

CHAPTER XI

CRACOW

“Sir, to a wise man all the world’s his soil:
It is not Italy, nor France, nor Europe
That must bound me if my fates call me forth.
Yet, I protest it is no salt desire
Of seeing countries, shifting a religion;
Nor any disaffection to the State
Where I was bred, and unto which I owe
My dearest plots, hath brought me out: much less
That idle, antique, stale, grey-headed project
Of knowing men’s minds and manners.”
— Jonson, *Volpone*, or *The Fox*

At the close of the sixteenth century, Cracow was at the height of its fame and prosperity. It was still the capital of Poland, and the residence of her kings, as well as the seat of the university founded two hundred years before by Casimir the Great. The Gothic cathedral erected under the same king, the burial place of Polish monarchs, was already adorned with sculptures and bronzes, the work of Renaissance artists from Florence and Siena. The visitor of today will find himself surrounded by churches and other buildings dating from the twelfth, fourteenth, and sixteenth centuries. Amid the ramparts of the Austrian fortress can still be traced here and there the older fortifications.

The city lies in the centre of a vast plain, almost at the confluence of two rivers, the Vistula and Rudowa. Across this plain from the north-west the travellers came, and reached Cracow in the afternoon of March 13, 1584.

“We were lodged in the suburbs by the church, where we remained a seven night, and then we (I and my wife) removed to the house in St. Stephen Street, which I had hired for a year for 80 gylders of 30 groschen. And Master Edward Kelley came to us on Fryday in the Easter week by the new Gregorian Kalendar, being the 27 day of March by the old Kalendar, but the sixth day of April by the new Kalendar, Easter Day being the first day of April in Poland, by the new Gregorian institution.”

From the time of arriving in Poland Dee is careful to enter the dates in both old and new styles. The New Style was then extremely new, it having been introduced by Pope Gregory XIII. only a couple of years before, and universally adopted by all Roman Catholic countries. England, in all the fervour of her recently established Protestantism, would have none of it, but still desired not to lag behind in needful reforms. Dee, as already stated, had been commissioned before he left England to make calculations by which the calendar could be suitably adopted in this country. The Roman Church had assumed the chronology adopted by the Council of Nice to be strictly correct. But Dee desired to ascertain the actual position of the earth in relation to the sun at the birth of Christ, as a basis on which to rectify the

calendar. The result of his calculations would have omitted eleven instead of ten days.

Dee's book (which was never printed, but remains in manuscript among the Ashmolean MSS.) was entitled "A Playne discourse and humble advise for our gracious Queene Elizabeth, her most Excellent Majestie, to peruse and consider as concerning the needful Reformation of the Vulgar Kalendar for the civile yeres and daies accompting or verifying, according to the tyme truely spent." It was finished and delivered to Burleigh on February 26, 1583. To him it was inscribed with these rather playful verses: —

"Το οτι, and Το διοτι
I shew the thing and reason why,
At large, in briefe, in middle wise
I humbly give a playne advise;
For want of tyme, the tyme untrew
If I have must, command anew
Your honour may, so shall you see
That love of truth doth govern me."

Burleigh proposed that skilful men in science, as Mr. Digges, be called from the universities to peruse the work and confer. But the Council of State consulted Archbishop Grindal and three of the bishops who recommended the rejection of Dee's scheme, chiefly on the ground that it emanated from Rome, and so their opposition delayed this desirable public reform in England for 170 years. Dee agreed to grant the ten days for the sake of conformity with the rest of the world, if his calculation that eleven were strictly accurate was publicly announced. It will be remembered that in 1742, when the change was made, eleven days were omitted from the calendar.

The household at Cracow now consisted of Mrs. Dee, Arthur, Katherine, Rowland and his nurse, and the maid Mary, Mrs. Kelley and her husband, a servant named John Crocker and a boy. It was augmented before long.

The actions with the spirits soon recommenced. Kelley began very unfairly by trying sittings alone, for he was importunate to know how the Prince was going to treat them as regards money. But he seems only to have drawn reproof and much excellent counsel on himself from Nalvage.

The next few weeks were taken up with instructions from Gabriel and Nalvage, consisting of letters, numbers and words in a strange Eastern or angelic language, to which Dee probably had some key, though they appear unintelligible. The partners were bidden to keep the Sabbath, and Dee resolves to go always to church. Kelley seems to have turned restive once again. On April 17 he declared he would sit no more to receive these A.B.C. messages unless they were better explained. "There is your boy, John," he said; "he can well enough give you these simple signs. You need me no longer. I will be gone." As Casaubon remarks, "he was ever and anon upon projects to break with Dee."

