

CHAPTER VIII

MADIMI

“Therefore for spirits I am so far from denying their existence that I could easily believe that not only whole countries but particular persons have their tutelary and guardian angels. It is not a new opinion, but an old one of Pythagoras and Plato. There is no heresy in it, and if not manifestly defined in Scripture, yet it is an opinion of good and wholesome use in the cours and actions of a man’s life, and would serve as an hypothesis to solve many doubts whereof common philosophy affordeth no solution.”

— Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*.

Dee’s costly apparatus and experiments, his large establishment and generous treatment of his servants and assistants, his entertainment of great folk, were all heavy drains upon his resources. He spent lavish amounts upon books and manuscripts for his library; he contributed as able to some of the Adventurers’ funds. He borrowed freely, and he had sometimes to run long bills. Beside the rent of the two livings (about eighty pounds a year) he had no fixed income. The Queen was ever promising him benefices which either never fell vacant, or when they did, had to be bestowed elsewhere. At the time he first fell in with Kelley, he knew not where to turn for money. Almost at this very moment, however, a rich patron appeared unexpectedly on the horizon and changed Dee’s outlook for several years.

On March 18, 1583, Mr. North came to Mortlake bringing a “salutation” from Albert or Adelbert Laski, Count Palatine of Siradia, a Polish Prince then about to arrive on a visit to the Queen. He wished to make Dee’s acquaintance, to see his library, and discuss magic, of which he had made a study. Laski was one of the most powerful of the Polish nobles reconverted to Catholicism. He had taken a very prominent part in the patriotic movement of a few years before in Poland, when almost every European sovereign had made a bid for the Polish crown. Elizabeth’s old suitor, the Duc d’Alencon, had actually worn it a month or two before escaping in the night to his brother of France. Laski was a dashing adventurer of heroic courage, quite unscrupulous as to cost; and although he had favoured the claims of the Emperor of Austria, he had, openly at least, agreed in the people’s victorious choice of Stephan Bathory. When that Transylvanian Prince had been elected King in 1576, Laski had taken a prominent part in affairs. He was popular and ambitious, not without aspiration towards the Polish crown himself. Burleigh, in writing of him to Hatton, called him “a personage of great estimation, few in the Empire of the greatest exceed him in sovereignty and power.” He is described by contemporary writers as a most learned man, handsome in stature and lineaments, richly clothed, “of very comely and decent apparel,” and of graceful behaviour. He wore his beard very long, not clipped close like the English courtiers. He arrived in London by Harwich on May Day, and proceeded to Winchester House, Southwark, where he made his headquarters during his stay. There seemed some doubt about how he was to be received, whether he was actually in favour or in disgrace with King Stephan. Burleigh desired Hatton to get some Essex nobleman — Lord Rich or Lord Darcy — to meet him at Harwich with proper state, “if he is the very Count Palatine

of the House of Laski.” Hatton replied that he must wait to hear more from Leicester, for in his letter to the Queen the visitor has called her “the refuge of the disconsolate and afflicted,” so perhaps he is out of favour after all.

Dee first saw Laski on May 13, at half-past seven in the evening, in the Earl of Leicester’s apartments at the Court at Greenwich, when he was introduced by Leicester himself.

Five days after the first meeting, Laski “came to me at Mortlake with only two men. He came at afternoon and tarried supper, and [till] after some set.” Near a month elapsed before his next visit, when he made a sort of royal progress down the Thames from Oxford to Mortlake.

“June 15 about 5 of the clock, came the Polonian Prince, Lord Albert Lasky, down from Bissham, where he had lodged the night before, being returned from Oxford, whither he had gone of purpose to see the university, where he was very honorably used and entertained. He had in his company Lord Russell, Sir Philip Sydney and other gentlemen: he was rowed by the Queene’s men, he had the barge covered with the Queene’s cloth, the Queene’s trumpeters, etc. He came of purpose to do me honor, for which God be praised!”

The visit was repeated on the 19th, when the distinguished foreigner was hospitably entertained for the night. The Queen was then at Greenwich, but on July 30 she and her court proceeded in great splendour up the river to Sion House. She passed by Dee’s door, and probably paused as usual for a greeting. Next morning Leicester rode over to Mortlake, and put the household in commotion by announcing that Laski and others would come to dine at Mortlake on the next day but one. These festivities were a great tax on the astrologer’s means, and he confessed sincerely that he was “not able to prepare them a convenient dinner, unless I should sell some of my plate or some of my pewter for it. Whereupon her Majesty sent unto me very royally, within one hour after, forty angels of gold [20 pounds] from Sion, whither her Majesty was now come from Greenwich.” Leicester’s secretary, Mr. Lloyd, was despatched post-haste with the gift, prompted, as Dee adds, “through the Earl’s speech to the Queene.” One might imagine Leicester’s somewhat peremptory suggestion and the Queen’s impulsive acquiescence. In minor matters she was woman enough to relish being sometimes dictated to. The secretary also brought what was hardly less acceptable to Dee, viz., “Mr. Rawligh his letter unto me of her Majesty’s good disposition unto me.” Raleigh was then in great favour with the Queen.

