

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST YEARS (1589-1608)

I. Dee returns to England — impoverished circumstances — issues an Almanac 1591 — caution in prognostication — the Compendious Rehearsall written as appeal to Elizabeth — her past promises to him — his pillaged library and wrecked laboratories — desire to recommence active research at St. Cross.

II. Appointed Warden of Manchester Collegiate Church — the past vicissitudes and disordered state of this institution — Dee's straitened circumstances there — lack of influence or patrons — extreme puritanism of Manchester and its uncongeniality to him — disputes with fellows of the College — renewed rumours of his conjuring — cautious piety when involved in case of witchcraft (n.48) — public letter to Archbishop of Canterbury to defend his life and studies and affirm his religious orthodoxy.

III. Abortive projects for composition — general neglect — unsuccessful appeals to James I and parliament for protection against slander — returns to Mortlake — renews angelic conferences — death — library and MSS dispersed (n.72, 73).

IV. Organic connection of Dee's varied activities as related aspects of his syncretist neo-Platonism — the elements of recognised and permanent value in his achievements arose neither spontaneously in isolation nor by chance — only a detailed examination of his work considered in toto and in its philosophical context can reveal something of the true origins and historical significance of these, and may, more generally, since Dee is a representative figure, contribute to the understanding of Renaissance adumbrations of, and contributions to, the development of modern science.

I. Dee came home to find his house at Mortlake had, during his absence, been partially sacked and burned by the mob; his library had been pillaged and his extensively equipped laboratories wrecked. Restoration was costly, and the more difficult, as Dee found he could command no regular or certain income whatsoever. However, for a time when it was thought that he was in possession of the philosopher's stone, or on the verge of discovering it, he enjoyed something of his former state and favour (1). Notable figures of court and city, from friendship or curiosity, began once more to flock about him and he resumed his correspondence with such scholars as Camden, then a master at Westminster, where Arthur had been sent, and Stowe (2). He continued to propagate his occult philosophy and revelations, though perhaps with an increased discretion (3). Kelly's angelic communications he never seems to have doubted, and a daughter born to him in 1590 he named Madimia, after the most frequent of his former spiritual visitors. Nor does he seem to have abandoned experiments in scrying (4), though the only full records of conferences after his return belong to a period only just before his death, and his household, if not himself, was still troubled by malignant spirits (5). Despite poverty he built a gallery in Mortlake Church soon after his return (6), in thankfulness perhaps for a safe homecoming. Thereafter, probably to allay suspicions of his conduct in this respect on the Continent, he seems to have become somewhat meddlingly strict and punctilious in conventional religious matters (7). He became afflicted with the stone (8), and despite gifts and occasional assistance from many persons, including George Carey and Lady Cobham, and the promises of assistance by Elizabeth, which were generally kept, though not always very promptly (9), he was forced ever more deeply into debt, by heavy borrowings which he had no very immediate or palpable prospect of repaying. It was probably to raise a little money and gain a temporary relief from this situation that he put out a popular almanac and prognostication for the year 1591 (10) — his first printed work since 1577.

This was A triple Almanack for the yeare of our Lorde God 1591 by J.D., bearing the hopeful device, "Nil tam occultum quod non revelabitur"; it was followed by "A Prognostication for the same year," headed by the declaration "Deum nescire est nihil intelligere." The Almanac was "triple" since it included, along with the "common accompt which in this our realm is used," the "Roman Calendar according to the late correction of Gregorie," and "The true computation, and reduction of the moneths to their first and aincient seats." Probably for Dee the most important aspect of this work was its publicising of his Calendar Reformation, which he here discusses in the dedication "To his very friende P.L." and which has been previously noticed (11). The prognostication is also, however, not without slight interest. In much, and on indifferent topics, it is very similar to any other popular astrological forecast of this type — advice, based on the conformation of the planets, and zodiacal aspects, is supplied on the best times to fell timber, collect firewood, sow seeds, take baths, etc., and such recommendations tendered as, that "It is good to purge the Moone being in the watri trigon viz, in Cancer, Scorpio or Pisces." However, under this guise Dee takes the opportunity to convey much wholesome practical advice, for which there was no need to invoke the authority of the stars. Thus it is plainly for sound natural reasons that Dee strictly prohibits to his readers the practice of blood letting on any subject over seventy or under fourteen years of age. Again, his distrust of the more particularised aspects of judicial astrology emerges from the circumspection with which he here indulges in it. That he should predict the weather was a conventional necessity in such a work, but on this topic he is cautious to the point of vacuity, only venturing to affirm that the year will be "indifferent fruitfull," that neither great storms nor great droughts will probably occur, but that it is possible that "the summer will prove somewhat remisse in heat" (12); and although he describes fully the eclipse of the moon occurring that year, he drops the subject at this point altogether, with the words: "which what it may presage I leave it to others to discusse."

During the years with Kelly, Dee's activities as an author had been confined to transcribing the angelic discoveries. From the time of this Almanac until his death he also wrote very little, for he was engaged in desperate attempts to raise money, while from 1593 the conditions of his life at Manchester further deprived him of adequate opportunities for composition. The chief interruptions of this prevailing literary silence were to be biographical documents drawn up as financial appeals or apologies against charges of sorcery. However, he wrote in addition to his almanac in 1591, a lost treatise entitled de homini Corpore, Spiritu, et Anima; sive Microcosmicum totius Philosophiae Naturalis Compendium lib. 1. and there survives from the following years some dedicatory verses supplied by him to authors of books on subjects in which he was interested (13).

