

CHAPTER XIII

A DREAM OF GOLD

“Now, Epicure,
Heighten thyself, talk to her all in gold,
Rain her as many showers as Jove did drips
Unto his Danaid, shew the gold a miser
Compared with Mammon. What! the stone will do't.
She shall feel gold, taste gold, hear gold, sleep gold.”
— Jonson, *The Alchemist*

On February 27, 1585, Dee and Kelley, with Thomas Kelley, rode with great secrecy to Limburg, six miles from Prague, in obedience to Madimi, who however told them on arriving that Rudolph know of their departure. Dee suspected Laski's man, Sontag, of treachery. Michael appeared to them there, and instructed Dee to name his new-born child Michael. The infant was baptised by the Court chaplain in Prague Cathedral (which is dedicated to the very unpopular Saint Vitus) on March 18, the Spanish ambassador being godfather and the Lady Dietrichstein, wife of the Emperor's major-domo, godmother.

Kelley was still murmuring under the mystical dealings of the angels. “Let them give me somewhat profitable to my body, or some wisdom to my mind's behoof, and then I will believe in them,” he says. Then he protests he will confess all to the priest, and if the holy father does not allow their doings or counsel to be genuine, neither will he.

The remarkable answer that Dee gives again shows us how in advance he was of his times in matters spiritual as well as scientific. “The authority of good angels or messengers from God is greater,” says he, “than the authority of the Pope, or priests.”

So the weeks went on. Kelley postponed the day of taking the sacrament. At Easter will be a fit time. He will wait till then. He is tired of skrying: “I pray you to deal with another. Here is John, a boy in the house. You may use him.” Thus, for the third time, a boy is suggested.

It is a curious piece of psychology, or crystallogancy, that Kelley, who possessed the mediumistic powers, was always so reluctant to use them, while Dee, who as Madimi told him, had clearer sight than his skryer, was entirely unable to open up communication with the unseen.

Money was scarcer than ever. “My wife being in great perplexity, requested E.K. and me that the annexed petition might be propounded to God and his good angels, to give answer or counsel in the cause.” Jane's petition set out simply that they had no provision for meat and drink for their family, that it “would discredit the actions wherewith they are vowed and linked unto the heavenly majesty” to lay the ornaments of their house or coverings of their bodies in pawn to the Jews, and that the city was full of malicious slanders. Aid and direction are implored how or by whom they are to be aided and relieved. The spirits, while reminding her grandiloquently that she is only a woman, full of infirmities, frail in soul, and not fit to enter the synagogue, yet favourably listen, and bid her be faithful and obedient

as she is yoked, promising that she and her children shall be cared for. Meanwhile her husband is to gird himself together and hasten to see Laski and King Stephan.

This injunction seems not to have been obeyed for some time, for Dee was now very busy inditing letters to Queen Elizabeth and to other of his friends in England. He was reminded of it later when something went wrong, and another crisis arrived with Kelley. On March 27, a Wednesday, Dee was busy in his study, when the skryer burst in, demanding unceremoniously a copy of a certain magic circle of letters which he professed to have had revealed to him by spirits at Oxford. He wished to show it to a Jesuit priest with whom he had made friends. He protested he would quit the company of the spirits with whom they had recently dealt and return to his former associates — the evil set. Dee said he had no leisure to look for the paper now, he was writing letters of importance, and in a week's time or when able, he would see it was found. This of course was irritating. Kelley stormed and raged, said the old man should not stir his foot from the room till it had been produced, and was about to lock up the door when Dee caught him by the shoulders, "calling aloud to my folks. They came in all, and my wife, and so afterwards by degrees his fury assuaged, and my folks, my wife and his, went away, and after he had sitten two or three hours with me, he saw on my head, as I sat writing, Michael stand with a sword, who willed him to speak, which he did forbear to do above a quarter of an hour."

Kelley, like a spoilt child, demanded of Michael if he should have his circle of letters. The angel addressed him then in a passage of exceeding beauty, seeming to scorch and wither the promptings of the skryer's evil nature, while wrestling at the same time with all the powers of darkness for his soul: —

"O Jehovah, whose look is more terrible to thy angels than all the fires thou hast created,...wilt thou suffer one man to be carried away, to the dishonouring and treading under foot of thee and thy light, of thee and thy truth? Can one man be dearer unto thee than the whole world was? Shall the heavens be thrown headlong down, and he go uncorrected?"

