

Mangetus gives another story on the authority of an English bishop, who told it to him in 1685, and at the same time gave him about half an ounce of the gold which the alchymist had made:—

"A stranger, meanly dressed, went to Mr. Boyle, and after conversing for some time about chemical processes, asked him to furnish him with antimony and some other common substances. These were put into a crucible which was then placed in a melting furnace. As soon as they were fused the stranger threw a powder into the crucible and instantly went out, directing the attendants to let the crucible stay in the furnace until the fire died out, and promising to return shortly. This he never did—so Boyle examined the contents of the crucible and found them to have all the properties of pure gold."

Helvetius in his *Vitulus Aureus* tells of another mysterious stranger who showed him a yellow powder which he affirmed to be the philosopher's stone. He gave Helvetius a portion of it, with which Helvetius, in the presence of his wife and son, converted six drachms of lead into what a goldsmith pronounced to be pure gold, which opinion was confirmed by Porelius, master of the Dutch mint, who had the gold assayed.—(From Thomson's History of Chemistry).

Many such stories are on record, all told in dead earnest, but reading like tales from the Arabian Nights.

But skeptics there were, and some of them have put themselves on record. The ill repute of the alchemist in the 17th century is quaintly brought out in a work on the metals published in 1683,—being a translation from the German with comments by "Sir John Pettus, Knight, of the Society of the Mines Royal." He writes:—

"Now I have shown the seven gradations to a chemist (miner, washer, stamper, melter, finer, refiner, prover or assayer), so I must tell you he looks on himself in a higher degree and justly defined, according to the Lord Verulam; for he not only knows all these seven gradations, but also knows how to extract Quintessences, or several marvellous works out of all, and if he would stop there (as Erkern doth) it were well for him, but it seems he cannot be content, unless he attains to the high *Elixir* or *Powder of Projection* or *Philosopher's Stone*, which is believed by some of them to have a power of *transmuting* or turning all other *metals* into *gold*; but by woful experience of some men's credulity, instead of turning everything into gold they have turned all their gold into nothing, (Verulam)."

"Now as for the word *Alchemist*, it is the same thing with chemist, but usually taken in an imperfect or ill sense (like Ben Johnson's *Alchemist*), i.e., one that can or pretend to counterfeit metals; so to sum up the chief term, an assayer judgeth of the purity of metals, and the chemist improves this purity to spirits, quintessences, virtues, &c. But the alchemist counterfeits and adulterates them, by making them appear to be pure which really are not pure, but mixed with other sophistications (Verulam). Of this latter our author (Erckern, whose book Pettus edits and amplifies) is not guilty; so as he stands for a renowned assay master, a good chemist, and one that understood, but was not a sophisticating alchemist, nor a lapidarian philosopher, or metaphysical projector."

(To be continued).