



The Real History Of The Rosicrucians

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PREFACE

Influence of the Secret Societies--Romantic Associations connected with the Rosicrucian Fraternity--Universal ignorance concerning it--Extent of the Rosicrucian literature--Pretensions of this History

BENEATH the broad tide of human history there flow the stealthy undercurrents of the secret societies, which frequently determine in the depths the changes that take place upon the surface. These societies have existed in all ages and among all nations, and tradition has invariably ascribed to them the possession of important knowledge in the religious scientific or political order according to the various character of their pretensions. The mystery which encompasses them has invested them with a magical glamour and charm that to some extent will account for the extravagant growth of legend about the Ancient Mysteries, the Templars, the Freemasons, and the Rosicrucians, above all, who were the most singular in the nature of their ostensible claims and in the uncertainty which envelopes them.

"A halo of poetic splendour," says Heckethorn, ¹ "surrounds the Order of the Rosicrucians; the magic lights of fancy play round their graceful day-dreams, while the mystery in which they shrouded themselves lends additional attraction to their history. But their brilliancy was that of a meteor. It just flashed across the realms of imagination and intellect, and vanished for ever; not, however, without leaving behind some permanent and lovely traces of its hasty passage. . . . Poetry and romance are deeply indebted to the Rosicrucians for many a fascinating creation. The literature of every European country contains hundreds of pleasing fictions, whose machinery has been borrowed from their system of philosophy, though that itself has passed away."

The facts and documents concerning the Fraternity of the Rose Cross, or of the Golden and Rosy Cross, as it is called by Sigmund Richter, ² are absolutely unknown to English readers. Even well-informed people will learn with astonishment the extent and variety of the Rosicrucian literature which hitherto has lain buried in rare pamphlets, written in the old German tongue, and in the Latin commentaries of the later

alchemists. The stray gleams of casual information which may be gleaned from popular encyclopædias cannot be said to convey any real knowledge, while the essay of Thomas De Quincey on the "Rosicrucians and Freemasons," though valuable as the work of a sovereign prince of English prose composition, is a mere transcript from an exploded German savant, whose facts are tortured in the interests of a somewhat arbitrary hypothesis. The only writer in this country who claims to have treated the subject seriously and at length is Hargrave Jennings, who, in "The Rosicrucians, their Rites and Mysteries," &c., comes forward as the historian of the Order. This book, however, so far from affording any information on the questions it professes to deal with, "keeps guard over" ³ the secrets of the Fraternity, and is simply a mass of ill-digested erudition concerning Phallicism and Fire-Worship, the Round Towers of Ireland and Serpent Symbolism, offered with a charlatanic assumption of secret knowledge as an exposition of Rosicrucian philosophy.⁴

The profound interest now manifested in all branches of mysticism, the tendency, in particular, of many cultured minds towards those metaphysical conceptions which are at the base of the alchemical system, the very general suspicion that other secrets than that of manufacturing gold are to be found in the Pandora's Box of Hermetic and Rosicrucian allegories, ⁵ make it evident that the time has come to collect the mass of material which exists for the elucidation of this curious problem of European history, and to depict the mysterious Brotherhood as they are revealed in their own manifestos and in the writings of those men who were directly or indirectly in connection with them. Such a publication will take the subject out of the hands of unqualified writers, and of the self-constituted pontiffs of darkness and mystery who trade upon the ignorance and curiosity of their readers. As the result of conscientious researches, I have succeeded in discovering several tracts and manuscripts in the Library of the British

Museum, whose existence, so far as I am aware, has been unknown to previous investigators, while others, including different copies and accounts of the "Universal Reformation," as well as original editions of the "Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosy Cross," which are not in the Library Catalogue, though less generally obscure, I have met with in a long series of German pamphlets belonging to the first quarter of the seventeenth century. These, with all other important and available facts and documents, I have carefully collected and now publish them in the present volume, either summarised or *in extenso* according to their value, and I offer for the first time in the literature of the subject the Rosicrucians represented by themselves. I claim that I have performed my task in a sympathetic but impartial manner, purged from the bias of any particular theory, and above all uncontaminated by the pretension to superior knowledge, which claimants have never been able to substantiate.

INTRODUCTION

Derivations of the name Rosicrucian--Derivation from the supposed founder, Christian Rosencreutz--Derivation from Ros and Crux--History of the term Ros in Alchemy--Derivation from Rosa and Cruz.--On the Rose in Symbolism, the Cross in Symbolism, and on the significance of their union, with special reference to the Romance of the Rose and the Paradise of the Divine Comedy

"In cruce sub sphaera venit sapientia vera."--*Hermetic Axiom.*

"La rose qui a été de tout temps l'emblème de la beauté, de la vie, de l'amour et du plaisir, exprimait mystiquement toutes les protestations manifestées à la renaissance. . . . Rénier la rose, à la croix, tel était le problème posé par la Haute Initiation."--*Éliphas Lévi.*

THREE derivations are offered of the name Rosicrucian. The first, which is certainly the most obvious, deduces it from the ostensible founder of the order, Christian Rosenkreuze. I shall show, however, that the history of this personage is evidently mythical or allegorical, and therefore this explanation merely takes the inquiry a step backward to the question, What is the etymology of Rosenkreuze? The second derivation proposed is from the Latin words *Ros*, dew, and *Crux*, cross. This has been countenanced by Mosheim, who is followed by Ree's *Encyclopædia*; and other publications. The argument in its favour may be fairly represented by the following quotation:--"Of all natural bodies, dew was deemed the most powerful dissolvent of gold; and the cross, in chemical language, was equivalent to light; because the figure of a cross exhibits at the same time the three letters of which the word *lux*, or light, is compounded. Now, *lux* is called . . . the seed or menstruum of the red dragon, or, in other words, that gross and corporeal light, which, when properly digested and modified, produces gold. Hence it follows, if this etymology be admitted, that a Rosicrucian philosopher is one who by the

