect as it still is, it is, on the one hand, too late to deny that a state of lucidity can be frequently induced by the mediation of crystals and similar transparent substances ; while it is evident, on the other hand, from the history of the subject, that beyond the bare fact and such possibilities as may be reasonably attached to it, nothing of real moment has resulted from any such experiments. Edward Kelly may have lost his ears

On the 21st of September, 1583, Edward Kelly and his patron left England for the continent. Various reasons have been assigned for this removal, as, for example, that Kelly went in continual fear of his liberty and even his life; that they could not carry on their

the body but the evocation of the spirit of the deceased), and to answer to such questions that he then proposed to him." An original letter to Wood signed "Anonymous Philomusus," and preserved among the Tanner MSS. in the Bodleian Library, says that Weever's authority was an accomplice of Kelly at the time of this transaction. As all species of magic were then vulgarly regarded as of Satanic origin, it is obvious, of course, that, from this standpoint, Kelly had commerce with evil spirits. In this connection there is one interesting citation from the "Diary of Doctor Dee." "April 13, 1584, *circa*, 3 *horam*. After a short request made by me to Christ for wisdom and verity to be ministered by Nalvage (*i.e.*, one of the spirits of the crystal), he appeared and spake much to E. K., which he expressed not to me, but at length confessed that he gave him brotherly counsel to leave dealing as an idolater or fornicator against God, by asking counsel of such as he did." Thereupon "E.K. confessed that he had been dealing with the devil." In whatever sense this admission must be understood, the kind of calumnies which it has occasioned may be understood by a passage in "Sibley's Illustration of the Occult Sciences," the work of a profound believer in astrology and magic.

"Edward Kelly was also a famous magician, and the companion and the associate of Dr. Dee, in most of his magical explorations and exploits: having been brought

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alchemical experiments under the best circumstances in their own country; that such operations were calculated to make them notorious, and liable to the superstitious fury of the populace; that Doctor Dee, in particular, had been disappointed of reasonably expected preferment. All

into unison with him (as the Doctor himself declares in the preface to his work on the ministration of spirits) by mediation of the angel Uriel. But Doctor Dee was undoubtedly deceived in his opinion that the spirits which ministered to him were executing the Divine will, and were the messengers and servants of the Deity. Throughout his writings on this subject, he evidently considers them in this light; which is still more indisputably confirmed by the piety and devotion he invariably observed at all times when these spirits had intercourse with him. And further, when he found his coadjutor Kelly was degenerating into the lowest and worst species of the magic art, for the purposes of fraud and avaricious gain, he broke off all manner of connection with him, and would never be seen in his company. But it is believed the doctor, a little before his death, became sensible that he had been imposed upon by these invisible agents, and that all their pretence of acting under the auspices of the angel Uriel, and for the honour and glory of God, was but mere hypocrisy and the delusion of the devil. Kelly, being thus rejected and discountenanced by the Doctor, betook himself to the most mean and vile practices of the magic art; in all of which pursuits money and the works of the devil appear to have been his chief aim. Many wicked and abominable transactions are recorded of him, which were performed by witchcraft and the mediation of infernal spirits; but nothing more *apropos* to the present sub-

of these causes may have contributed to make their departure desirable, and they may not have been actuated by any of them. As to Dee, he enjoyed a considerable share of Court favour, that of royalty included, and there is no reason to suppose that his journey was in search of preferment, or that he contemplated

ject, than what is mentioned by Weaver in his 'Funeral Monuments.' He there records that Kelly, the Magician, with one Paul Waring, who acted as companion and associate in all his conjurations, went together to the church-yard of Walton Ledale, in the country of Lancaster, where they had information of a person being interred, who was supposed to have hidden or buried a considerable sum of money, and to have died without disclosing to any person where it was deposited. They entered the church-yard at exactly twelve o'clock at night; and having had the grave pointed out to them the preceding day, they exorcised the spirit of the deceased by magical spells and incantations, till it appeared before them, and not only satisfied their wicked desires and iniquities, but delivered several strange predictions concerning persons in that neighbourhood, which were literally and exactly fulfilled. It was vulgarly reported of Kelly, that he outlived the time of his compact with the devil, and was seized at midnight by some infernal spirits, who carried him off in the sight of his own wife and children, at the instant he was meditating a mischievous scheme against the minister of his parish, with whom he was greatly at enmity."—This account is simply a tissue of falsehoods, not only as regards the relations of Dee and Kelly, but the place and manner of the alchemist's death. Moreover, Kelly does not appear to have had any issue.