Two days after, Dee heard him come upstairs to his own study, and called him in. Dee's study was an inner room through one that opened on to the stairs, at the foot of which was a door. He explained that he had now a distinct clue to the meaning of the tables of letters on which he had long been puzzling; dwelt on how

essential it was to miss not a single letter, or else the words would err. He asked him, in fact, to resume his skrying, and encouraged him by saying that he knew he “would come to like better this due and methodical manner of our friends’ proceeding,” if only he would continue. Kelley scornfully replied that their teachers were mere deluders, and no good or sufficient teachers. In two years they had not made them able to understand, or do anything. “In two years,” he said boastingly, “I could have learned all the seven liberal arts and sciences, if I had first learned Logick.” He protested he would have no more to do with the spirits in any manner or way, wished himself in England, and vowed if the books were his he would burn them all. “These spiritual creatures are not bound to me. Take John for your skryer.”

Dee pathetically recapitulated his long desire for wisdom, his faith that more knowledge will be granted him. Kelley went out leaving Dee buried in prayer.

In two days, Kelley was again submissive to the spirits, who bade him not mistrust. “Let him that is a servant and is commanded to go, go. And let not the earth rise up and strive against the plowman.” So they go on again with their cabalistic letters and signs. In the beginning of May, Dee notes: “E.K. is very well persuaded of these actions now, thanked be the Highest.”

Later in the month he says: “There happened a great storm or temptation to E.K. of doubting and mistaking our instructors and their doings, and of contemning and condemning anything that I knew or could do. I bare all things patiently for God his sake.” Kelley at the same time says: “I am contented to see and to make true report of what they will show, but my heart standeth against them.”

That night after the sitting, he again swore he would not go on skrying. The morning after, Dee knocked at his study door, and bade him come, for Nalvage had left off the previous day in the middle of an interesting geographical lesson about unknown parts of the earth, and had told them to be ready to continue it next morning. Kelley was obdurate, and Dee retired to prayer. In half an hour, the skryer burst in with a volume of Cornelius Agrippa’s in his hand, where he said all the countries they were told about yesterday were described and written down. “What is the use,” he said, “in going on with this farce, if they tell us nothing new?” Dee replied that he was glad to see Kelley had such a book of his own; that Nalvage in giving those ninety-one new names of countries, all of seven letters, was answering his particular request; that he had verified the lands in the charts of Gerardus Mercator and Pomponius Mela, which he had at hand and produced, “and now,” he said triumphantly, “we know exactly what angels govern which countries, in case we are ever called to practise there.” Nalvage had described the natives of the countries and the products, suggesting that in Greenland a vein of gold might be found. “Your wilful phantasie,” Dee ended to Kelley, “perverts your reason; and whereas you find fault with our instructors, I, who much more narrowly peruse their words, know that they give direct answers to my questions, except indeed when you misreport them, or I make a mistake in hearing or writing.” So three days were lost, as Dee bemoans in the margin, and then Kelley was again induced to resume his skrying.

On the 25th, Laski arrived and left again for Kesmark. He now intended to redeem his property there. But King Stephan and his Chancellor were both set against him, and he wished Dee to go with him to the Emperor of Austria, Rudolph II.

Instructions were now given that they must be ready to go with Laski to the Emperor, must make themselves apt and meet, for until no remembrance of wickedness is left among them they cannot forward the Lord's expeditions. Gabriel tells Kelley at some length of his many faults. Dee did not hear this, but considerately does not ask for a repetition of the catalogue. He only bids Kelley listen well. Gabriel says if any will be God's minister, he must sweep his house clean, without spot. He must not let his life be a scandal to the will of the Lord.

"God finds thee, as he passes by in his Angel, fit in matter, but, my brother, God knows, far unfit in life. O consider the Dignity of thy creation. See how God beareth with thy infirmity fromtime to time. Consider how thou art now at a Turning where there lieth two wayes. One shall be to thy comfort, the other to perpetual woe."

Gabriel's dart, like a flame of fire, is upright in his hand. He pleads with Kelley in such adorable gentleness and with such tender and ecstatic weeping, that both his hearers cannot withhold their tears. Gabriel's words so moved Kelley that he professed absolute repentance for all his dealings with wicked spirits, vowed he would burn whatsoever he has of their trash and experiments, and write a book setting forth their horrible untruth, and blasphemous doctrine against Christ and the Holy Ghost. It is curious that among the other errors he renounced was the Eastern doctrine that a fixed number of souls and bodies have always been in the world, and that a man's soul goes from one body to another, viz., into the new-born child. In the light of after-events, it is significant that another belief abjured is that to the chosen there is no sin.

Dee was overjoyed, and full of thanksgiving. He believed utterly in Kelley's conversion, all the more because of his former lapses. If anything were wanting to prove it, it was to be found in the humble and patient spirit in which this impracticable, volcanic skryer of his now sat on patiently for two hours and a half before the stone without either cloud, veil, or voice appearing. This to Kelley was "no light pang." Nay, he argues that servants must wait as long as their Master pleases, and the time is better spent than in any human doings. He opens his wayward heart to Dee, the man without guile, and avows that he had fully intended at his last outburst, ten days before, to have gone away secretly with those with whom he had so long dealt had they not threatened him with beggary — a thing, adds Dee, that he most hated and feared. Therefore, till this time he had been a hypocrite. Now, in his new-found elation, he cares not for poverty; life eternal is more than riches and wealth. He that can be hired with money to forsake the devil is no Christian. He will doubt no more, but believe. Dee adds that he omits many others of his godly sayings, thinking these sufficient to write down. He had no suspicion of any ill faith. His love for Kelley was truly unbounded in its long-suffering. He offered a fervent thanksgiving for the conversion, and for Satan's defeat, and prayed for them both for "continual zeal, love of truth, purity of life, charitable humility and constant patience to the end."