In the intervals between these visits of the Prince, the spirits had been consulted about Laski’s prospects. They had at once interested themselves in him, and Madimi, one of the most fascinating of these psychical projections, had vouchsafed some kind of genealogical information, connecting him with the Lacys and Richard, Duke of York. She was the first of the female angels who appeared to Dee, as it seemed in answer to his arguments reproving Trithemius, who had asserted that no good spirits ever took the shape of women. Madimi, who suddenly appeared on May 28, was “like a pretty girl of 7 or 9 years, attired in a gown of Sey, changeable green and red, with a train”; her hair was “rowled up before and hanging down very long behind.” She came into the study and played by herself; “she seemed to go in and out behind my books;...the books seemed to give place

sufficiently, one heap with the other, while she passed between them.” She announced that her elder sister would come presently, and corrected Dee’s pronunciation for her name. “My sister is not so short as you make her: Esemeli not Esemeli.” Madimi was a very clever and accomplished little fairy. She learned Greek, Arabic, and Syrian on purpose to be useful to Dee. On June 14 Dee asked the spirit Galvah, or Finis, what she had to say about the “Polandish Lord Albertus Laski.” The reply came, “Ask me these things to-morrow.” But when the next day came, Kelley, the seer, “spent all that afternoon (almost) in angling, when I was very desirous to have had his company and helping hand in this action.” So at the next sitting Galvah administers to Kelley a sharply pointed reproof: “You, sir, were best to hunt and fish after Verity.” Dee adds that “she spake so to E.K. because he spent too much time in Fishing and Angling.” Then he asked if Laski should return to Poland in August, if his relation with the Prince should bring him credit, and how should he “use himself therein to God’s liking, his country’s honour, and his own credit.” Galvah replied oracularly: “He shall want no direction in anything he desireth.” “Whom God hath armed, no man can prevaile against.” Again, on June 19, Dee asked if it would be best for the Prince to take the first opportunity of going homeward.

“It shall be answered soon,” replied Galvah.

“May he be present at the action?”

“Those that are of this house are not to be denied the Banquets therein.”

“May I request you to cause some sensible apparition to appear to him, to comfort him and establish his minde more abundantly in the godly intent of God his service?”

“If he follow us, let him be governed by us. But whatsoever is of flesh is not of us.”

“You perceive how he understandeth of the Lord Treasurer his grudge against him. And perhaps some others also are of like malicious nature. What danger may follow hereof, or encombrance?”

“The sum of his life is already appointed; one jot cannot be diminished. But he that is Almighty can augment at his pleasure. Let him rejoice in poverty, be sorry for his enemies, and do the works of justice.”

Then the “cloud of invisibility” — a drop scene between the acts — came over Galvah, and she disappeared.

Next day Laski was present at the action. An angel named Jubanladec appeared, and said he was appointed the Prince’s “good governour or Angel,” “the keeper and defender of this man present.” He bade him “look to the steps of his youth, measure the length of his body, live better and see himself inwardly.” Excellent advice, which might have been continued had not a man named Tanfield, attached to the Prince, arrived suddenly at Mortlake, with a message from the Court, and, contrary to all good manners, burst into the study. Laski had gone out another way through the oratory to meet him. The angel was annoyed, and prophesied rather unkindly that in five months the rash interrupter should be devoured by fishes of the sea. Was he drowned then or ever? Then the thread was resumed.

“What do ye seek after? Do ye hunt after the swiftness of the winds? Or are you imagining a form unto the coulds? Or go ye forth to hear the braying of an Asse, which passeth away with the swiftness of the air? Seek for true wisdom, for it beholdeth the highest and appeareth unto the lowest.”

Then Laski’s guardian angel becomes extremely practical and interesting: “Cecil hateth him [Laski] to the heart, and desireth he were gone hence. Many others do privily sting at him.”

Dee endeavours to keep him to the point.

“For his return, what is your advice? Perhaps he wanteth necessary provision, and money.”

