

## CHAPTER II.

### THE LEGEND OF JOHN DEE.

- I. Dee's reputation in his own day — respected by scholars, voyagers, practising craftsmen — influential patrons at court — but rumoured to be a wizard by the populace, persistently slandered as a "conjuror."
- II. The growth of legend after his death — Casaubon establishes the theory that Dee was deluded by devils — Dee adopted by the Rosicrucians — revered by "adepts" as the possessor of secret wisdom and the vehicle of a new revelation.
- III. The eighteenth century — Dee as a notable instance of folly and enthusiasm — increasing interest in him during the Gothick revival but not different in kind — a patronising contempt still the prevailing tone of interpretations of his career.
- IV. The nineteenth century — printing of the primary biographical sources — their failure to correct picture of Dee as a mere charlatan or black magician — the large number of such representations of him — circulation of spurious prophecy under his name — Dee and Victorian spiritualism and popular astrology.
- V. A modern revival of a more sober and scholarly interest in Dee and appreciation of his scientific importance justifies a full scale re-examination and revaluation.

I. Before proceeding to a detailed examination of Dee's thoughts and writings, a brief survey of the fortunes of his name through history and the various presentations of him that have successively appeared may be of some use not only in making evident the need for a thorough reevaluation of his work, but tracing the growth of the distortions and misunderstandings of his life and character may serve to reveal something of the causes of the denigration to which he has been too often and for too long unjustifiably subject. During his lifetime Dee enjoyed a far-reaching reputation.

Abroad it was of a respectable enough character, for there his name was chiefly current among scholars, many of whom had similar interests and inclinations to himself, and amongst whom he built up an extensive personal acquaintance, and though the events of his journey to Rudolph II's capital in the latter part of the century won him a certain amount of evil notoriety, his figure in that episode was overshadowed by that of the flamboyant Kelly, and his activities were hardly of a remarkable singularity in the city of Prague — at that date thronged with imposters encouraged by the credulity of the emperor, and a melting pot for all varieties of the marvellous. In England his reputation was of a more dubious cast. Dee gave few books to the world, though he poured out the riches of his learning unstintingly in private conference and correspondence, and the consequent lack of any public knowledge of the exact nature of his pursuits left the details of his portrait, for which the extent of his personal fame had created a demand, to be filled in by rumour, which was usually ignorant and not infrequently also malicious.

In Dee's lifetime several bodies of opinion regarding him may be distinguished. There was first the large circle of navigators, experimental workers, skilled artisans, and fellow scientists who turned frequently to him for advice and assistance, who invoked him as an authority in their writings, and looked to him as a champion of the importance and dignity of their studies. A prominent example is Digges who, in a little work of trigonometry applied to astronomical questions, issued together with one of Dee's on the same subject, testifies to the assistance he has received from Dee in his labours, and introduces Dee's complementary work as proceeding "a charissimo meo amico & Parente altero Mathematico D. Io. Dee," whom he lauds as "vir in omni doctrinarum genere celeberrimus, tum in abditissimis Philosophiae mysteriis admirandus." (1) Dee had another wide set of acquaintances, headed by Elizabeth, at the Court, and it is perhaps not without interest that his contacts and friendships in this sphere seem to have been made and continued without regard to the political or personal groups and factions that divided it in his day. He was frequently consulted before voyages of trade and exploration sponsored from there, and on legal and state affairs, especially such as required antiquarian knowledge — as in the establishing of the English royal titles to territorial possessions — and on medical matters. Richard Harvey in 1583, among a list of prominent Englishmen favouring astrology, cites "M. Dee whome hir maiestie vouchsafeth the name of hyr Philosopher." (2) Elizabeth and his other patrons however seem largely to have been most particularly impressed by hopes of what his unusual learning and supposedly extraordinary powers in the ill-defined and somewhat suspect field of "natural magic," might achieve in the search for the philosopher's stone and other immediately beneficial marvels. It is nevertheless noteworthy that after continual disappointment, as such dreams began to recede from the scope of practical considerations, so that his patrons began, financially at least, to abandon him, no charges of chicanery or conscious deception, such as have sometimes been made subsequently and even recently (3), were ever levelled against him. To the court Dee was to address some biographically valuable accounts of his scientific endeavours, and if in his later years, when there had been much ground covered, much unsuccessfully attempted or left half done, yet little produced, these reduced themselves merely to statements of time and energy and money laid out in the cause of learning, they still constitute, though tantalising in their uninformative generality, a sufficiently impressive personal record.