The same atmosphere continued next day, June 11. Kelley protests he could sit for seven years awaiting a vision. They do wait nearly four hours. Evidently Kelley converted is not going to be so good a medium as Kelley unregenerate. Dee explains the non-appearance as retribution for the three days wasted before. But they are all rather depressed, especially the Prince.

Then a vision appears of the castle of Grono, in Littau, where the King of Poland then was. Stephan's arms are seen over the gate. A man like an Italian is beheld, carrying an iron chest within which are an image in black wax, a dead hand, and so on. The promise is that Laski shall be King of Poland.

Early next morning Kelley, lying awake in bed, had a vision which he or Dee afterwards embodied in the curious diagram facing [?].

It may be taken as a sample of the kind of intricate complications of theurgy which often absorbed the pair for days together.

The vision was expounded by Ave, something in the following manner: —

A VISION.

East and West, North and South, stand four sumptuous and belligerent Castles, out of which sound Trumpets thrice. From every Castle, a Cloth, the sign of Majesty, is cast. In the East it is red, like new-smitten blood. In the South, lily-white. In the West, green, garlick-bladed like the skins of many dragons. In the North, hair-coloured, black like bilberry juice. Four trumpeters issue from the Castles, with trumpets pyramidal, of six cones, wreathed. Three Ensign bearers, with the names of God on their banners, follow them. Seniors, Kings, Princes as train bearers, Angels in four phalanxes like crosses, all in their order, march to the central Court, and range themselves about the ensigns.

IT VANISHETH.

The dazzling, shifting formation seems to proceed in a glorious paginat of colour, and then to rest, frozen into a minutely exact phantasticon of harmony.

Now for the meaning of the allegory. The Castles are Watch towers provided against the Devil, the Watchman in each is a mighty angel. The ensigns publish the redemption of mankind. The Angels of the Aires, which come out of the Crosses, are to subvert whole countries, without armies, in this war waged against the Powers of Darkness.

Many weeks were taken up with tables of letters for the games, angels, seniors, etc.

Kelley is again sometimes very much tempted to doubt the good faith of the angelic visitants, more especially as he sadly fears that good angels will not provide them with the needful money that the Prince requires for the success of his cause. One day, Dee wrote in his diary: "E.K. had the Megrom sore." Kelley read this, and "A great temptation fell on E.K., upon E.K. taking these words to be a scoff, which were words of compassion and friendship." After this Dee resorts more frequently to the use of his Greek characters.

The Dees were still living near the church of St. Stephen, where Kelley was a frequent visitor. Laski lodged with the Franciscans in their convent. The revelations were now of tables of letters again, intended, Dee things, that they may learn the names of angels and distinguish the bad from the good. (The bad angels' names are said to be all of three letters.) He hopes Ave is about to reveal the healing medicines; the property of fire; the knowledge, finding, and use of metals; the virtues of stones, and the understanding of arts mechanical. But Ave says it is the wicked spirits who give money coined, although there are good angels who can find

metals, gather them and use them. Then Madimi appears, after a long absence, and addressing Dee as “my gentle brother,” tells him that Ave is a good creature and they might have made more of him. She wants to know why they have not gone to the Emperor Rudolph. The old excuse of poverty is pleaded.

That evening, June 26, at seven o’clock, Dee sat in his study considering the day’s action, when Kelley entered and asked if he understood it. He, it seems, had burst out again, had raged and abused Michael and Gabriel, called Ave a devil, made “horrible speeches.” There had been a most terrible storm of thunder and rain, and Kelley always appeared sensitive to these electric disturbances. Now he is penitent once more, acknowledges his words were “not decent,” and begs forgiveness of God and Dee. The talk lasted long, and several calls to supper were unheeded; then, just as they were leaving the room, Kelley felt something warm and heavy on his shoulder, and behold! it was Ave come to acknowledge his repentance. Dee hands him his Psalter book, and with three prayers devoutly said, all is smooth again, and they go down to supper.

Dee’s patience and humility seemed unending. In conversing with the spirits he is always, as it were, face to face with God. His replies are made direct to the Majesty of the Divine. When Kelley is blamed he assumes equal blame.

Ave. — “Which of you have sought the Lord for the Lord his sake?”

D. — “That God can judge. We vaunt nothing of our doings, nor challenge anything by the perfection of our doings. We challenge nothing, Lord, upon any merits, but fly unto thy mercy, and that we crave and call for. Curiosity is far from our intents.”