Dee's poverty however, resulted in his composition in 1592 of a document of primary biographical importance: The Compendious Rehearsall of John Dee his dutifull declaracion and proof of the course and race of his studious lyfe, for the space of halfe an hundred yeares, now (by

God's favour and helpe) fully spent, and of the very great injuries, damages, and indignities which for these last nyne yeares he hath in England sustained, (contrary to her majesties very graciuos will and express commandment)...(14). Dee had secured a visit by two royal commissioners in November — Sir John Wolley and Sir Thomas Gorges — to investigate the state of his affairs, since his penury had by this time become obvious to all and very pitiable. He received them in his library, one table of which bore copies of his own writings, printed or in manuscript, and another testimonials, letters and promises he had received from great personages in the past, and while they examined these, Dee read this document out to them, which was thereafter presented to the Queen.

He records here the various offers of places that have been made to him but never implemented since Elizabeth's accession, who, at that time, had willed that "after Dr. Mallet, I should have had the Mastership of St. Katharines, wherein Dr. Willson politickly prevented me"; there had been the Deanery of Gloucester, for which a caveat had been entered for him Dec. 8th, 1584, "but the same deanery was afterwards bestowed as one Mr. Man, who was sent into Spaine in her Majesties service," (15) the half promise of the Provostship of Eton, the grant of the advowsons of five rectories made to him through Dr. Aubrey in April 1592, to annual value of L14.11.2d. but of which "there never came a penny unto me of them," and the promise of the rectory of St. Cross, when a bishopric could be found for the incumbent Dr. Benet, yet who, although many had since fallen vacant, had not been promoted. Dee notes that he receives no money for the two livings long held, of Upton and Long Ledham, for though these had been granted to him in perpetuity in 1583 he had at that time been so busied, at Elizabeth's request, on the reformation of the calendar, that he had neglected to secure the necessary affixing of the great seal. He has lived since his return by borrowings from friends, or on bonds and sureties and constant pawnings of plate and furniture "after the same manner went my wives jewells of gold, rings, bracelets, chaines, and other our rarities, under the thraldome of the usurer's gripes: till non plus was written upon the boxes at home." The sum total of his debts accumulated in the past three years he estimates at L833. His manner of living, he having been "unjustly, unchristianly, and unnaturally so long forced and driven to such very disgraceful shiftes and full of indignity," has become exceedingly precarious and this, despite "many gifts and helps for our housekeeping sent to me by good friends; as vessells of wine, whole braunes, sheepes, wheat, pepper, nutmegg, ginger, sugar, etc. and other things for the apparell of me, my wife, and our children," so that now he has no further resources, and "my onely house is left to be sold outright, and that for halfe the money it cost me, wherewith to pay some of my debts and not all."(16)

He describes at length the loss he has sustained in the wreck of his library, which had contained 4000 volumes and "the fourth part of which were the written bookes....of which some were the autographia of excellent and seldome heard-of authors." The value of the collection he estimates at well over L2000; which he justifies in part by producing four remaining manuscripts, one in Greek, two in French, and one in High Dutch, which had "cost me and my friends for me L533." There had also been "a great case and frame of boxes," containing ancient Irish deeds and other records, and similar collections of Welsh and Norman records, and a collection of seals; the contents had been inscribed in chalk on the various cases, "which on the poore boxes remaineth; better to be seen now than the evidences, which before had remained to be seene so many hundred yeares; but now by undue meanes imbeziled away every one of them." All this collection — "to my library...a very necessary appendix" — he had willed to the Tower; the royal heralds had frequently taken notes from them in the past, "other of the Clerks of the Records in the Tower satt whole dayes in my house in Mortlake, in gathering rarities to their liking out of them; some antiquaries likewise had view of them."(17)

He further lists numerous scientific instruments that were destroyed or carried off in the pillage: a quadrant of five foot semi-diameter, made by Richard Chancellor, with which he and Chancellor had many observations from 1554 onwards, and on which L20 had been spent in improvements in marking "the divisions in divers exact manners thereon designed," had been "most barbarously spoyled and with hammers smitt in peeces." A ten foot cross staff also made by Richard Chancellor, with similar exact divisions, and mounted in a frame for easy handling had disappeared, as had also two globes of Mercator's ("recorded on which were my divers reformations, both geographicall and celestially," together with Dee's observations of comets). Others of Mercator's instruments, and various compasses, with a lodestone which had been broken up and even its pieces disposed of for more than L20, had suffered the same fate, as had "an excellent watch-clock made by one Dibbley a notable workman, long since dead, by which clock the tyme might sensibly be measured in the seconds of an houre, that is not to faile the 360th part of an houre. The use of this clock was very great, more than vulgar."(18) His three laboratories serving for Pyrotechnia, which he calls "an appendix practical" to his library, and of

which the equipment had cost him above L200, had likewise been wrecked; the total of the damages he has sustained since leaving England he estimates at L1,510 (19).