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a protracted absence, for he left his library behind him in his cottage at Mortlake. His wife and his children accompanied him, as well as the family of Kelly, who also appears to have been married, though at what period is unknown. This considerable party was completed by Lord Albert Alasko, a Polish noble, who had sought and obtained the familiar acquaintance of Doctor Dee during a residence of a considerable duration in England.* Whether he was interested in the alche-

* In the "Private Diary," under date of May 1st, there is the following entry:—*Albertus Laski, Polonus, Palatinus Scradensis, venit Londinem.* Compare MS. Donce 363, fol. 125. "The year of our Lord God, 1583, the last day of April, the Duke or Prince of Vascos, in Polonia, came to London, and was lodged at Winchester House." It was at half-past seven in the evening of May 13th, that Dee made his acquaintance. He became a frequent and even continual visitor. The "Autobiographical Tracts" published by the Chetham Society contain the following reference:—"Her Majesty (*An. 1583, Julii ultimo*) being informed by the right honourable Earle of Leicester, that whereas the same day in the morning he had told me that his honour and the Lord Laski would dine with me within two daies after, I confessed sincerely unto him, that I was not able to prepare them a convenient dinner, unless I should presently sell some of my plate or some of my pewter for it, etc."

mical experiments of the two Hermetic confederates does not appear from the evidence, though it may be reasonably assumed. But, like Dee himself, he was profoundly impressed by the spiritual revelations in the crystal, and the records exhibit him as a regular and active participator in the clairvoyant séances. The entire journey would seem to have been undertaken at the instance of Lord Albert Alasko, who had invited them to visit him at his castle in the neighbourhood of Cracovia. Hostile biographers like Figuiet have therefore represented him as the dupe of the two colleagues, whom they plundered without mercy, with whom they outstayed their welcome, and were at last shaken off, not without great difficulty, when their victim could tolerate them no longer, and when he was practically ruined by their rapacity. For all this there is not a particle of evidence. It is certain that they did not reach Cracovia till March 13th, 1584. They had scarcely arrived in the north of

Germany before Doctor Dee had intelligence of the destruction of his library at Mortlake, by the fury of a fanatical mob, who took advantage of the wizard's absence to revenge themselves on his effects. The sequestration of his rents and his property seems to have followed quickly on this act of vandalism. During this period, as already seen, there is a gap in the "Private Diary," and it is only imperfectly supplied by the "True and Faithful Relation," which is devoted to the visions in the crystal. There is no record of the circumstances under which they parted from the Polish noble, but the date of their departure from Cracovia is fixed by the "Faithful Relation" as the first day of August, 1584, new style. There is evidence to shew that, in common with Doctor Dee, he had experienced much from the unreasoning violence of Edward Kelly's temper; but there is no evidence that they parted unpleasantly. The visions and revelations in the crystal continued abroad as

at home with the utmost regularity and persistence, doing credit as before either to the marvellous clairvoyance of the seer, or to the variety of his imaginative resources, but destined ere long to be stained with one foul record. It is certain, on the other hand, that during this period the alchemical experiments which have been assumed to be the object of their journey do not appear to have been prosecuted. It is even affirmed that, in spite the *Donum Dei*, the two families were sometimes in great poverty. But at length they repaired to Prague, reaching that city seven days after their departure from Cracovia. There all men talked of Alchemy, numbers practised it, half the world credited the marvels concerning it, and supposed processes were more numerous than even the adepts themselves. Inevitably, the possessor of the Bishop's powder, obtained at the digging in Wales, must have been calculated to shine in this city of hierophants, and Edward Kelly came

among them like that artist Elias foretold years previously by Paracelsus, and still expected by his disciples. Within a very short time all Prague was in transport, for the adept Kelly was transmuting everywhere, as, for example, at the house of Thaddæus de Hazek, the imperial physician, and even initiating disciples like Nicholas Barnaud and the Marshal of Rosenberg in the process, if not in the secret. Many authorities, including the great name of Gassendus, have been cited in support of these prodigal transmutations, but some who have been quoted either utter an uncertain note or are altogether silent.* However this may be, the whole party became exceedingly and suddenly affluent, great in their extravagance, and magnificent in their retinues. They were invited to

* The only discoverable testimony of Gassendus is contained in *De Rebus Terrenis Inanimis*, Lib. III., c. VI., *Lugduni Batavorum*, fol. 1658, vol. 2, p. 143. "Deinde manifesta sunt genera varia imposturarum, quibus versutiores fumivenduli illudere solent non modo simplicioribus, sed nonnullis etiam ex iis, qui se putant oculatarios (he has already spoken of the credulity of believers, more especially with regard to the forgeries of alchemical literature), dum

returned to Prague and took counsel with Dr. Dee. To that city he was consequently permitted to go back, but his house was guarded, and as fresh experiments in the composition of a transmuting powder were abortive as ever, the alchemist, seized with rage, made a futile attempt to escape, which ended in the murder of one of his guards.