He intimates to the partners that their work and calling is greater than honour, money, pride and jewels. As it is great, so must their temptation be great.

"Therefore God has framed one of you as a stiffe-made Ashe, to bind up the continuance of his work, and to be free from yielding unto Satan."

As for the other, Michael promises Kelley that no evil spirit shall visibly show himself unto him any more as long as he is in the flesh.

"Whosoever therefore appeareth hereafter is of good."

Thus begins to yawn before the pair the most dangerous pitfall of all. Pride and confidence in the perfect intuition of God's will has led many a good and holy man astray. Soon even the stiff-made ash is to arrive at the pitch of believing that their teachers cannot err, and then comes a terrible downfall. Michael in an exquisite little parable bids them cleave fast together. And again it is clear why the elder man, the seeker after hidden knowledge, the pure-minded and gentle-hearted

old mathematician and astrologer, though torn in pieces with his partner's wild outbursts, his notorious cupidity, impatience, and evil living, yearned over him and his rebellious youth as a mother over her child. Like Michael, he seems involved in a prolonged struggle for the rescue of his soul from the demons in whose power he devoutly believed.

“PARABOLA DE NOBIS DUOBUS.

“A wood grew up, and the trees were young, and lo! there arose a great Tempest from the North, and the Seas threw out the air that had subtilly stolen himself into them. And the winds were great. And behold there was one Tree which was older than the rest, and had grown longer than that which shot up by him. This Tree could not be moved with the wind, but the Tree that was young was moved to and from with the wind, and strook himself oftentimes upon the stiff-set tree. The Forrester came and beheld, and said within himself, ‘The force of this wind is great. See this young Tree beateth himself in pieces against the greater. I will go home, and will bring my ground instruments, and will eradicate him, and I will place him farther off. Then if the winds come, he shall have room to move.’ But when he came home, the Lord of the Wood seeing him in a readiness with his Mattock and his spade, asked him of his goings, which told the thing in order unto his Master. But lo! his Master rebuked him, and he said thus: ‘When the winds are not, they increase, they are not hurtful one to the other. Suffer them therefore. When the young Tree taketh roots, and shall look up unto some years, his roots shall link themselves with and under the roots of the greater. Then, though the winds come, they shall not be hurtful one to another, but shall stand so much the more fast, by how much the more they are wrapped together; yea, when the old tree withereth, he shall be a strength unto him, and shall add unto his age as much as he hath added unto his youth.’

“And he ceased to dig.

“Be not you therefore haled in sunder, neither be you offended one at another. Peradventure Reason would set you aside. But God will not. Behold, if you break the yoke that you are in and runne astray, he that erreth shall perish, even so shall he that standeth also be desolate. Love therefore one another, and comfort one another, for he that comforteth his brother comforteth himself...Let youth yield to ripe years...You have vowed that one of you do nothing without the other's counsel, but you shall not be two counsellors. Let the Doer occupie the superiority. The Seer, let him see and look after the doings of that he seeth, for you are but one body in this work.”

In April, Dee and Kelley returned to Cracow. As they were nearing the city they saw a great whirlwind wreathing up the dust and shooting forward in a southerly direction. They found their house let under them to a “forced-in tenant,” but as Dee had brought his keys, he effected an entrance, and secured at least a bedstead. By the aid of his lawyer, Mr. Tebaldo, “an ancient practitioner in Polish causes,” he obtained a decree against his landlord that without six months' notice he could not be ejected. They took up their abode in the College of Nyepolonize. Laski now joined them in Cracow, and took Dee on May 23 to an audience of King Stephan. Stephan was seated by the south window of his principal audience and

banqueting chamber, looking out upon the beautiful new gardens that he was then making. Polite speeches of greeting in Latin passed between the two, but there was scant time for more before the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Secretary, with others, came in, bringing Bills for the King to read and sign. Stephan had small time to spare for visionary alchemists. His very glorious reign was crowded with great achievements. Though a strong Catholic himself, he respected the liberties of his Protestant subjects, won back the Russian provinces for Poland, reformed the universities and established the Jesuits in educational seminaries, and protected the Jews. He died very suddenly about a year after Dee's third interview with him. Dee has the following very valuable note of his death, entered in the diary a few weeks after his arrival at Trebona Castle in 1586: "December 11, Stephan Poloniensis obiit: natus anno 1530, die 13 Januarii, hora quarta mane min 25, in Transylvania. Obiit hora secunda post medium noctem, ut intellexi ex literis Dni Lasky, receptis die 29 per Alexandrum."

