

infirmity and changed it into genuine gold.

Some of the adepts also took the word "sickness," in its real meaning, and deemed the philosopher's stone to be a universal panacea curing all diseases, retaining the body in health and strength, and prolonging life to the hundredfolds of its natural limits. Hence it is often called the Panacea of Life, and Potable Gold, *aurum potabile*.

In every epoch and nation, if it arose to any eminence, we find Alchemists; the Spaniard, under Pizarro, found them even among the Peruvian priests.

From Egypt, it went to Greece; although history has preserved the name of no Greek adept; and in common with all sciences and arts, it soon made its way to the Romans. During the time of the most senseless luxury under the tyrants, when all the treasures of the world were wasted recklessly at Rome, gold was often wanting, and the pretended discovery of the transmutation of metals was hailed with joy, by which gold was promised in boundless proportions. Emperor Caligula, 37—41 A. C. instituted such experiments. Diocletian, 285—304 A. C. on the contrary, ordered that all books treating on the art of gold-making should be burned. Since, however, the persecution of an idea, always contributes to spreading it, we find alchemy flourishing about this time. The suppression, however, effected that the adepts enveloped their science in a mysterious fold, they called themselves the "hermetical chain," and in aught bearing on their art expressed themselves in mysterious representations and language. At a subsequent date, the alchemists found it of advantage to retain this secretmongery, in order to shroud their secrets from the vulgar.

The signs and names used by them to designate the seven old metals, were as follows:

Gold, ☉ Heli. s.	Silver, ☽ Selene.
Mercury ☿ Mercurius.	Copper, ♀ Venus.
Tin, ♃ Jupiter.	Lead, ♄ Saturn.
Iron, ♂ Mars.	

Which symbols have been retained in metallurgy until the present day.

About this time also arose among the adepts the so-called Theurgy, that is, the power, by mysterious ceremonies, to summon the departed, and to press them into service, when the master could compel the spirit to reveal to him all secrets, especially the preparation of the Philosopher's stone. To do this, the most

horrible crimes against the life of a fellow-man was often committed, the quintessence requisite for this ceremony was human blood; because it was even then well known that "blood is a peculiar juice."

After the destruction of the Roman Empire, the art flourished in the Byzantine. Later it was adopted by the Arabs, who, together with other sciences, raised it to a high standard. The first Arab who wrote of Alchemy, was the doctor and chemist Geber, in the eighth century, in whose works already occurs a method for mercury preparations. The most celebrated of all Arabian chemists was Lullus; according to his system, all metals consist only of sulphur and mercury; correctly proportioned, all metals might be composed of these two ingredients—also gold (not alone Zinnabar.)

During the middle ages, the monks were often occupied with Alchemy, although it was forbidden by the Popes; the Franciscan friar, Berthold Schwarz, as is well known, in one of his alchemical experiments, invented powder. But we find adepts even among the Popes; John XXII, and many churchmen high in authority, dabbled in the goldmaker's art. Among the temporal rulers, also, we find seekers for the Great Magisterium, Rudolph II., German Emperor, 1576—1612. In general, the adepts found their warmest supporters during the middle ages in the both great and small potentates, for the simple reason that they always found themselves in a chronic state of impecuniosity, and thought to obtain the much coveted prize quickest through these alchemists. What of it, if, after having been disappointed by them, they should deal out summary punishment—the rack and the gallows. Thus the adept John F. Bottcher, druggist, was kept imprisoned by his Saxonian ruler, and barely escaped death, when in the place of the philosopher's stone, he discovered the Meissen porcelain. Frederic I., of Prussia, caused an alchemist, because he was not successful in the transmutation business, to be suspended from a gallows decorated with gold paper.

The most celebrated adept of the middle age was friar Basilius, a monk, living in Erfurt, in the 15th century. His system rested upon salt, sulphur and mercury, (*sal, sulphur, et mercurium*). In the 16th century we find the celebrated Swiss doctor, Paracelsus; in the 17th, Beuther, in the court of August I. of

Saxony, sharing the fortunes of most of the alchemists, who entered into princely service. He was tortured, maimed, and imprisoned for life. The Dutch Dr. van Helmont, who in the enthusiasm for the art, christened his son "Mercurius," who also died an adept in 1689. Dr. Helvetius, who was at first a bitter enemy to alchemy, but finally died one of its most devoted followers. Kunkel, who discovered the ruby glass and phosphorus, and many others might be named.

The researches, extending over 4,000 years, of these adepts have led to the most important discoveries and inventions in the field of chemistry, technic, and medicine. The first raised the condition of the people, and the latter has reduced sickness and disease to a minimum, and prolonged life, therefore the Philosopher's stone has been partly discovered, but in another form than was imagined by the alchemists.

There may have been many frauds and pretenders in the guise of alchemists, a few really are said to have been able to transmute baser metals into gold, for instance, a stranger caused such a transmutation in presence of Helvetius, who thereupon changed his opinion. That there were as many cheats among the adepts as history records, is undoubtedly one of its well known lies; a person who lived as retired as they did, only in communion with and in pursuit of his idea, with but few necessities, like the majority of adepts, is generally no cheat and swindler.

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(*Jewelers' Circular.*)

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