“He shall be helpen, perhaps miraculously. Let him go so soon as he can conveniently.”

“I say again, perhaps he wanteth money; but the Treasures of the Lord are not sent to them whom he favoureth.”

“His help shall be strange. The Queen loveth him faithfully and hath fallen out with Cecil about him. Leicester flattereth him. His doings are looked into narrowly. But I alwayes inwardly direct him. I will minister such comfort to him as shall be necessary in the midst of all his doings.”

Mingled with these sayings were some prophetic utterances about Laski overcoming the Saracens and Paynims with a bloody cross shown in his hand, and about Dee’s passing to his country and aiding him to establish his kingdom. Then the familiar spirit sank through the table like a spark of fire, “seeming to make haste to his charge, I mean the Lord Laski.”

On Wednesday, the 26th, Laski again being present, the good angel II appeared with a besom in his hand. The Prince’s pedigree was then barely begun, but on June 29 the clever little Madimi promised to finish the book exactly as Dee would have written it. It was no matter where the book was left, she told him, locked up or lying about. “Your locks are no hindrance to us.”

“You have eased my heart of a thousand pound weight,” ejaculated Dee, fervently. “Now I shall have leisure to follow my sute, and to do all Mr. Gilbert’s businesse.”

Madimi was much too learned a scholar for Kelley, who on this same day grew very angry with her for speaking to him in Greek, of which he knew nothing, not even the alphabet. As an alternative she gave him Arabic. “Unless you speak some language which I understand, I will expresse no more of this Gibberish,” he said, rudely.

Poor Dee! His skryer was a constant anxiety to him. Like every medium since known, he would sometimes apply himself and sometimes not, was often honest and yet frequently a cheat.

Dee writes: —

“My heart did throb oftentimes this day, and I thought E.K. did intend to absent himself from me, and now upon this warning, I was confirmed, and more assured that it was so. Whereupon seeing him make such haste to ride to Islington, I asked him why he so hasted to ride thither. And I said if it were to ride to Mr.

harry Lee, I would go thither also, to be acquainted with him; seeing now I had so good leisure, being eased of the book writing [through Madimi's good offices]. Then he said that one told him the other day that the Duke did but flatter him, and told him other things, both against the Duke and me. I answered for the Duke and myself, and also said that if the forty pound annuity which Mr. Lee did offer him was the chief cause of his mind feeling that way (contrary to some of his former promises to me), that then I would assure him of fifty pounds yearly, and would do my best by following of my sute [with the Queen] to bring it to passe as soon as possibly I could, and thereupon did make him promise upon the Bible. Then E.K. again, upon the same Bible, did swear unto me constant friendship and never to forsake me: And moreover said that unless this had so faln out, he would have gone beyond the Seas, taking ship at Newcastle, within eight days next. And so we did plight our faith to one another, taking each other by the hands upon these points of brotherly and friendly fidelity during life, which Covenant I beseech God to turn to his honour, glorie and service, and the comfort of our brethren (his children) here on earth."

This reconciliation was not for long, in spite of the promised salary, and soon another scene occurred. On June 5 Dee write that from nine in the morning Kelley was "in a marvellous great disquietness of mind, fury and rage," because his brother Thomas Kelley brought him word, first, that a commission was out to attach and apprehend him as a felon for coining money; second, that his wife, whom he had left at Mistress Freeman's house at Blockley, having heard from Mr. Hussey that he was a cosener, had gone home to her mother, Mrs. Cooper, at Chipping Norton. Dee is "touched with a great pang of compassion," grieved that any Christian should use such speeches and be of so revenging a mind, even more than he is distressed that his own credit shall be endangered for embracing the company of such a disorderly person, especially if he be arreseted at Mortlake, "which will be no small grief and disgrace." But he so generously resolves to stand by his friend. Kelley, it seems, had been met coming from Islington with his scroll, book and powder, and had been threatened to "be pulled in pieces" if he brought them to Dee. A drawing in the margin of the MS. shows the book to have had a cross on the cover, one clasp, and deep metal bands across its two sides. Presumably these were some of the treasures reported to have been found at Glastonbury.

A day or two after, June 18, Kelley again simulated great fear and distress at seeing evil spirits. He protested he would skry no more, and was so excited that he brought on himself the wise rebuke from Galvah: "He that is angry cannot see well." He seems to have wished to show Laski some reprobate spirits in Dee's study, but the older man wisely kept the crystal and teh "table of communion" under his own control. It was, perhaps, partly cunning that made Kelley, although he really possessed extraordinary mediumistic powers, so sceptical. "I am Thomas Didymus," he says to the spirits. "How can ye persuade me ye are no deluders?"