Though Dee does not ask for redress for these losses, he does beseech some present relief "whereby I may prevent that I and myne shall not be registered in chronicles or annalls to the posterity of true studients for a warning not to follow my steps." This relief he is confident of receiving, he says, "seeing the blinded lady Fortune doth not governe in this commonwealth, but justitia and prudencia, and that in better order, than in Tullies Republica or bookes of Offices they are laied forth to be followed and performed." (20) He sets out his past services to Elizabeth and the course of his studies (21) and finally adduces seven reasons why she should now assist him; the first being: "By this meanes her Majestie shall highly please the eternall and almighty God, in executing for him and in him the verity of his merciful promises, generally made to all his sincere worshippers." (22)

The gift Dee particularly pleads for is the living of St. Cross, of which he had received a provisional grant more than twenty years previously, through the good offices of Blanche Parry and Lady Skudamore (23). Some of the reasons he advances for this choice are of considerable interest (24); revealing at once Dee's exceeding secretiveness about his activities, his dream of himself as the centre and director of what is almost a little academy, his apparent intention of plunging back into wider studies than he had been able to pursue in association with Kelly, while the mention of a press indicates that, given personal protection from intruders in the preparatory stages of his researches, he was prepared to give the world the benefit of his conclusions. He wishes for St. Cross, he writes, "Because I would faine retyre my self for some yeares ensuing, from the multitudes and haunt of my common friends, and other, who visit me." The value of the living will maintain him in a decent manner of life; fuel coal, and bricks and other necessaries for the laboratory are cheaper there; he will be nearer the glasshouses of Suffolk, which will assist "my exercises in perspective and other works philosophicall," and he could oversee the instrument making in person, ensuring its better performance, and "with better order taking for secreting some rarities therein from vulgar sophisters' eyes or tongues." The premises are large enough for lodging "severall mechanicall servants," and to hold a printing press from which he will issue Greek and Latin works from MS "and some of my owne," (25) and will be convenient for entertaining learned men, and that "in far better manner, than I could in Mortlacensi Hospitali Philosophorum peregrinantium in tymes past"; thus he will be "better able to allure and win unto me rare and excellent men from all parts of Christendome (and perhaps some out of farder regions)" — adding rather curiously "especially when they shall by me understand, that with me now and in such a solitary and commodious place, they may dwell in freedome, security, and quietnes, under her Majesties unviolable protection by her sacred vow and promise to God warranted, and under her Majesties great seal, to me and my assistants and servantes, during my life, and a year and a day after, to all and every one of them authentically and royall confirmed." His final and chief reason is on this same theme — the convenient closeness to the coast he will there enjoy — "for to have the more commodious place for the secret arrival of special men to come unto me (from overseas) there at St. Crosses: some of which men would be loath to be seene or heard of publickly in court or city." Dee was sixty-five when he advanced these proposals, from the scheme they divulge however he seems to have been envisaging the commencement of a new era of industrious study and discovery in his career.

II. These plans were not to be realized; for though Dee records that "her Majestie greatly pittied my case," sent him a hundred marks, "and said that St. Crosses I should have," and in the meantime receive L200 p.a. from the revenues of the bishopric of Oxford (26), nothing further was done, and it was only after long delays, and further supplications which secured various unfulfilled promises (27) that Dee was appointed (28) to the Wardenship of Christs College in Manchester (29). This was a purely ecclesiastical establishment and not a centre of secular learning; there were also many arduous duties and obligations resting on the Warden at that time, as the college had seen many vicissitudes and its finances were thoroughly disordered and its lands largely alienated. Founded in the fifteenth century for pious purposes by Thomas Lord de la Warre, it had been dissolved by act of Parliament in the first year of Edward VI's reign, and the college house demised to the Earl of Derby. Reconstituted by Mary, soon after Elizabeth's accession it had its independent status largely removed, and the deaconal powers of the warden were annexed to the regional episcopal authority. The lands and revenues were brought under the Crown, and its activities placed under the supervision of the Archbishop of York. It was designed, said Strype, as "a noble and useful foundation for learning and propagation of religion in these Northern parts."(30) At one time "It maintained....godly preachers. Young men were instructed in it for the duties of the ministry; and to add to the dignity of the establishment, it was ordered that...the small tithes accruing to the Manchester Church, should be reserved by the Warden and fellows for the maintenance of hospitality and the relief of the poor."(31) But an era of corruption set in. Strype gives an account of the pitiful state of the college in 1570 (32) when court favourites had obtained letters from the Queen "to make some disadvantageous lease of the best revenues of it," and they threatened the Warden, Birch, with expulsion if he did not make such leases of his lands, so that the college revenues were in danger of being quite swallowed up. Birch, after an unsuccessful attempt to preserve the college, in which he was aided by Archbishop Parker, by presenting its lands en bloc to St. Johns College, Cambridge, had resigned in 1570. The new Warden, Thomas Herle continued the splotiation vigorously until he was expelled, with various of the fellows after an inquiry instituted by Dean Nowell in 1578, when the college was refounded with fresh statutes (and renamed Christ's College in Manchester). According to these (33) the college was "to consist of one warden, priest, by degrees bachelor of divinity" (34) appointed under the great seal; "four fellows, priests, bachelors of arts" (vacancies to be filled by election by the Warden and fellows), "two chaplains or vicars," "four laymen and four children skilled in music to sing, say prayers, read chapters and continue other divine exercises in the said collegiate church." The Warden's income was not great and was to prove insufficient to maintain Dee's large household: in addition to the house or house rent that he was to receive, "We do limit and appoint unto the Warden every day that he shall be present and resident four shillings," and this was to be forfeited for every day's absence in excess of the eighty days statutorily permitted leave "for his recreation and visiting his friends," a clause which if enforced must have certainly affected Dee who for long periods found it impossible to reside amidst the turmoil and disorder he found prevailing in the college. Dee's predecessor, William Chatterton, who succeeded Herle in 1579 and was under the patronage of Leicester, seems to have been financially better circumstanced than Dee, and lived more comfortably in Manchester. He attempted to reorganise the college affairs and commenced numerous lawsuits, which Dee inherited, for the recovery of college lands that had been leased out at iniquitously low rents, resting his case on the ground that the college should be regarded as being in dissolution from the first year of Edward VI, until its refoundation by Elizabeth in 1578. However, it was said of him, that, when he was translated to the see of Lincoln in 1595 to make room for Dee, "at his departure he proved another Herle, making away what he could."(35)