Dee also visited Dr. Hannibal (Annibaldus), the famous divine, and discussed with him his commentaries on Latin authors- -Hermes Trismegistus and Mandellus. He partook of the Communion at the Bernardine convent where the Doctor was a professor. Three times within Easter week did he communicate, "that in all manner of wayes I might have a clean and quiet conscience." On "Easter Monday, very devoutly, in St. Stephan's Church, E.K. received the Communion, to my unspeakable gladness and content, being a thing so long and earnestly required and urged of him by our spiritual good friends." As Dee wrote to Walsingham, "Saul had become a Paul."

It was a very short interlude. For Laski had not yet paid him the "money long since due," and Kelley once more vows he will leave, for the "actions are unsuccessful and are to be cut off." Laski was again admitted to the sittings, and King Stephan granted them another interview. Laski urged the King to take the two alchemists into his service and give them "a yearly maintenance." In obedience to his instructors, Dee promises to make the philosopher's stone, if the King will bear the charge. He does not profess that he can, but he believes the angels will teach him the secret. Stephan was not so sanguine. In the King's private chamber, a sitting was held, with the crystal set before him, but he remained unconvinced. He gave no encouragement, and in August the pair, hopeless of patronage from Poland, returned to Prague, where Jane and Joan Kelley, the children and the servants, had been left under Edmond Hilton's care.

An anglicised Italian pervert, Francisco Pucci, now appeared upon the scenes and was admitted to the sittings at the shew-stone. Pucci had been a Lyons merchant, but had "laid aside his trade to study sacred letters," and become a theological disputant of the current type. Professing himself a Protestant, he came to Oxford to study, graduated M.A. in 1574, and in London, Basle, Antwerp, and other places, became an open and notorious writer and champion against the Church which he had abjured. He had followed Socinus to Cracow, and had noisily opposed the Jesuits there. Soon after he recanted, became a Romish priest and secretary to a cardinal in Rome, where he died in 1606, and was buried in the Church of San Onofrio on the Janiculum.

On his information it appears that three copies of Dee's manuscripts were burned in Prague, April 10, 1586. These were the Book of Enoch, the Forty-eight Keys of the Angels (Claves Angelicae) and the Liber Scientioe Auxilii et Victoria

Terrestris, works which had been written down from the spirit revelations since the partnership with Kelley had commenced. The books burned were not of course the originals, the two first of which still exist. Of the Book of Enoch there are three copies, one made by Kelley, a remarkable tribute to the mechanical skill in draughtsmanship, the extraordinary application and ability, of this very versatile personage. It contains hundreds of diagrams of figures, round or rectangular in shape, composed of an infinite number of minute squares each containing a letter or figure. These letters occur in every possible combination and order, some reading straight across the page, others diagonally, and so on. Dee gives an extraordinary story of the restoration on April 30 of the books said to have been burned, by a man like a gardener, invisible to himself, to Joan Kelley, and to all in the garden at the time, save Kelley. The gardener placed them under an almond tree in Carpio's vineyard, on a sloping bank between the banqueting house and the "cliff side." Trickery of Kelley's, no doubt.

The feeling against these foreign adventurers grew strong in the city. Sixtus V., who had succeeded as Pope, issued a Papal edict, dated May 29, 1586, banishing Dee and Kelley from Prague within six days. It seemed to trouble them very little, for Dee was already away on a visit to a new patron, William Ursinus, Count Rosenberg, at his country seat on the Moldau. From thence he went to see some glass works at Volkanau, about twelve miles north of the city; then he proceeded to Leipsic in time for the fair on May 11. There he met Lawrence Overton, an English merchant to whom Jane Dee had given kind attention and hospitality when he had fallen ill in her house a year before. Overton had returned from England, where he had seen Edmond Hilton, sent in November with letters to the Queen, Sir Francis Walsingham, and others. Hilton was expected back shortly. Overton was on the point of returning to England, and by him another letter to the Secretary was despatched.