A third, by far the most numerous, section of opinion, regarded Dee as a sorcerer, or suspected this to be a probability. Throughout his life he was pursued by such rumours; they increased that vein of reserve and secretiveness in him which had helped to give rise to them and continued to encourage them; while at times they led to explicit false charges against him — on occasion, so flagrant and so publicised that they were attended with much personal inconvenience, crippling and distracting some of his activities. A somewhat plaintive note of protest against such slanderers is seldom absent from his later writings; and his diaries give evidence of the growth of obsessional fears about the secret enemies that he came, in consequence, to believe surrounded him. Genuine practising sorcerers, or aspirants to that mystery, there of course were at the time (4) (though only rarely are they to be found making public boast for advertisement or from self-delusion, of an association with the devil, as apparently did the historical Faust (5)) and the popular mind was inclined to see in what Dee innocently was — a mathematician and astronomer

— only the usually adopted outward seeming and admitted profession of the conjuror, and therefore to regard it as indicative of an identical diabolical background. Thus Faust in the fiction turning from divinity "named himself an astrologian and mathematician and for a shadow sometimes a physician, and did great cures."(6) Many of those who looked on Dee as a magician were not unsympathetic, and he complained that he suffered as much from the indiscreet praise of credulous friends as from the malice of his enemies (7), others hoped to gain something from what they believed were his Black Arts (8). But the mob which burned his house at Mortlake were not such as these, and the popular prejudice was hardly at all mitigated by the few defences of Dee which appeared from those who knew him, and which show him in an amiable and harmless light. Thus Nashe in 1593, reproving the spreading of false predictions for purposes of gain or calumny, lists some incredible reports of omens, monsters and prophecies then current, and concludes "under Maister Dee's name, the lyke fabulous divinations have they bruted, when (good reverend old man) hee is as farre from any such arrogant prescience as the superstitious spreaders of it are from peace of conscience."(9) Dee's own "apologies" seem only to have helped further to publicise the charges, and towards the end of his career he is reported in France as having undergone public trial for witchcraft (10).

II. In the succeeding century, though Dee's scientific fame persisted for some time, the Preface was twice reprinted, while Selden and other jurists refer with respect to his arguments on British territorial rights, and though he was cited by Naude in 1615 among examples of great scholars who had formerly been falsely accused of magic (11), legend is found already inextricably mingled with fact. Thus a fellow of Manchester College, where Dee had been Warden, writing a little before 1656, though he clearly had access to various manuscript works and autobiographical material tells a curiously muddled story (12). He calls Dee "a very learned man, and perfect maister of mathematical studies, many arts enumerated in his preface to Euclide's Elements, were, by him, wholly invented, by name, definition, propriety, and use, more than either the Grecian or the Roman mathematicians have left to our knowledge": but then Kelly appears in the guise of a "cannon of Bridlington" (as Ripley had been some centuries before), and he and Dee find the Great Elixir together in the ruins of Glastonbury, and other stories including that of the famous piece of a warming pan lid they transmuted and sent to Elizabeth are seriously presented. Fuller in 1662, but apparently quite independently, peddles the same tales in a generally inaccurate account, which however praises Dee's learning on the strength of the "books he hath left behind him," though the only ones of these he cites are M.S. works probably already lost and otherwise unknown at the time (13). The period of Dee's life round which the legends clustered — that in which he was absorbed in occult practices — since it became the more familiar part of his career, dominated presentations of him. This distortion to cite one instance, was assisted by Wood's Athenae Oxoniensis, in which although Dee has no separate entry, the articles on his son Arthur, and on Kelly naturally describe in some detail his more suspicious activities (14).

The most generally accepted picture of Dee was of one deluded by Devils. It was a view firmly fixed by Casaubon's publication of Dee's records of his communications with "spirits" in 1659. Hooke seems to have been alone in charitable, but unjustified, belief that this was a cipher account of more mundane matters, perhaps even secret political reports officially commissioned (15). Casaubon presents Dee in his preface as a warning against "presumptuous unlawfull wishes and desires," as one who believed himself "a zealous worshipper of God, and a very free and sincere Christian....his only (but great and dreadful) error being that he mistook false and lying Spirits for Angels of Light, the Devil of Hell (as we commonly term him) for the God of Heaven." "I am much of the opinion," Casaubon comments "that these Spirits had as great hopes of Dr. Dee as ever they had of Bacchus or Mahomet," ("Two notable lewd Enthusiasts") (16). Butler adopts and popularises the same view. Sidrophel the Conjuror