Dee arrived in Manchester 15th February, 1596, and was installed as Warden on the 20th February (36). Except in its great distance from the court and his "common friends," the position corresponded in no respect whatsoever with the advantages he had anticipated from St. Cross; Elizabeth's promise that something better near at hand should be found for him was never implemented and he held the Wardenship until his death (37) though his residence in the town was irregular (the diaries reveal him as in London from 1598-1600 and he does not seem ever to have left Mortlake after 1605). At Mortlake his position even in his distress had allowed him to be in some respects a patron as well as associate of other scholars (38); in Manchester Dee practically starved in the complete neglect into which he had fallen, and his correspondence with Camden on the investigations he made of the Roman remains at Castlefield and an inscription, relating to the Frisian Cohorts once stationed there that he discovered, is one of the very few links he maintained with his former acquaintances and associates (39). A vivid picture of the evils of his new life is contained in the letter to Dyer of 20th September, 1597, accompanying and preceding his extension

of General and Rare Memorials written in snatches of time from his "College cumpers," which as been previously discussed (40). He complains bitterly of "the most intricate, cumbersome and (in manner) lamentable affaires and estate of this defaced and disordered College of Manchester." The Wardenship "hath browght me likewise into great debt (41) by reason of the pore Revenue of my stipend (of only iii a day for me and all mine and that in these times of very great dearth here....)" His household he has reduced to a minimum, "being now but eighteen persons most needfull: I, my wife, and our children being the one half of them"; and this family has only been saved from starvation by gifts of food from friends, that have arrived from Hull, Wales, and "from Dantzig some barrells of Rye": they subsist on "so hard and thinne a dyat (as) never in all my life, did I, nay, was I, forced, so long to use: Neyther did ever any household servants of myne have so slender allowance at their table." The College affairs have "altered, yea, barred and stayed my whole course of life, and bereaved me of my so many yeares continued joyes: taken in my most esteemed studies and exercises." Worst of all, he writes, is the fact that "I knowe no one (as yet) of her Maties most honourable privy Councaille (42) who willingly and comfortably will listen unto my pitifull complaint and declaration: How this Colledge of Manchester is almost become No Colledge in any respect, for I can verifie my worde too manifestly."

There were many reasons why Manchester proved particularly uncongenial to Dee: he was engaged in lawsuits externally (43) and in continual internal quarrels with the fellows (44) and the diaries reveal his time as fully occupied with general administrative duties, and such tasks as taking surveys of the boundaries of the college lands. A probable cause of further friction between Dee and his colleagues — and it may well have been one of the principle ones — was the extreme puritanism of the college, which had long been the centre for the denunciation, detection and persecution of catholics in the county. The prisons of Manchester were filled with recusants, apprehended frequently at the instance of officials of the college, the fellows of which busied themselves in tormenting the prisoners by mingled exhortations and threats: the heads of three recusants had decorated the steeple of the college church in 1584 (45). Chatterton, Dee's predecessor, had encouraged this tendency in the college. He himself, as Bishop of Lincoln, was later in trouble with the authorities for favouring extreme protestant sects — but it was entirely foreign to Dee's spirit, and his eclectically tolerant religious outlook; while his known associates (46) and public record of his activities (particularly since memories were still strong of John Bradford, a Manchester man, associated with the college's activities under Edward VI, largely responsible for reconciling Lancashire to protestantism. He had been a close friend of Philpott's, whome Foxe had represented Dee as interrogating, and was burned by Bonner while Dee was serving as his chaplain) are unlikely to have assisted in procuring Dee a very cordial reception. The fellows in his day were turbulently puritanical and rashly outspoken, continually at loggerheads with parishioners and ecclesiastical authorities, and it is not surprising that details of religious ceremonial figured in Dee's constant disputes with them (47).