A second imprisonment, this time in the castle of Zerner, followed his violence. Doctor Dee returned alone to England, but at a date which conflicts with many alleged incidents in the life of his seer. The two confederates seem to have parted amicably, and they corresponded after their separation.* At the instance of the philosopher of Mortlake, Queen Elizabeth claimed the alchemist as her subject, but the

*There seems little doubt that Dr. Dee held the memory of Kelly in something like affection. Long after his return to England, under date March 18, 1595, there is this entry in one of his diaries : "Mr. Francis Garland came this morning to visit me, and had much talk with me of Sir Edward Kelly."

Emperor excused himself from releasing him on the ground of the homicide. The second imprisonment of Kelly, according to accepted dates, lasted till the year 1597, when he attempted to escape by a rope, but, falling from a considerable height, sustained such injuries as resulted in his death at the age of forty-two.* His treatise on the "Stone of the Philosophers" was the product of his enforced leisure, but it did not appease his captor. The other tracts contained in the present volume may have been earlier compositions. As previous to his acquaintance with Kelly Dr. Dee had no transactions in Alchemy, so, after his return to England till his own death in the year 1608, he eschewed experiments which had involved his clairvoyant in misery, and

* "John Weever says that Queen Elizabeth sent, very secretly, Captain Peter Gwinne, with some others, to persuade Kelly to return to his native country. It is then said that attempting to escape from a wall of his own house at Prague, he fell, etc. . . . His house is said to bear his name to this day, and was once an old sanctuary."—*Athenæ Oxoniensis*.

was content to be Warden of Manchester, to be persecuted by the Fellows of the College, and to suffer other indignities with the patience of an enlightened philosopher.

II.

THE BOOK OF ST. DUNSTAN.

The student of alchemical literature will naturally be curious to know whether the mysterious manuscript of Glastonbury has been pretended to have survived. Tradition has ascribed to it the name which heads this section, and there is the following evidence, which must be taken with all faults, to account for it. The abbey of Glastonbury was founded by Saint Dunstan, but he does not appear to have been buried there, despite the supposed translation of his relics from Canterbury. Yet it must be inferred from the tradition that the remains of the disinterred bishop were those of the saint himself. Saint Dunstan was supposed to

have been an alchemist, and has been regarded as the patron of the goldsmiths; but an anonymous compiler in manuscript of the seventeenth century affirms that he "had no other elixir or Philosopher's Stone than the gold and silver which, by the benefit of fishing, was obtained, whereby the kingdom's plate and bullion was procured. For the advancement of the fishing trade, he did advise that three fish days be kept in every week, which caused also more abstinence, and hence the proverb that St. Dunstan took the devil by the nose by his pincers." The "Book of St. Dunstan" is mentioned occasionally in the diaries of Dr. Dee, in connection with the "powder found at the digging in England," and in such a way as to make it a reasonable inference that this name was borne by the Glastonbury manuscript. A work of the same title is the subject of continual reference by the son of the philosopher of Mortlake, Arthur Dee, especially in his *Fasciculus Chemicus*. The British Museum contains

a Latin copy in manuscript of another treatise by the same author, under the title of *Arca Arcanorum*, which is followed by the *Tractatus Maximi Domini Dunstani, Episcopi Cantuariensis, veri philosophi, de Lapide Philosophico*. Several extant manuscripts, both in Latin and English, widely at variance in their dates and in the nature of their contents, are, however, attributed to St. Dunstan. The first impression printed at Cassel in 1649. A few ignorant critics have gone so far as to regard Kelly's own treatise as the genuine Glastonbury manuscript. Others, discountenancing the connection with the saint, have been inclined to consider two metrical treatises, which are included by Elias Ashmole in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, as constituting the original work, though not, of course, in the original form or language. There may be little evidence in support of this hypothesis, but it does not exceed possibility; if rejected, the verses in question may be safely regarded as additional literary remains of

Edward Kelly; in either case, they demand a place here.