Three days after this, Dee was writing letters to Adrian Gilbert, in Devonshire, when Madimi suddenly appeared to Kelley, who was seated in the green chair.

Dee said, "How is the mind of Mr. Secretary toward me? Methinketh it is alienated marvellously."

Dee had long been on neighbourly terms with Sir Francis and Lady Walsingham. If any cause existed for supposing both Burleigh's and Walsingham's

attitude toward him was changed, it may have been that the Lord Treasurer, the great financier of the time, resented his constant applications for a salary from the exchequer, while Walsingham, with his intimate knowledge of foreign affairs, perhaps misdoubted this intimacy between Dee and the scheming Polish Prince. Curiously enough, it was through this very intimacy with Laski that both Burleigh and Walsingham came later to regard the alchemists in the light of a valuable national asset.

Madimi replied —

“The Lord Treasurer and he are joynd together, and they hate thee. I heard them when they both said, thou wouldst go mad shortly. Whatever they can do against thee, assure thyself of. They will shortly lay a bait for thee, but eschew them.”

D. — “Lord have mercy upon me, what bait, I beseech you, and by whom?”

M. — “They have determined to search thy house, but they stay untill the Duke be gone.”

D. — “What would they search it for?”

M. — “They hate the Duke, both, unto death.”

Then with a sharp caution to Kelley to deal uprightly with Dee, and a protestation from him of his “faithful mind” to his master, she goes on to reveal the suspicions attached to Laski: —

M. — “Look unto the kind of people about the Duke in the manner of their diligence.”

D. — “What mean you by that? His own people? Or who?”

M. — “The espies.”

D. — “Which be those?”

M. — “All. There is not one true.”

D. — “You mean the Englishmen.”

M. — “You are very grosse if you understand not my sayings.”

D. — “Lord! what is thy counsel to prevent all?”

M. — “The speech is general. The wicked shall not prevail.”

D. — “But will they enter to search my house or no?”

M. — “Immediately after the Duke his going, they will.”

D. — “To what intent? What do they hope to find?”

M. — “They suspect the Duke is inwardly a traitor.”

Dee replies with sincerity, “They can by no means charge me, no not so much as with a traitorous thought.”

M. — “Though thy thoughts be good, they cannot comprehend the doings of the wicked. In summe, they hate thee. Trust them not. They shall go about shortly to offer thee friendship. But be thou a worm in a heap of straw.”

D. — “I pray you expound that parable.”

M. — “A heap of straw being never so great, is no weight upon a worm. Notwithstanding every straw hindereth the worm’s passage. See them and be not seen of them; dost thou understand it?”

It now seemed certain that Dee and his skryer were to embark their fortunes with Laski. Dee begs for particular instructions when they had better take ship, what shall be done with all the furniture prepared and standing in the chamber of practice? Is it best for the Pole to resort hither oft, or to stay quiet at his house in London?

Madimi retorts —

“Thou hast no faith. He is your friend greatly and intendeth to do much for you. He is prepared to do thee good, and thou art prepared to do him service. Those who are not faithful shall die a most miserable death, and shall drink of sleep everlasting.”

A couple of days after, on July 4, Dee returning from Court, found Kelley making preparation to go away for five days, having fixed to meet some companions in Mortlake, others in Brentford. Doubtless he found all this mystical and angelic society somewhat of a bore, and was yearning for an outburst a little more to his taste. Dee, who had seen Laski in London, knew that he intended to come down to Mortlake within a day or two, “who also,” he says, “delighted in E.K. his company.” So he wrote a short note in very polite Latin to the “Nobilissimi Princes,” bidding him put off his visit, as “our Edward” was about to take a journey, and would not be home for five days, or so he says: “Quid sit ipsa veritas.”

He showed Kelley the letter. Kelley took great offence at these words, suspecting some secret understanding between the two against him. Dee gently referred to Kelley’s own words that his return might be within, or at the end of, five days. Kelley, angry and suspicious, seized the letter and tore it up.

Soon after, Kelley beholds “a spiritual creature” by his right shoulder, telling him to go clean away, for if he stays there he will be hanged. If he goes with the Prince, he will cut off his head, and (to Dee)

“You mean not to keep promise with me. And therefore if I might have a thousand pound to tarry, yea, a kingdom, I cannot. Therefore I release you of your promise of 50 pounds yearly stipend to me, and you need not doubt but God will defend you and prosper you, and can of the very stones raise up children unto Abraham. And again, I cannot abide my wife, I love her not, nay, I abhor her, and here in the house I am misliked because I favour her no better.”