Dee's position was not rendered easier by the renewed charges of conjuring that were again being raised against him, nor the publicity he received when he figured prominently, while at Manchester, as a consultant in a case of witchcraft. Wisely on this occasion he refused to meddle with the diabolic aspects of the case, and merely gave orthodox spiritual counsel. His diary shows that he lent a number of books on the subject to a Mr. Hopton, who was the magistrate in charge of the case, including, to his credit, Wierus' much slandered de Praestigijis which minimised the powers of witches and attributed so called cases of diabolic possession to organic nervous disorders (48). Moreover, Dee himself had never wholly abandoned the practice of scrying, though he never found an assistant so fluent and satisfactory as Kelly had proved (49) and it is doubtful whether such an occupation could be kept entirely secret. Renewed rumours had led him in 1595, just before he was presented with his wardenship to print a public letter, to the archbishop of Canterbury, which had perhaps only served to give further currency to the slanders. It is one of those works which Ashmole spoke of later with italicised eloquences: "His great ability in astrologie and the more secret parts of learning (to which he had a strong propensity and unwearied Fancy) drew from the Envious and Vulgar many rash, lewd and lying Scandalls upon his most honest and justifiable Philosophicall Studies; and many times forced him out of the bitternesse in his Soule (which was even Crucified with the malice of impudent Tongues) most seriously and fervently to Apologise." (50)

It is almost the last writing of any length we possess from Dee's pen. He entitled it (51) A Letter containing a most briefe Discourse Apologeticall, with a plaine Demonstration, and fluent Protestation, for the lawfull, sincere, very faithfull and Christian Course, of the Philosophicall Studies and exercises, of a certaine studious Gentleman: An Ancient seruant to her most excellent Maiesty Royall. The title page shows Dee kneeling on a hassock, inscribed with the words "Spes

Humilitas Patientia," looking up to God (who emerges as an eye, ear and sword-wielding arm, from the clouds) with a lamb before him, and confronted by a wolf and the winged many-headed monster Slander; beneath all is set the text (Prov. XIX.v.9) "Falsus Testis non erit impunitus: & qui loquitur mendacia, peribit."

The letter is a confession of his faith written to satisfy the "godly and impartial Christian hearer" (52) "that I have wonderfully labored to finde, follow, use and point the true straight and most narrow path, leading all true devout zealous faithfull and constant Christian students ex valle hoc miseriae, et miseria istius vallis: et tenebrarum Regno: et tenebris istius Regni, ad montem Sanctum Syon, et ad coelestia tabernacula. All thankes are most due therefore unto the Almighty. Seeing it so pleased him (even from my youth, by his divine favour, grace and helpe) to insinuate into my hart, an insatiable zeale and desire to know his truth; and in him, and by him incessantly to seeke and listen after the same; by the true philosophicall method and harmony: proceeding and ascending (as it were) gradatim, from things visible, to consider thinges invisible: from thinges bodily, to conceive of thinges spirituall; from things transitories, and momentarie to meditate of things permanent: by things mortall (visible and invisible) to have some perceivance of immortality, and to conclude most briefly: by the most mervailous frame of the Whole World, philosophically viewed and circumspectly wayed, numbred, and measured" to come to knowledge and love of its creator. Dee, then, to check (53) "the rash lewde, fond and most untrue fables and reports of me....which commonly after their first hatching, and divelish devising, immediately with great speede, are generally all the Realme overspread," takes his oath "on the perill of my soules damnation" that "from my youth hitherto, I have used, and still use, good, lawfull honest, christian, and divinely prescribed meanes, to attain to the knowledge of those truthes, which are meet and necessary for me to know," as a dutiful servant to the queen, and "as a very comfortable fellow-member of the body politique governed under the scepter Royal of our earthly Supreme head (Queen Elizabeth) and as a lively sympathicall, and true symmetricall fellow member, of that holy and mysticall body, Catholicklie extended and placed (wheresoever) on the earth," which is directly illuminated and guided by God, the "head of that body being only our Redeemer, Christ." He gives a list of his writings in evidence for the archbishop "to whose censure and judgement I submit all my studies and exercises: yea, all my bookes, past, present and hereafter to be written, by me." (Nonetheless he omits to make any mention of his records of his angelical conferences, and the large numbers of books he had compiled from their dictations.)