SIR EDWARD KELLE'S WORK.

All you that faine philosophers would be,
And night and day in Geber's kitchen broyle,
Wasting the chipps of ancient Hermes' Tree,
Weening to turn them to a precious oyle,
The more you worke the more you loose and spoile;

To you, I say, how learned soever you be,
Go burne your Bookes and come and learne of me.

Although to my one Booke you have red tenn,
That's not enough, for I have heard it said
The greatest clarkes are not the wisest men:
A lion once a silly mouse obey'd.

In my good will so hold yourselves appaid,
And though I write not halfe so sweete as Tully,

Yet shall you finde I trace the stepps of Lully.

Yt doth you good to thinke how your desire
And self-conceit doth warrantize vaine hope;
You spare no cost, you want no coals for fier,
You know the vertues of the Elitrope;
You thinke yourselves farr richer than the pope;

What thinge hath being either high or low
But their *materia prima* you do know.

In spite of love, of life him to bereave,
Which being done, then will she never leave,
But labour kindly like a loving wife
Untill againe she him have brought to life.

Then he againe, her kindness to requite,
Upon her head doth set a crowne of glory,
And to her praise he poems doth indite,
Whose poems make each poet write a story,
And that she slew him then she is not sorry,
For he by vertue of his loving wife
Not only lives but also giveth life.

But here I wish you rightly understand
How here he makes his concubine his wife,
Which if you know not, do not take in hand
This worke, which unto fooles is nothing rife,
And look you make attonement where is
strife ;

Then strip the man into his shirt of tishew,
And her out of her smock to ingender yssue.

To tell you troath he wanteth for no wives,
In land or sea, in water, air, or fire,
Without their deaths he waieth not their lives.
Except they live he wants his chief desire ;
He binds them prentice to the rightest dier,
And when they once all sorrowes have abidden,
Then find they joyes which from them first
were hidden.

For then they finde the joy of sweet encrease ;
They bring forth children beautifull to sight,

The which are able prisners to release,
And to the darkest bodyes give true light,
Their heavenly tincture is of such great
might ;

Oh ! he that can but light on such a treasure,
Who would not think his joyes were out of
measure ?

Now by this question I shall quickly know
If you can tell which is his wife indeede—
Is she quick footed, fair faced, yea or no ?
Flying or fixed, as you in bookes do reade ?
Is she to be fed or else doth she feed ?
Wherein doth she joy, where's her habitation ?
Heavenly or earthly, or of a strange nation ?

What is she, poore ? or is she of any wealth ?
Bravely of her attyre, or meane in her
apparrell ?

Or is she sick ? or is she in perfect health ?
Mild of her nature ? or is she given to
quarrell ?

Is she a glutton ? or loves she the barrell ?
If any one of these you name her for to be,
You know not his wife, nor ever did her see.

And that will I prove to you by good reason,
That truly noe one of all these is she ;
This is a question to you that is geason ;
And yet some parte of them all she must be :
Why then, some parte is not all you may see.
Therefore the true wife which I doe mean
Of all these contraries is the meane betweene.

As meale and water joyned both together
Is neither meale nor water now but dow,
Which being baked is dow nor water neither :
Nor any more will each from other goe ;
The meane betweene is wife, our wife, even so,
And in this hidden point our seacret lyes—
It is enough, few words content the wise.

Now by this simile heere I do reveale
A mighty seacret, if you marke it well ;
Call mercury water, imagine sulphur meale,
What meale I meane I hope the wise can tell ;
Bake them by craft, make them together
dwell,

And in your working make not too much hast,
For wife is not the while she is in paste.

This lesson learn'd, now give me leave to play,
I shall the fitter be to learne another,
My mind is turn'd cleane cam another way ;
I do not love sweete secret thoughts to
smother—

It is a child you know that makes a mother,
Sith so it is then we must have a childe,
Or else of motherhood we are beguil'd.

What will you say if I a wonder tell you,
And prove the mother is child and mother
too ?

Do you not thinke I goe about to sell you
A bargaine in sport as some are wont to do ?
Is't possible the mother to weare her infant's
shoe ?