"Had read Dee's Prefaces before  
The Devil and Euclid o'er and o'er,  
And all th'intrigues, 'twixt him and Kelly  
Lascus and th'Emperour would tell ye." (17)

Butler displayed as vigorous a contempt for any "Pythagorean" mathematics, with all its related superstitions, mysteries, as he did for the credulity, over confidence, random dilettantism he attributed to the experimentalists — this one result of Ralph's erudition was that:

"He'd extract numbers out of matter  
And Keep them in a glass like water," (18)

but his lack of sympathy towards this type of thought more accurately reflected a contemporary outlook, and the increasing disfavour with which certain of the studies Dee had particularly cultivated, were regarded. Thus though there were still many contemporary exemplars of his generic portrait in the Characters of the Hermetic Philosopher, the doctrines held up especially to scorn — the Cabala, exegetical or mystical use of number, the Three Worlds — were known as special preoccupations of Dee, and are here presented by Butler as wiles of the Devil, leading their exponents inevitably to hell (19). Dee's first biographer, the learned Dr. Thomas Smith, lends his authority to this, by then, orthodox interpretation of Dee's activities; deluded by devils, and led on by pride and conceit Dee became "famosus iste Daemonum Legatus"; he revered and no doubt believed he practised a true Christianity "sed en obstupescendum deploratissimi ingenii et diabolicae tyrranidis in illum exercitae specimen et exemplum...O deplorandum stupidatem! O execrandem insaniam."(20)

The exact obverse of this presentation was adopted by a small but hereafter historically persistent body who regarded Dee as having genuinely been possessed of secret knowledge and esoteric wisdom, and as being, perhaps almost the apostle of a new form of religion. In his lifetime a few individuals, fanatics or madmen, finding the more obscure of his writings an authoritative and conveniently ambiguous licence for their own disordered speculations, may have so believed (21), but in the seventeenth century wider currency was given to this misrepresentation when Dee's memory was forcibly annexed by the Rosicrucians. A claim that by reiteration has

been frequently accorded credence (22) though without any possible foundation, for while it is not impossible chronologically, for Dee to have been acquainted with Fludd, the earliest, most notorious, and probably the most learned member of this sect in England, and their cosmogonies are not wholly dissimilar, nevertheless the earliest idiomorphic appearance of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood does not occur until 1614, some six years after Dee's death (23). This did not prevent such adepts and connoisseurs of the occult as Ashmole and Zieglerus, from considerably antedating its origin and claiming Dee as an acknowledged member of the "Fraternity." (24) He is associated with them again in the Rosicrucian publication of Roger Bacon's Epistola de Secretis overibus artis et naturae at Hamburg in 1618, supposedly taken from a copy possessed by Dee, and reproducing his notes on the work. A late seventeenth or early eighteenth century work in manuscript entitled "A treatise of Rosicrucian secrets. Their excellent secrets of making medicine of metalls," purports to be a transcript of a manuscript owned by Dee, enriched by many of his personal additions (25). Though Dee's son Arthur lived with him through his later penury and mental decline, he nevertheless in his writings, assisted by his friend Ashmole, who translated his Fasciculus Chemicus, in 1650 under the pseudonym of James Hassolle, fostered the legend of Dee as the great hermetic philosopher possessed of more than apparently natural knowledge, especially in alchemy and astrology, and other spheres where "occult causes" were chiefly operative (26).

III. The eighteenth century which inherited such a picture could find little worthy of attention in it. Pervasively controlling the culture of the age were sentiments of fear and distaste for all varieties of "enthusiasm," in its technical religious sense perhaps best defined as an attempt to receive the Holy Spirit otherwise than through the channel of the established Church, but a phenomena which might infect any sphere, threatening an ideal of unimpassional regularity by its melancholy-engendered intensity — and it was as an "enthusiast" that Casaubon had branded Dee. He was no longer a diabolical figure but a notable instance of Folly, pointing ineluctably the moral, implied by the fatal ease with which excessive spiritual pride uninstructed by, or wantonly diverging from, the promptings of common sense, might subdue a profound but unenlightened learning to the service of superstitions, ridiculous even by the better standards of its own time.