III. Dee's days of composition were over, though he has been credited with an account — the first ever made — of the previous Wardens, and a description of the church (54); conditions at Manchester, which also interrupted his other investigations such as alchemical experiment — though he seems never to have lost hope of discovering the philosopher's stone (55) — supply an obvious reason for this. However, he notes in this letter an obvious reason for this. However, he notes in this letter that he had written one work since the Compendious Rehearsal appeared, and was intending another, but at that time in 1595 he was still hopefully expectant of "the performance of her Sacred majesties most gracious and bountifull disposition, resolution, and very royall beginning, to restore and give unto me (her ancient faithfull servant) some due maintenance: to leade the rest of my old daies, in some quiet and comfort: with habilitie to retaine some speedy, faire and orthographicall writers about me; and the same skilfull in Latine and Greeke (at the least): as well for mine owne bookes, and workes faire and correctly to be written...(as) of other ancient authors their good and rare workes, in Greeke or Latine: which by Gods providence, have been preserved from the spoile made of my library."(56) One of these works dated 1592 he hopes "may, one day, hereafter (by God's helpe) be published, in some maner very strange," this was entitled Certaine considerations and conferrings together, of these three sentences, (aunciently accounted as Oracles) Mosce te ipsum: Homo Homini Deus: Homo Homini Lupus. Of the other he writes "I have just cause, lately given me to write and publish a Treatise, with Title, 50. [i.e., his fiftieth work] De Horizonte Aeternitatis: to make evident, that one Andreas Libavius, in a booke of his, printed the last year, hath unduly considered a phrase of my Monas Hieroglyphica: to his misliking: by his own unskilfulness in such matter: and not understanding my apt application thereof, in one of the very principal places, of the whole book." This work, which he intends to dedicate to Elizabeth, will have three parts "The first entitled, De Horizonte: liber Mathematicus et Physicus. The Second, De Aeternitate: liber Theologous, Metaphysicus et Mathematicus. The Third, De Horizonte Aeternitatis: liber Theologicus, Mathematicus, et Hierotechnicus."(57) This was probably never written, nor do any other works of his survive after this date, except the treatise on sea power for Dyer, and his last intentions of composition are perhaps the "Diary's" brief note of Monday 7 July, 1600. "The morning as I lay in my bed it cam into my fantasy to write a boke, De differentiis quibusdam corporum et Spiritum."

The publication of this letter does not seem to have assisted materially in restoring Dee's declining credit. Through these his last years, Dee appears to have encountered in Manchester mainly hostility and opposition, and further abroad, neglect, contempt or suspicion and little acknowledgement of his past fame. His years on the continent had irreparably broken the current of his life, he had returned ruined financially, and out of touch with public authorities and those of influence in court, commercial and scientific circles. His complaint to Dyer that he is now insufficiently acquainted with any member of the privy council to rely on a sympathetic hearing, is an indication of this state of affairs (58). A new generation had grown up since Dee's most useful and generally acknowledged work had been done. Not merely was his fame obscured by dark rumours of magical practises, but many of the subjects he had openly engaged on were perhaps already coming to be regarded less seriously by the generality of reputable scholars. The period in which the Cabalah, for instance, from its first proclamation by Christian philosophers as an unexplored field full of golden promise, was able to command a fairly general respect, and at least a temporary suspension of judgment as to its merits, was perhaps comparatively brief: for though as a body of metaphysical doctrine it, and its fundamental assumptions, were closely concordant with reputable, less esoteric neo-Platonic teaching, its more flamboyant claims, which had originally excited so much attention, as an instrument for the discovery of new factual knowledge, and of demonstrating, unambigiously, philosophical truths and religious dogma, rapidly showed themselves as illusory, as its methods revealed themselves as capable of sustaining with equal definiteness and authority whatever whims and fantasies the individual scholar cared to undertake to derive from their application. The number of those who would class Dee with the meddling superstitious Cabalists, "the giddie cockbraynes," denounced by Henry Howard as fools or worse (59), was probably increasing. We find in this period, for instance, John Chamberlain despatching some books to a friend ("For lacke of better matter I send you three or four toyes to pass away the time"), including one of Dee's — probably the published letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury that has just been described — and commenting: "The letter of Squire's conspiracie is well written, but the other of Dr. Dee is a ridiculous fable of an old imposturing jugler."(60) Stories continued to accrue about his name, despite his prudence in the Hartley affair — Chamberlain some years later in a string of gossip, provides the following, probably typical, specimen: "The young Lady North is brought to bed of a sonne, and the common report is that Dr. Dee hath delivered the Lady Sandes of a devill or of some other strange possession."(61)

There is little of significance to record concerning Dee's last years. The Diaries show, that, perhaps finding conditions in Manchester intolerable, he retired to Mortlake for two years, 1598-1600, probably with the consequent forfeiture of his stipend; but he later returned there and notes a reconciliation with the fellows in 1600. On the accession of James, Dee again visited London, and made a last effort to obtain redress for his many grievances. On June 5th, 1604, he presented a petition to the king demanding a public trial "to be cleared of that horrible and damnable and to him most grievous and dammageable sclander, generally and for these many yeares last past, in this kingdome raysed, and continued, by report, and Print against him," "namely that he is or hath bin a conjuror or caller or invocator of divels." He pleads "to have your Highnesse said Suppliant to be tryed in the premisses who offereth himselfe willingly to the punishment of Death; (yea eyther to be stoned to death; or to be buried quicke; or to be burned unmercifully). If by any due, true and just meanes, the said name of conjurer, or caller or invocator of Divels or damned Spirites can be proued to have beene or to be duely or justly reported of him or attributed unto him." He ends with the hope that James, after Dee's name has been cleared "will, soone after, more willingly have Princely regard of redressing of your Highnesse said suppliant his farder griefes, and hinderances; no longer of him possibly to be endured: so long hath his utter undoing by little and little, beene most unjustly compassed."(62) Dee followed this up with a printed handbill of a petition to Parliament on June 8th in doggerel verse, calling for "an Act Generall against Slander" complaining of his

"Halfe hundred yeeres, which hath had wrong,
By false light tonges and divelish hate"

and that, though

"In sundry sortes this sclander great
(Of Conjuror) I have sore blamde,
But wilful, rash, and spitefull heat,
Doth nothing cease to be enflamde."