In faith it is in our philosophy,
As I will prove by reason by and by.
Ripley doth bid you take it for no scorne
With patience to attend the true conjunction,
For, saith he, in the aire our child is born,
There he receiveth the holy unction,
Also with it a heavenly function,
For after death reviv'd again to lyfe,
This all in all, both husband, child, and wife.
Whilst all is earth conception it is termed,
And putrefaction tyme of lying in ;
Perfect conjunction (by artes-men is affirm'd)
The woman's childing where doth all ioy begin :
Who knows not this his witts are very thin ;
When she is strong and shineth fair and bright
She's teamed the wife most beautifull to sight.
Loe ; thus you see that you are not beguil'd !
For, if you mark it, I have proved by reason
How both is one the mother and the child,
Conception, breeding, childing every season ;
I have declared to you without all treason,
Or any false ambiguous word at all,
And hewn you worke, then find it true you shall.
This is that Mercury essentiall truly,
Which is the principall of the Stone materiall,
And not those crude amalgames begun newly—
These are but Mercuries superficiall ;
This is that menstroe of perfect tincturial ;
This is most truly that one thing
Out of the which all profit must springe.

1.

Edward Kelly :

If this content you not, abide displeas'd for me,
For I have done. If reason takes no place,
What can be said, but that there doubts will
be,

Do what one can, where folly wins the race ;
Let it suffice this is the perfect base,
Which is the Stone that must dissolved be :
How that is done I will declare to thee.

This is the Stone that Ripley bids you take
(For untill thus it be it is no stone) :
Be ruled by me, my counsell not forsake,
And he commands, let crudities alone,
If thou have grace to keep thee free from
moan.

Then stick to this, let phansey not o'resway thee,
Let reason rule, for phansey will betray thee.

Take thou this Stone, this wife, this child, this
all,

Which will be gummous, crumbling, silken,
soft ;

Upon a glasse or porphire beat it small,
And, as you grinde, with Mercury feed it oft,
But not so much that Mercury swim aloft,
But equal parts, nipt up their seed to save ;
Then each in other are buried within their grave.

When thus and there you have it, as is said,
Worke in all points as Nature wrought at first,
For blacknes had thow needest not be afraid,
It wil be white, then thou art past the worst,
Except thou breake thy glass and be accurst ;

But if through blacknes thou to whitenes march,
Then it will be both white and soft as starch.

This very place is cal'd by many names—

As imbibition, feeding, sublimation,
Clyming high mountaines, also children's games,
And rightly it is termed exaltation,
When all is nothing else but circulation
Of the foure elements, whatsoere fooles clatter,
Which is done by heate upon forme and matter.

Earth is the lowest element of all,

Which black is exalted into water ;

Then no more earth but water we it call,

Although it seeme a black earthy matter,

And in black dust all about will scatter ;

Yet when soe high as to water it hath clym'd

Then it is truly said to be sublym'd.

When this black masse again is become white,

Both in and out, like snow, and shining faire,

Then this child, this wife, this heaven so bright,

This water earth sublimed into aire,

When there it is, it further will prepare

It selfe into the element of fire ;

Then give God thanks for granting thy desire.

This black, this white, doe we call seperation,

Which is not manuall but elementall ;

It is no crude mercuriall sublimation,

But Nature's true worke consubstantiall ;

The white is called conjunction naturall,

Secret and perfect conjunction, not grosse,

Which bringeth profit, all other losse.

i.

Edward Kelly :

When thrice yee have turned this wheele about,
Feeding and working it as I have said,
Then will it flow like wax without doubt,
Giving a tincture that will not vade,
Abiding all tryalls that can be made ;
If wisely project you can and keepe free,
Both profit and credit to you it wil be.

Your medicine fixed and perfectly flowing,
White you must thinke will whitenes increase,
So red begets red, as seede in the sowing
Begetteth his like, or as kind doth in beasse,
And fire must be the true maker of peace,
For white or red ferment your medicine aug-
menteth,
And perfectly tinckteth and soone it relenteth.

That is to say, your medicine ended,
If white, melt downe silver and thereon
project it :

If red, melt downe sol, for so it is intended,
Like unto like, in no wise reject it,
And out of the purest looke you elect it :
Medicine one part upon ferment ten—
That one on one thousand of Jupiter then.

Your Jupiter standing red hot on the fyre,
So soon as your medicine upon him is cast,
Presently standeth so hard as a wyre,
For then he is fixed and melteth by blast,
And of all your working this is the last ;
Then let it by test or strong water be tryde,
The best gold and silver no better shall bide.