A revival of interest in Dee was fostered by Hearne's publication in 1726 of John of Glastonbury's *Chronicles*, to which he appended among other documents some writings of Dee's including the Compendious Rehearsall, and proposals to Mary for the foundation of a Library Royall (27). The new light these threw on Dee's character, and the type of impression they could make on a mind, that had been preserved from prejudice, by lack of acquaintance with the more melodramatic picture offered by the usual sources, can be illustrated by Ballard's letter to Hearne, which discusses them. Dee's summary of his own life, leads Ballard to comment "from which account may be seen the wonderfull variableness of Fortune, and that no dependency is to be made upon the flattering promises of great ones; nor upon any abilities or deserts of our own, be 'em never so extraordinary. He being a person that had made such surprising acquisitions in several parts of learning that he was justly accounted one of the greatest learned men of that age: and yet for all his valuable and wonderfull partes, and the fair promises that were made him by the prime nobilitie of the kingdome; without all which to anyones thinking, his own merits would undoubtedly have been a patron good enough to have presented him to some noble benefit. But to the great scandal of the English nation, he was neglected and necessitated to the last extremity...."(28) But Casaubon's revelations still proved too powerful in their effect to allow any reassessment on these lines to make much headway. Typical of any age in which Dee's contribution to thought had long since been overshadowed by the virtuosi of the Royal Society, who now figured as the true original pioneers of science, and in which only his, by now highly coloured adventurings in the occult were much remembered, is Kippis' authoritative verdict in his Biographia Britannica. Dee he declares was learned "but withal extremely credulous, extravagantly vain, and a most deluded enthusiast." All his writings show him "to have been a man vain and conceited in the highest degree." He "had not only a boundless curiosity, but likewise a depraved judgment. His ambition to surpass all men in knowledge carried him, at length, into a desire of knowing beyond the bounds of human faculties, and in order thereto, of having recourse to methods equally contrary to the laws of God, and to the rules of right reason."(29) In similar vein Nash, Granger and others give him comparable accounts, Lyson wonders "whether....he was himself the dupe of an enthusiastic imagination, or whether he availed himself of his knowledge to dupe others in an age when all ranks were given to credulity, may perhaps admit of a question," but confesses he is "rather inclined to the latter opinion."(30) Continental accounts reflect similar views. Early in the century Nicéron, though confining himself largely to giving an objective, uncritically factual, summary of Dee's life as then known, reveals his suspicions of the "fourberie" underlying much of his conduct (31), and at its close Adelung finds in "so ausgeseichneten Dummkopf als Dee wirklich war" a notable theme for his *Chronicles of human folly* (32).

The "Gothick" revival did not assist in correcting the interpretation of Dee as an example of Folly. For though new subject matters invaded literature and affected "taste," the movement, at first, represented an emotional indulgence rather than any fundamental turning aside from the clear and easy principles of rationalism or naturalism. The new "taste" for the historical was also perhaps not accompanied with much enlargement of the understanding, in the consideration of the past, and is symptomatic of a shift in sentiment rather than an alteration in intellectual standards. It conduced to making Dee better known as a magician and alchemist — odd relics of his were sought after with some interest and Horace Walpole proudly displayed in the collection at Strawberry Hill certain magical objects that had supposedly once belonged to Dee (33) — but rather encouraged than disturbed previous contemptuous general estimates of him. The consequent judgment which was largely to persist — as the more charitable type of attitude usually to be met with there — through the nineteenth century is well illustrated by the account of Dee supplied by a correspondent of the Gentleman's Magazine in 1815. Dee, we are told, was "a man of uncommon application and diligence, but had very little of that which has ever bid defiance to definition and is usually denominated commonsense." His industry it is admitted is apparent from the Compendious Rehearsall, but "that he was, moreover, weak and wrongheaded, that he lived in a sort of continual