Dee's proceedings were probably not unconnected with the new Witchcraft act, which aroused a certain amount of public interest and was passed on June 9th, 1604. But James had little favour to spare for astrologers (63) and none for suspected magicians — his attitude to Wierus, for instance, whose moderate and tolerant medical work on the subject Dee had lent to the authorities during the Hartley case — was, that, "Wierus a German Phisitian, sets out a publick apologie for all these craftes folkes (i.e., witches) whereby, procuring for their impuritie, he planely bewrayes himselfe to have bene one of that profession."(64) Dee received no satisfaction and returned to Manchester, where in 1605 his wife Jane died of the plague after nursing her children through the disease (65). Our last glimpses of his life are contained in the concluding pages of Casaubon's printed True and Faithful Relation, when Dee had finally come home to Mortlake, and living in such penury that according to Wood he was compelled to sell his books one at a time to buy his dinners (66) had once more given himself up to the visions of the shewstone.

This record begins (67) "At Mrs. Goodman her house 1607 March 20"; the style of the spirits communications has much changed; Dee is addressed now by Raphael, abruptly and it seems almost contemptuously at the beginning of every speech merely as "Thou, John Dee." He is told "Thou dost live now in want and to be beholding unto those who do not love thee, neither in heart do wish thee well." When he seeks the spirits' advice on how to obtain the favour of the Privy Council he is informed that Salisbury is his secret enemy, and that the devil has hardened the king's heart, so "thou art no better account made of unto him [than] to be such an one that doth deal with Devils, and by `Sorcerers' as you commonly term them, Witchcraft." When Dee, probably to gain a little money, promised to assist a Mr. Ecclestone in the detection of the person who had robbed his house, by these means (four astrological schemes were also erected by him for this purpose), the spirits prevaricated and were discouragingly unhelpful. "Thou dost take an hard matter...I would from God advise thee John Dee to enter as few of these matters as may be" (67A); and the case was similar when articles were missed from his own house — perhaps pawned by Arthur to meet household expenses — "I would gladly understand" Dee asked, "who hath my Silver double-gilt bell-Salt, and other things here of late conveyed from mee"; Raphael "It is past help to have it again...for thy son had it, although he would not either will confess it." But vague hopes were held out to him of the philosopher's stone, and though he was now so infirm as to be in almost every respect dependent upon the continual ministrations of his daughter Katherine, under the spirits' directions he was made to plan another journey to the continent though the destination and purpose were never precisely revealed to him. Dee, however, died in December 1608, before he could realise this project, Smith declaring "when hee lay sick of his last sickness, his maiden daughter Katherine conveyed away his bookes, unknown to him about a fortnight

before he dyed, wch when he could understand, it broke his heart."(68)

Aubrey found no tombstone covering Dee's body; "there was on him a marble but without any inscription, which marble is removed," but from Aubrey's account it seems that sixty-five years later the villagers could still point out confidently the unmarked spot where he was buried in the chancel of Mortlake Church between Mr. Holt and Mr. Miles (69). Local memories of him appear to have been kindly, for Aubrey on a visit talked of John Dee with Goodwife Paldo, who had served him as a girl, and who gave an amiable account of how he was still spoken of in the district, "He was," she said, "a great peacemaker among his neighbours, insomuch that long after his death, when any of them fell at variance, they would say they wanted a peacemaker such as Doctor Dee was."(70)

Among the public at large, more extensively informed of his character and career, than by brief personal memories, estimates of him were more varied and ambiguous. Thus Smith writes — though since he is referring to Dee's grave in Mortlake Church, which seems to have born no inscription, the situation he envisages is quite imaginary, and introduced as a mere rhetorical flourish to give point to the comment — "cujus nomen, apud omnes posteros mansurum, alii ob summam in Mathematicis peritiam cum honore legent; alii ex intuitu humanae infirmitatis, et ex nimiae credulitatis excusatione miserabuntur; alii vero ab impium novae religionis in mundum invehendae, zelum studiumque odio, horrore et execrationi habebunt."(71) The subsequent fortunes of his name have been related in a previous chapter, but it may be repeated that already in the half century after Dee's death it figured in a multitude of different contexts. His son fostered the legends of his alchemical achievements, scientists occasionally still referred to his work on the new star, technicians, popular writers on mathematics, and educationalists continued to speak with gratitude and respect of his edition of Euclid, and the annotations and preface he had appended to it, the last of which was to be twice reprinted; his manuscript on the calendar was cited with approval when the prospect of reform recurred periodically as a matter of astronomical and public interest in England; some of his proposals in General and Rare Memorials, it seems probable excited the interest and approval of Sir Harry Vane; connoisseurs of the occult such as Ashmole and Digby assiduously collected his manuscripts in this kind (72), and very early the Rosicrucians busied themselves in annexing Dee's memory to embellish their own sect, and in employing the Monas as a shewstone to reflect the contents of their own imaginations.