Mercury crude in a crucible heated
Presently hardeneth like silver anealed,
And in the high throwne of Luna is seated.
Silver or gold as medicine hath sealed,
And thus our greate secret I have reveled,
Which divers have seene, and myself have
wrought
And dearly I prize it, yet give it for nought.

FINIS.—E.K.

SIR ED. KELLEY CONCERNING THE
PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

Written to his especiall good freind, G. S. Gent.

The heavenly cope hath in him nature's fower—
Two hidden, but the rest to sight appeare :
Wherein the spermes of all the bodies lower
Most secrett are, yett spring forth once a yeare ;
And as the earth with water, authors are,
So of his parte is drines end of care.

No flood soe great as that which floweth still,
Nothing more fixt than earth digested thrise,
No winde so fresh as when it serveth will,
No profitt more, then keepe in, and be wise ;
No better happ, then drie up aire to dust,
For then thou maist leave of, and sleepe thy
lust.

Yett will I warne thee, least thou chaunce to
faile,

Sublyme thine earth with stinkeing water erst ;
Then in a place where Phœbus onely tayle
Is seene att midday, see thou mingle best ;
For nothing shineth that doth want his light,
Nor doubleth beames unless it first be bright.

Lett no man lead unless he know the way
That wise men teach, or Adrop leadeth in,
Whereof the first is large and easiest pray,
The other hard and meane but to begin ;
For surely these and no one more is found
Wherein Appollo will his harp-strings sound.

Example learne of God that plaste the skyes,
Reflecting virtues from and t'every poynt,
In which the mover wherein all things lyes
Doth hold the vertues all in every joynt,
And therefore essence fift may well be said,
Conteining all and yett himselfe a maid

Remember also how the Gods began,
And by discent who was to each the syre ;
Then learne their lives and kingdomes if you
can,

Their manners eke, with all their whole attire,
Which if thou do, and know to what effect,
The learned Sopheis will thee not reject.

If this my doctrine bend not with thy brayne,
Then say I nothing though I said too much ;
Of truth 'tis good will moved me, not gaine,

To write these lynes, yett write I not to such
As catch at crabs when better fruits appear,
And what to chuse at fittest time of yeare.

Thou maist (my friend) say, what is this for
lore ?

I answer such as auncient physicke taught,
And though thou read a thousand bookes before,
Yet in respect of this they teach thee naught :

Thou mayst likewise be blind and call me
foole,

Yet shall these rules for ever praise their
schoole.

To these very curious specimens of
metrical Alchemy it will perhaps be of
interest to add one of the shorter tracts
which have been attributed to Saint
Dunstan. The selection of the following
experiments has been governed only by
considerations of brevity.

SAINT DUNSTAN OF THE STONE OF
THE PHILOSOPHERS.

I.

Take of the best red transparent ore of
gold as much as you can have, and drive its
spirit from it through a retort ; this is the Azoth

and the Acetum of the Philosophers, from its proper minera, which openeth radically Sol that is prepared.

II.

Take the minera of Venus or Saturn, and drive their spirits in a retort ; each of these dissolveth gold radically, after its purification.

III.

Take pulverised ore of Saturn, or vulgar Saturn calcined ; extract its salt with Acetum or its antinæ (? *anima*) ; purify it in the best manner, that it may be transparent as crystal, and sweet as honey, and be fluid in heat like wax, and brittle when cold. This is the tree which is cut off, of unwholesome fruits, on which must be inoculated the twigs of Sol.

IV.

Take of that earth which lieth waste in the field, found everywhere in moorish grounds, into which the astrals ejaculate their operations, being adorned with all manner of colours, appearing like a rainbow ; extract from it its purest and subtilest. This is the universal menstruum for all ; and is all in all.

V.

Take of the ore of Sol and Mercury a like quantity ; grind each very well ; pour on it the spirit of Mercury, that it stand over three fingers deep. Dissolve and digest it in a gentle warmth.

VI.

Take of the best vitriol, or of the vitriol of Venus ; drive their spirits in a retort, white and red. With this red spirit, being rectified and sweetened, you may ferment and imbibe the subtle gold calx, and with the white spirit you may dissolve it after it hath been purified.

VII.

Take quick Mercury ; purify and dissolve it so long in alcolisated spirit of wine, till its impurity be separated from it, and become into its extreme, transparent, easy, fluid essence, like unto the white gluten of the eagle, and capable to receive the blood of the Red Lion.

VIII.