Dee endeavoured to calm this turbulent young man, spoke of his confidence in him in his dealings with their spiritual friends, but such doings and sayings as these, he points out, are not meet and fitting.

Kelley flung out of the room in a passion, mounted his mare, and rode off furiously towards Brentford, clattering out of the house with such commotion that Jane came running up to her husband’s study to know what was the matter. It was about seven o’clock in the evening.

“‘Jane,’ I said, ‘this man is marvellously out of quiet against his wife, for her friends their bitter reports against him behind his back, and her silence thereat, etc. He is gone,’ said I, ‘but I beseech the Almighty God to guide him and defend him

from danger and shame. I doubt not but God will be merciful to him, and bring him at length to such order as he shall be a faithful servant unto God.’“

Then a remarkable thing happened. By ten o’clock that night (the long midsummer twilight barely over), the prodigal returned, and mounted softly up the study stairs, “unbooted, for he was come in a boat from Brentford. When I saw him, I was very glad inwardly. But I remained writing of those records as I had yet to write, of last Tuesday’s action.

“‘I have lent my mare,’ he said, ‘and so am returned.’

“‘It is well done,’ said I.

“Thereupon he sate down in the chair by my table where he was wont to sit. He took up in his hand the books which I had brought from London, of the Lord Laskie, written to him in his commendations.” Evidently books sent to Kelley by way of compliment.

Almost immediately, Madimi, who seemed to have a special wardship over books, appeared. She patted the parchment cover of one and would have taken it out of Kelley’s hand. Dee heard the strokes, he says. He took a paper and, greeting his visitor, noted the conversation.

D. — “Mistresse Madimi, you are welcome in God for good, as I hope. What is the cause of your coming now?”

M. — “To see how you do.”

D. — I know you see me often, but I see you onely by faith and imagination.”

M. (who is always more personal than the other spirits) —

“That sight is perfecter than his,” pointing to Kelley.

D. (with emotion) — “O Madimi, shall I have any more of these grievous pangs?”

M. (oracularly) — “Curst wives and great Devils are sore companions.”

D. — “In respect of the Lord Treasurer, Mr. Secretary and Mr. Rawly, I pray you, what worldly comfort is there to be looked for? Besides that I do principally put my trust in God.”

M. — “Madder will staine, wicked men will offend, and are easie to be offended.”

D. — “And being offended, will do wickedly, to the persecution of them that mean simply.”

M. — “Or else they were not to be called wicked.”

D. — “As concerning Alb. Laski, his pedigree, you said your sister would tell all.”

M. — “I told you more than all your Dog painters and Cat painters can do.”

Kelley interrupts Dee’s questions about Laski’s pedigree and parentage, impatiently, with

K. — “Will you, Madimi, lend me a hundred pounds for a fortnight?”

M. — “I have swept all my money out of doors.”

D. — As for money, we shall have that which is necessary when God seeth time.”

Then Madimi, becoming serious, addresses to Kelley a beautiful exposition of the unity of all things: "Love is the spirit of God uniting and knitting things together in a laudable proportion." She turns sharply to him, with

"What dost thou hunt after? Speak, man, what doest thou hunt after?...Thou lovest not God. Lo, behold, thou breakest his commandments: thy bragging words are confounded...If thou hast none of these [faith, hope, love] thou hast hate. Dost thou love Silver and Gold? The one is a Thief; the other is a Murderer. Wilt thou seek honour? So did Cain. But thou hast a just God that loveth thee, just and virtuous men that delight in thee. Therefore be thou virtuous."

Next follows a remarkable scene. Madimi summons Barma and his fourteen evil companions, who have assumed possession of Kelley, with the words "Venite Tenebrae fugite spirito meo," and orders them to return to the Prince of Darkness: "Depart unto the last cry. Go you thither....The hand of the Lord is like a strong oak. When it falleth it cutteth in sunder many bushes. The light of His eyes shall expel darkness."

Kelley sees the whole crew sink down through the floor of the chamber: "A thing like a wind came and pluckt them by the feet away." He professes his deliverance: "Methinketh I am lighter than I was, and I seem to be empty and to be returned from a great amazing. For this fortnight, I do not well remember what I have done or said."

"Thou art eased of a great burden. Love God. Love thy friends. Love thy wife."

And with this parting injunction, and a psalm of thanksgiving from Dee, the story of Kelley's wild attack of temper, or as it was regarded in the sixteenth century, his possession, for the present ends. Nor is there any record of further dealings with spirits for more than two months.