IV. Dee's last years form a pitiful record of neglect, disappointments and grinding poverty — it is probably because the estate was encumbered with a complex accumulation of debts that it was not, as it seems, finally wound up until 1624 — at which date the remains of his library manuscript collections and other papers, were dispersed (73) — yet his whole life, in many respects was but a succession of ill successes, and imperfect achievements though all heralded initially by brilliant promise and accompanied by unsparing and unremitting personal industry and diligence in research. It is a strange reflection that Dee may have anticipated this course of his fortune by a study of his own horoscope — of which the conventional interpretations would have been, for once, relatively unequivocal and apt — indeed early in life he had marked with heavy memorandum signs (in the margin is written " et applicationibus") a group of particular astrological aphorisms at the back of his Ptolemy, selecting especially one which reads — and at Dee's nativity Jupiter was in the ninth degree of cancer, practically on the cusp of the eighth house, that is, almost the furthest possible removed situation from the ascendant — "Si iuppiter fuerit in cancro remotus ab ascendente: nec ipeditus ab aliquo erit quide natus rationalibus et in scientia valde peritus diliget tamen solitaria vita: nec habebit laudem de scientia sua."(74) Nonetheless, despite personal failure, and the fragmentary nature of so many of his endeavours as they emerge from surviving traces — his career is of some historical significance. The range of activities, which allowed him to be regarded in so many different fashions after his death, may perhaps be looked upon as merely another instance of that indiscriminating dilettantism with which many Renaissance scholars have sometimes been charged. But Dee, accepting grandiose ideals of the possibility of the minds' attaining to universal knowledge, seems to have looked on all his activities and interests, however superficially dissimilar, as essentially related, and in often rather unexpected ways, as making important contributions to each other. He believed, and indeed this is detectable in his work, and a main justification for such a survey as the present, that his researches were made from a fundamentally unified set of premisses, and that they were only more particular aspects, or applications, of a coherent philosophical theory. This might be called a neo-Platonic mathematicism, in which the scientific, metaphysical and mystical or "superstitious" elements are inextricably mingled, for it would be a false simplification arbitrarily to grant priority to any set of these — to maintain, for instance, that he was led to profess a Platonic idealism merely in search of a general justification for the mathematical studies to which he had an innate personal aptitude, and which were insufficiently valued or encouraged by an older well-established school of philosophy, or to claim on the other hand that his mathematical studies were merely a collateral consequence of his devotion to doctrines to which he was on other grounds temperamentally attracted, and which incidentally prescribed mathematical studies as a path to magical, divine and "occult" truths. Dee's life and writings illustrate exceptionally well both the dangers and potentialities of these doctrines in his day, as well as the organic association that the varied and disparate features they capaciously embraced seemed to possess for thinkers of the late Renaissance. His edition of Euclid and the preface he attached to it was a contribution of great importance to intellectual progress, to mathematical studies, and to the philosophy of the exact sciences in England; such a claim for the Preface, as a generalisation, is indeed by now a fairly well-established commonplace (a detailed exploration of its sources, contents and influence is designed to form the subject of a subsequent complementary work to this present survey). Nevertheless, though the positive value of this single achievement, for example, is very obvious, a full comprehension in historical terms of its origin and the conditions, personal and pertaining more widely to the culture of its age, which made possible its generation, appearance and fruitfulness, involves the examination and display of many beliefs and doctrines perhaps quite ephemeral in themselves and which have appeared to be the judgment of later epochs only fantastic, absurd, thoroughly baseless, unnecessary, even intellectually perverse — speculations (75), but which nonetheless in their day provided, psychological, philosophical, or even material assistance in the development and persistence of teachings, and modes of thought, and investigation, of which the increasingly apparent utility in a later period provided a simple justification, and warrantage for survival. Dee's personality, interests, fields of study and career offer a not untypical — and therefore valuable — example of the maintaining contemporary conditions of which such lasting achievements — to a later age appearing deceptively self-sufficient, self-explanatory, and needing no apology, their contents an unquestioned reason for their production — as the 1570 Euclid, must be regarded as particular results, organically emerging from an extremely complex intellectual context, and one very foreign in character to those through which such works have survived, and continued to be recognised as valuable. The details of Dee's life and researches or those of others of his time, offer them an illuminating view of the environment and constituent elements, the formative circumstances and the embryonic stages, of what subsequently emerged triumphantly as important, conditioning features

of later thought, as scientific truths, or as accepted platitudes regarded as perhaps almost self-evident. For as Cassirer commented on the general sixteenth century intellectual scene — and he has just spoken both of Cardan's emphasis on "daemons" and Kepler's polemic against those such as Fracosboro who belittled the logical worth of mathematics — "Durch den dichten Schleier hindurch, mit dem Phantasie und Aberglauben sie umhüllen treten hier dennoch die Umrisse und Formen eines neuen Bildes der ausserren Wirklichkeit heraus. Die intellectuelle Arbeit der Zeit fuhr nur selten zu sichern und fruchtbaren Ergebnissen, and die die spatere direkt anzuknupfen vermochte: aber sie deutet gleichsam in sumbolischer Form und Sprache suf allgemeine gedankliche Prozesse voraus, die sich in Aufbau der Wissenschaft wiederholen werden."(76)