childhood, and that he was all but an idiot withal, may be easily deduced from the same source." And the final verdict arrived at is: "He was an honest, inoffensive, and well-meaning sort of man I dare say; and ought to rank high among that species of being termed Wisemen; of whom every village, in the North of England at least, produces one." (34) Similarly Godwin, although St. Leon is testimony that he was not lacking in intelligent imagination or sympathetic insight when dealing with "Gothick" subjects, did not contribute to Dee's rehabilitation in his sketch of him in his commercial Lives of the Necromancers of 1834, did the sensational portrait in the account in Roby's popular Traditions of Lancashire, circulating in the same period, which presented Dee as "our English Faust," and even D'Israeli's widely read Amenities of Literature of 1841, cannot be cited as an exception to the usual treatment, for though D'Israeli displays a more amiable and tolerant spirit in his discussion he is still obsessed by the elements of the marvellous in Dee's career, going so far as to suggest that he may be the original of Prospero (35). It is not surprising therefore to find Bentham dismissing Dee, as the type of thinker who credulously and superstitiously, sunk in the fantasies of an ignorant age, encouraged, with deplorable effects the belief in the "irregularity" of nature, by accepting constant supernatural intervention, belief in which it was the glory of Francis Bacon to sweep away at one stroke and for ever, thus alone making any true science possible (36).

IV. From about the eighteen forties a more serious strain can be marked in a reviving interest in Dee. Halliwell though somewhat isolated in this enthusiasm, was active in bringing to light sixteenth-century scientific writings, and so in contributing to a recognition of the value of other types of study than the magical in which Dee had engaged; and the Chetham and Camden Societies published various biographical sources though even Dee's editors themselves were prepared to view his activities in a still somewhat dubious light. Thus one of these, Sir Henry Ellis, comments: "Dr. Dee was greatly eminent as a mathematician, but of a vain and ambitious spirit, easily tricked and himself an occasional impostor; trying how far he could take advantage of human credulity." (37) Nevertheless, despite an increasing amount of available and authentic information it is still as a magician (38) though of a more debased and popular variety even than hitherto, that Dee again becomes an object of public interest.

No small share of the responsibility for firmly fixing such a picture, at least in the popular mind, rests with Harrison Ainsworth's Guy Fawkes or Gunpowder Treason of 1841 (39), in which sensational, frequently reprinted novel, Dee plays a prominent and lurid part. Written as it was, like all Ainsworth's romances, no matter how fantastic the superimposed plot, with a parade of historical detail, and a background built upon a by no means contemptible documentation and study of standard authorities, it was unfortunate that among so much that might seem impressively authentic, its presentation of Dee was one taken over uncritically from such writers as Sibley — one of those who still seriously perpetuated legend, in the mistaken belief of doing service to Dee's memory, and one who, himself an exponent of "Magic" and astrology, genuinely believed Dee had attained peculiar powers and knowledge by his penetration into the secrets of Hermetic wisdom (40). The novel through which Dee moves meddling in sinister, if ambiguous fashion in great affairs of state, paralysing intruders by sprinkling a pinch of powder on them, interrogating the dead, exhibiting the future with diabolical accuracy in his magic mirror, on one occasion "resuscitating" Guy Fawkes with an elixir vitae (41) was issued with engravings by Cruikshank — in which Dee appears almost as a prototype of Fagin — vividly depicting all these scenes. One of these indeed, a hair-raising scene of tomb robbing and necromancy conducted by Dee and Kelly, is almost an iconographic source for a legend that has been only too frequently seriously repeated in later accounts of Dee (42). Ainsworth's sketch was admittedly fiction, making no pretence of appealing to any other standards than those chosen for the occasion by the licensed imagination of the novelist; but it is substantially the same portrait — or rather caricature — that is thereafter reproduced in works frequently claiming historical veracity. Dee is presented in Mackay's Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions 1841, as driving a thriving trade in the "elixir vitae" he had found in Glastonbury ruins with the people who flocked to Mortlake to buy his charms, but despite profits from this source, it is observed that "being crazy upon the subject of the philosopher's stone" he "spent so much on drugs that he never became rich." (43) Then in 1842 an absurd doggerel prophecy reported as being taken from "a manuscript in the British Museum," but not further identified, its text announcing Dee to be its author, was circulated in London, and its warnings of the disasters to occur in that year seems to have caused considerable panic in some sections of the population — a striking testimonial both to the reviving powers of Dee's name and general human credulity (44). After the failure of the prediction, Blackwoods, fastening on Dee's topicality, improved the occasion by printing a jocularly toned article about him, which, though perhaps somewhat crudely, probably reflects the prevailing attitude among the somewhat better educated towards him. In this Dee is accused of irreligion, sorcery and charlatanry and described as "the greatest rogue in the neighbourhood of London," though he is judged to be no greater fool than everyone else in his age, for all sixteenth century science is dismissed as devil-ridden superstition, and of contemporary scholars and philosophers in general, it is roundly declared "The majority of them were in all probability half mad and those who were whole mad of course set the fashion and were followed as the shining lights of the day." (45) Significantly the anonymous writer apparently does not question the genuineness of the circulated prophecy.