Extract the salt of the crude and white calcined tartar ; purify and clarify it often, till it be as bright as the tear of the eye, and can be brought no higher ; therewith you may sharpen its own spirit of wine, which dissolveth Sol and Lune.

IX.

Take of the rank poisonous matter or stone, called kerg swaden, exuviæ, or husk of the metals ; drive its spirit very circumspectly ; receive it so that it may turn unto water ; it reduceth all metals to a potableness.

X.

Take of the air or heavenly dew, being well purified, ten parts, and of subtle gold calx one

part ; set it in digestion, dissolve, and coagulate it.

XI.

Take the urine of a wholesome man, that drank merely wine ; make of it, according to art, the salt of microcosm ; purify it very well, which doth so much acuate the spirit of wine that it dissolveth Sol in a moment.

XII.

Take of the best ore of gold ; pulverise it very well ; seal it with Hermes his seal ; set it so long into the vaporous fire till you see it spring up into a white and red rose.

XIII.

This last experiment he calleth the Light. Take, in the name of the Lord, of Hungarish gold, which hath been cast thrice through antimony and hath been laminated most thinly, as much of it as you will, and make with quick Mercury an amalgam ; then calcine it most subtilly, with flowers of sulphur and spirit of wine burnt, so often till there remaineth a subtle gold calx of a purple colour. Take one part of it, and two parts of the above mentioned red matter ; grind it very well together for an hour on a warmed marble ; then cement and calcine well by degrees for three hours in a circle fire. This work must be iterated three times ; then pour on it of the best rectified spirit, that it stand over it three fingers deep ;

set it in a gentle and warm digestion, for six days to be extracted; then the spirit of wine will be tinged as deep as blood; cant off that tincture, and pour on another as long as it will tinge it; put all these tinged spirits of wine into a vial so that the fourth part only be filled, and seal it hermetically; set it on the vaporous fire of the first degree; let it be of that heat as hot as the sun shineth in July; let it stand thus for forty days—then you shall obtain your wish.

The author recommendeth this last experiment very highly, affirming upon his experimental practice that this Aurum Potabile is the highest medicine next unto the universal, and, being taken in appropriated vehicles, cureth all diseases without causing any pains at all.

Item.—With this Aurum Potabile is Antimony prepared, so that it purgeth only downward, and carrieth forth all ill humours without molestation, and is called the purging gold.

It is prepared also by the aid of antimony into a diaphoretic gold, to expell by sweating all malignant humours; and Mercurius Vitæ is made also with this Potable Gold (if it be kept in a long digestion); their dose is according to the quality of the person.

III.

THE ROSICRUCIANS AND DOCTOR DEE.

It is evident from the first section of this notice that Doctor Dee has been popularly regarded as an alchemist with about as much reason as he has also been regarded as a magician. No doubt he knew something of chemistry before he was acquainted with Kelly, and we have seen that he conducted a phenomenal series of experiments in artificial lucidity through the mediation of his celebrated crystal; but he was not an alchemist on the one hand, nor a necromancer and a dealer with devils on the other. He was actually a learned mathematical philosopher, who was to some extent absorbed by the physics and metaphysics of the Hermetic tradition. In particular, he wrote nothing on Alchemy, and it is necessary to accentuate this point, because a hypothesis has been recently put forward which it will not be unreasonable to dispose of in this place. It has been

advanced that Doctor Dee was in reality the founder and head of the mysterious Rosicrucian Fraternity, which publicly manifested its existence some twenty years after the death of Edward Kelly, but claimed to have been previously incorporated. Could the philosopher of Mortlake establish his claim to this distinction, it is reasonably clear that his companion must divide with him the honours of having originated one of the most curious historical mysteries. Now, it is well known that, setting aside the imaginative persons who persuade themselves that the Rosicrucians, like the Masonic Brotherhood, can be traced to the period of the Flood, and have disseminated the wild and unaccountable through all ages and in all countries—setting these aside, it is tolerably well known that investigators of the Rosicrucian mystery have cast about them on all sides for some one on whom they could father it. Few mystics of the period have consequently escaped their suspicion. Till recently Dr. Dee—