Dee's letters to Walsingham, with their veiled allusions to secret affairs, form one of the grounds upon which the supposition has been based that he was employed by the Queen's minister as a secret spy and diplomatic agent abroad, and that his cabalistic diagrams contained a cipher. An elaborate theory was constructed to support this contention.

From this letter it is evident that Dee wishes his friends in England to believe that he and his partner have already found the hidden secret, but he wraps his words in due mystery, and it is impossible to say exactly when Kelley first professed to have made, and when he induced his partner to believe that he actually had made, the gold on which his heart was set. That Dee's heart was equally fixed on the discovery is indisputable, but from what a different cause!

"To ye Rt. Hon^{ble}. Sr. Fr. Walsingham Knt, her most excellent Maties.
Principal Secretary my singular good Fr^d. and Patron with speed.

"Right Honorable Sir,

"Albeit I have almost in vain come a hundred miles (from Prague to this Leipsic Mart) hoping either to meet my servant there with answer to my former letters, sent in November last to her Majesty (when also I wrote unto your honour and others). And so with speed from this Leipsick to have sent again most speedily, as occasion should have served. and now I find neither servant neither letter from

him, neither word of mouth, yet all this notwithstanding; and whatsoever the hindrance or delay hereof may be (whether the keeping back of my letters from her Majesty, or the manifold and important most weighty affairs public hindring or delaying her Majesty's most gracious discreet and wise resolution herein. Or what other occasion else hath and doth cause this long and wonderful delay of answer receiving); all this notwithstanding, I thought good before I set up my coach to write, and most humbly to salute your honour very faithfully, dutifully and sincerely, with great and the same good will that my Letter some years since written to your Honour (but then a stumbling block unto your Honour and others for the strangeness of the phrases therein) doth pretend. So it is, right Honorable, that the merciful providence of the Highest, declared in his great and abundant graces upon me, and mine, is so wonderful and mighty, that very few, unless they be present witnesses, can believe the same. Therefore how hard they are to be believed there, where all my life and doings were construed to a contrary sense, and processe of death contrived and decreed against the Innocent, who cannot easily judge?

"I am forced to be brief. That which England suspected, was also here, for these two years almost, secretly in doubt, in question, in consultation, Imperial and Royal, by Honourable Espies; fawning about me and by others discoursed upon, pryed and peered into. And at length both the chief Romish power and Imperial dignity are brought to that point resolutely that partly they are sorry of their so late reclaiming their erroneous judgment against us and of us, and seek means to deal with us so as we might favour both the one and the other; and partly to Rome is sent, for as great authority and power as can be devised; and likewise here all other means and wayes contrived, how by force or for feare they may make us glad to follow their humours. But all in vain, for force human we fear not, as plainly and often I have to the Princes declared. And otherwise than in pure verity and godlinesse we will not favour any (my words may seem very marvellous in your Honours ears, but mark the end, we have had, and shall have, to deal with no babes). I have full oft, and upon many of their requests and questions, referred myself to her Majesties answer thus in vain expected. Nuncius Apostolicus Germanicus Malaspina, after his year's suit to be acquainted with me, at length had such his answer that he is gone to Rome with a flea in his eare, that disquieteth him and terrifieth the whole state Romish and Jesuitical. Secretly they threaten us violent death, and openly they fawn upon us. We know the Sting of Envy and the fury of fear in tyrannical minds, what desperate attempts they have and do often undertake. But the God of Heaven and Earth is our Light, Leader and Defender. To the World's end, his mercies upon us will breed his praises Honour and glory. Thus much, very rhapsodically yet faithfully, tanquam dictum sapienti, I thought good to commit to the safe and speedy conveyance of a young merchant here called Lawrence Overton, which if it come to your Honours hand before my Servant have left his despatch, I may by your honor be advertised. Your Honour is sufficient from her Majesty to deal and proceed with me, if it be thought food. But if you make a Council Table Case of it, Quot homines, tot sententioe. And my Commission from above is not so large: Qui potest capere, capiat."