A spate of publications popularising astrology, numerology, crystal-gazing, fortune telling, etc., accompanying the growth of literacy and popular education, made much play with Dee's name. One miscellany of pieces to illustrate and defend planetary and stellar influence reprints an ordinary, probably anonymous Shepheard's Kalendar under the title "Her Majestie Elizabeth's book of Astrologie: Prepared by her Sacred Majesty's very devoted subject and Astrologer Dr. John Dee," "which until now remained unknown among Dr. Dee's secret papers," and accompanies it with a number of highly coloured or mythical stories of his life (46). The frauds perpetrated about the middle of the century on various of the nobility by Commander J. Morrison (founder of Zadkiel's almanac) were carried through by the aid of what was announced as being the original crystal globe, of strange properties, which Dr. Dee had used (47). Charges of

chicanery and swindling, such as the modern exploiters of his name invited, were now made almost invariably in accounts of Dee (48). At the same time there had never lacked those who, like Sibley or Borrett, professed to believe in Dee's supernatural powers, and they were reinforced in this period as a result of the spreading cult of Spiritualism. Dickens in a lively but inaccurate article, based on an obviously hasty reading of the True and Faithful Relation, took up the cudgels against this fashionable craze in 1860 (all seance phenomena he put down "to the abnormal, not supernatural, power of high nervous excitement, and to clever conjuring") making the basis of his criticisms an examination of the angelic conferences of "the first and cleverest spiritualists of the middle ages, Dr. John Dee and his assistant Edward Kelly."(49)

It is small wonder that those of more intelligence or education placed little store by Dee's memory. Dircks, a popular writer on various incidents in the history of scientific progress especially symbolised for him by the "steam engine," passes a judgment in 1865 far from being extreme of its kind "The Marquess of Worcester" he declared "affords an eminent example of genius of high order, grandly and effectively directed towards the advancement of man's political and social condition. His contemporary (!) Dr. John Dee, the Astrologer, together with his friend Kelly, the Alchemist, may be appropriately distinguished as representing a class chimerically inclined and hurtful to society."(50) It is a pleasing reflection that many of the "inventions" of Worcester — who flourished half a century after Dee's death — are taken from works of Elizabethans of Dee's circle, such as Bourne's Inventions and Devices and sometimes contain direct verbal reminiscences from Dee's Preface (but for the most part, it may be noted, they are of the same fantastic variety as figured so largely in such Renaissance compilations as Porta's Natural Magic, and however prophetically striking are as barren, or cryptic, as regards suggested practical realisation, as such works as Bacon's Miracles of Art and Nature so popular in the preceding century), while Leybourne's Cursus Mathematicus of 1690, dedicated to the Marquess of Worcester, in introductions to its various sections often closely follows, or exactly reproduces, occasionally with acknowledgement, passages from Dee. As a final instance of this genre, nothing could exceed the contempt with which Dee is treated by Cooke Taylor, under the heading of The Romance of Absurdity where he is described as "A man who won a European reputation by writing sheer nonsense, and bequeathed to posterity an edifying controversy to determine whether he was an enthusiast or an imposter."(51)

V. The present century has begun to readjust the balance and superstitions, has no longer a handsel of Dee's name and writings; though modern occultists still attempt his annexation (52), while such judgments as Dreyers' would imply that a large side of him at least is only worthy to be left to their plundering, for Dee he declares, was a man "qui, cum ad disciplinas mathematicas ingenio destitutus non esset, simul tamen theurgus erat at imposter, qui crystalli sphaeram intuens hominum fata praesagiret (53). A generally reliable full-scale biography appeared in 1909, though the impression it leaves is still mainly that of the deluded mystic, and other sides of his works are neglected to make room for a full account of the exciting, but in its surface manifestations, not over-important story of Dee, Kelly and the Angels (54). (It was still possible for a recent biographer of Raleigh to dismiss Dee as "the funny old man who was liable to be visited by a spiritual creature at midnight." (55)) However, since Miss Fell Smith's biography appeared, Dee's services to the scientific thought of his day has been slowly receiving more attention — particularly as a result of the writings of F.R. Johnson and E.G.R. Taylor (56). A fairer estimate than hitherto of his personality and achievement is becoming possible, and some fuller description and assessment of the surviving fragments of his work seems not unjustifiable.