whether from unsavoury associations, or because he was a little too early—has enjoyed complete immunity ; his turn, however, has arrived, and for a moment it certainly seemed that he was the responsible party. Among the unpublished writings of Doctor Dee, some of his biographers have included a manuscript which is preserved in the library of the British Museum, and is devoted to the elucidation of certain Rosicrucian arcana. It has been included on the faith of the manuscript, which claims to be his composition, but the biographers knew nothing of the Rosicrucian problem, and it passed without examination or challenge. Now-a-days, however, people are sufficiently instructed to be aware that if this manuscript must really be ascribed to the author of *Monas Hieroglyphica*, then the Rosicrucians were distinctly in evidence years before the issue of their manifestoes, and they have not unnaturally concluded that it is to Dee, as the first exponent of their doctrines, recourse

must be had as a likely founder of the Fraternity, and this, in fact, is the latest hypothesis by which it is sought to account for them. The manuscript consists of 501 folios, beautifully written, and illustrated with a few alchemical symbols, Hermetic seals, etc. The slightest examination would shew that it is, at least, not an autograph, for the floriated title contains in a scroll the date March 12th, 1713.* Still it might not incredibly be regarded as a transcript of an original that has been lost; and the criticism which alone could break down this assumption and make evident the imposition which has been practised, would involve a more than common acquaintance with Rosicrucian and alchemical literature. The work is divided into three parts, of which the first is alchemical and medical. It describes the Rosicrucians as without

* There is no separate title page. On the right hand of the upper margin is the motto, *Qui vult secreta scire, debet secreta secreta custodire*, and on the left, "The First Sheet of Doctor Dee," which heading continues throughout the first part, a new pagination beginning with the second division.

doubt the wisest of "nations," and affirms that their contemplative order has "presented to the world angels, spirits, planets, and mettals, with the times in astronomy and geomancy to prepare and unite them telesmatically." It quotes Sendivogius and Ripley, Sir Christopher Heydon, etc. On page 201 there is a "Process upon the Philosophical work of Vitriol," with the following marginal note:—"This process Doctor Dee had from Doctor R. set down in a letter, Oct. 19, 1605." There is nothing in the text to indicate that it is communicated matter. It is written, like the rest of the work, mainly in the first person, but lapsing into plurals and imperatives. The references ascribing the entire treatise to Doctor Dee are wholly marginal until folio 352 (b), where the following occurs:—"To conclude these secrets, I shall here insert Doctor John Frederick Helvetius' Letter to Doctor Dee. How in lesse than a quarter of an hour by ye smallest proportion of the Philosopher's Stone, a

great piece of common lead was totally transmuted into the purest transplendent gold. By Elias Artista." But the Elias Artista in question was the mysterious adept who imparted the powder of projection to Helvetius.* The second part of the manuscript contains an alphabetical explanation of certain words hard to be understood, which occur in the writings of Doctor Dee. The third part contains a methodical apology for the Rosicrucian doctrines, and an explanation of the principles which guided the Fraternity. It may be readily admitted that the manuscript as a whole is calculated to deceive anyone but a well-equipped specialist; it is, in fact, a very curious forgery, rendered the more difficult to account for by its want of assignable motive. A critical examination of the first part shews it to be little else but an adaptation of John

* See "John Frederick Helvetius' Golden Calf," translated in "The Hermetic Museum," Vol. II., p. 271, etc. This historical transmutation took place at the end of 1666, more than half a century after the death of Doctor Dee.

Heydon's "Elharvareuna, or Rosicrucian Medicines of Metals," which consists of a dialogue supposed to take place between Eugenius Philalethes (*i.e.*, Thomas Vaughan) and Eugenius Theodidactus (*i.e.*, Heydon himself). It was first printed in 1665. The second part is not definitely traceable to any published work, but there are a variety of alchemical lexicons, of which it is probably an abridgment; it is, in any case, quite certain that the words which it undertakes to explain are not found in the extant writings of Doctor Dee. The third part of the manuscript is an adapted translation of Michael Maier's *Themis Aurea*, which appeared in 1618.

Outside the now exploded claim of this extraordinary imposture, there is no reason for connecting the philosopher of Mortlake either remotely or approximately with the Rosicrucians. At the same time, it is reasonably within the limits of this biographical notice to shortly test the evidence which offers in the question, because if Dee could be

proved a Rosicrucian, it is fairly certain that Kelly, his inseparable, as well as his inspirer, in Alchemy, must also have been bonded with him in the same brotherhood; and Kelly as a Rosicrucian, connected with the founder of the order, would be undoubtedly of more interest than the "skryer" of Doctor Dee, without prejudice to the philosopher of Mortlake or to the possessor of Saint Dunstan's powder.

ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE.