The almost apostolical flavour which Dee permits himself to impart to some of this letter, owing to the greatness of his believed mission, shows to what a height of "rhapsodical" fervours his spirit had now attained. It is still more emphasised in

the concluding passage, which begins, however, very practically, with an anxious thought cast back to his English possessions. His desire that Thomas Digges, the eminent mathematician to whom his calculations for the reformed calendar had been submitted, should be sent over to inspect their doings, was curious, but it shows that he, at any rate, wished to deal openly and conceal nothing. He ends thus:

“Sir, I trust I shall have Justice, for my house library, goods and Revenues, etc. Do not you disdain, neither fear to bear favour unto your poor innocent neighbour. If you send unto me Master Thomas Digges, in her Majestie’s behalf, his faithfulness to her Majesty and my well liking of the man, shall bring forth some piece of good service. But her Majesty had been better to have spent or given away in alms, a Million of gold, than to have lost some opportunities past. No human reason can limit or determine God his marvellous means of proceeding with us. He hath made of Saul (E.K.) a Paul, but yet now and then visited with a pang of human frailty. The Almighty bless her Majestie both in this World and eternally; and inspire your heart iwth some conceiving of his merciful purposes, yet not utterly cut off from her Majesty to enjoy.

From Leipsic this 14 of May, 1586,
at Peter Hans Swarts house.

Your Honours faithful welwisher to use and command for the
honour of God and her Majesties best service,

“John Dee.”

On being ejected from Prague, Dee removed his family and goods to Erfurt, but in spite of the influence of Dr. Curtius, and of a friend of Rosenberg, he was not allowed to hire a house there, for the Italian was before him. Pucci called on Dee after supper, and held out hopes that he might obtain permission for their return to Prague, for the new Nuncio, the Bishop of Piacenza, was inclined to a more favourable view than Malaspina. Pucci protested that they were only to be examined and if found heretical to be sent to Rome. He brought an invitation for their return, if they would promise not to exercise magical arts. Dee, who was starting early next morning to look at a house at Saalfield, wherein to settle his exiled family, bade Kelley copy it and rode off. On the ride he thought it over. Pucci he had never liked, neither had Jane. “His household behaviour was not acceptable to our wives and family. He had blabbed our secrets without our leave. He was unquiet in disputation.” Dee summed up the man as a spy, the letter as a bait, and set to work to devise a way of being rid of him “by quiet and honest meanes.” He was absent two or three days, but the Italian was still there when he returned, urging them to go to Rome. Dee rebuked him for curiosity and interference, and accused him of conspiring against them; he, a mere probationer and not yet owned of the spirits (who in fact had said he was “leprous” and should be “cut off”), to presume an equal authority with them in their revelations!

Dee wrote a dignified letter to the Nuncio, and despatched it by the Italian, who was to receive from John Carpio, a wealthy neighbour and friend of theirs in

Prague, a sum of fifty dollars for his expenses. The travellers went on to Cassel and to Gotha, but it was not long before a permanent asylum offered for the exiles. Their new patron, Count Rosenberg, was a friend worth having, for he was all-powerful with Rudolph; he was Viceroy of Bohemia and a Knight of the Golden Fleece. His influence and protection were now to be at the Englishmen's disposal. On August 8, Rosenberg obtained from the Emperor a partial revocation of the decree against them, since they were permitted by it to reside freely in any of his lordship's towns, cities or castles. They settled on September 14, 1586, at Tribau or Trebona, in Southern Bohemia, and here for about two years their wanderings came to an end.

Dee resumed the writing of his private diary, in which he had made no entry for three years, the last event recorded there being the departure of the family from Mortlake just three years before, on September 21, 1583. He opened a new volume, an *Ephemerides Coelestium*, calculated for the years 1581-1620, by Joh. Antonius Maginus, printed in Venice, 1582. The first entry made in it was Michael's birth at Prague on February 12, 1586; the next was their arrival at Trebona (for it will be more convenient to follow Dee's latinised version of the name).