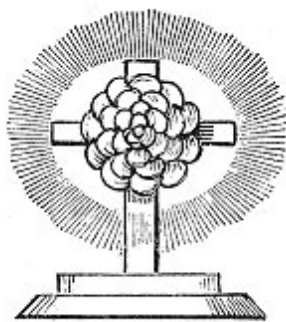
intervention and assistance of the dew, seeks for light, or, in other words, the substance called the Philosopher's Stone."⁶

This opinion exaggerates the importance attributed to the dew of the alchemists. The universal dissolvent has figured under various names, of which *ros* is by no means most general; the comprehensive "Lexicon Alchymixæ" does not mention it. According to Gaston le Doux, in his "Dictionnaire Hermétique," Dew, simply so called, signifies Mercury; Dew of the Philosophers is the matter of the stone when under the manipulation of the artist, and chiefly during its circulations in the philosophical egg. The White and Celestial Dew of the Wise is the philosophical stone perfected to the White. Mosheim derived his opinion from Peter Gassendi,⁷ and from a writer in Eusebius Renandot's "Conferences Publiques,"⁸ who confesses that he knew nothing whatsoever of the Rosicrucians till the task of speaking on the subject was imposed on him by the *Bureau d'Adresse*. He says:--"Dew, the most powerful dissolvent of gold which is to be found among natural and non-corrosive substances, is nothing else but light coagulated and rendered corporeal; when it is artistically concocted and digested in its own vessel during a suitable period it is the true menstruum of the Red Dragon, *i.e.*, of gold, the true matter of the Philosophers. The society desiring to bequeath to posterity the ineffaceable sign of this secret, caused them to adopt the name *Frères de la Rozée Cuite*." The mystic triad of the Society, F. R. C., has been accordingly interpreted *Fratres Roris Cocti*, the Brotherhood of the Concocted or Exalted Dew, but the explanation has little probability in itself.

"Several chemists," says Pernetz, in his "Dictionnaire Mytho-Hermétique," "have regarded the dew of May and September as the matter of the *Magnum Opus*, influenced doubtless by the opinion of various authors that dew was the reservoir of the universal spirit of Nature. . . . But when we seriously study the texts of the true philosophers, wherein they make reference to dew, we are soon convinced that they only speak of it by a similitude, and that theirs is

metallic, that is, it is the mercurial water sublimated into vapour within the vase, and precipitated at the bottom in the form of fine rain. Thus when they write of the dew of the month of May, they are referring to that of their philosophic Spring, which is governed by the gemini of the alchemical Zodiack, which differs from the ordinary astronomical Zodiack. Philalethes has positively said that their dew is their mercurial water rising from putrefaction."

The third derivation is that which was generally adopted, even from the beginning, by writers directly or indirectly connected with the Rosicrucians. It deduces the term in question from the words *rosa*, rose, and *crux*. This is sanctioned by various editions of the society's authoritative documents, which characterise it as the *Broederschafft des Roosen Creutzes*, that is, the Rose-Crucians, or *Fratres Rosatæ Crucis*, according to the "Confessio Recepta," terms quite excluding the conception of dew, which in German is Thau, while in Latin the Brothers of the Dewy Cross would be *Fratres Roratæ Crucis*. This derivation is also supported by the supposed symbol of the Order, whose "emblem, monogram, or jewel," says Godfrey Higgins, "is a Red Rose on a Cross, thus:--



When it can be done it is surmounted with a glory and placed on a calvary. When it is worn appended and made of cornelian, garnet, ruby, or red glass, the calvary and glory are generally omitted."⁹

Mr Hargrave Jennings, who borrows the whole of this passage¹⁰ without acknowledgment of any kind, also tells us that "the jewel of the Rosicrucians is formed of a transparent red stone with a red cross on one side and a red rose on the other--thus it is a crucified rose."

All derivations, however, are to some extent doubtful and tentative. The official proclamations of the Society are contained in the "Fama Fraternitatis," and in the "Confessio Fraternitatis," which, in their

original editions, appear to describe it simply as the *Fraternitas de R. C.*, while the initials of its founder are given as C. R. "The Chemical Nuptials of Christian Rosen Kreuze," published anonymously at Strasbourg in 1616, and undeniably connected with the order, seem to identify it as the Brotherhood of the Rose-Cross, and its founder as Father Rosycross. These designations at any rate were immediately adopted in Germany, and they appear in the subsequent editions of both manifestos, though as early as 1618 I find Michael Maier, the alchemist, expressing a different opinion on this point in his "Themis Aurea, hoc est, De Legibus Fraternitatis R. C. Tractatus." "No long time elapsed, when the Society first became known by that which was written, before an interpreter came forward who conjectured those letters to signify the Rose Cross, in which opinion the matter remains till this present, notwithstanding that the Brothers in subsequent writings do affirm it to be erroneously so denominated, and testify that the letters R. C. denote the name of their first inaugurator.¹¹ If the mind of one man could search that of another and behold formed therein the idea or sensible and intelligible form, there would be no necessity for speech or writing among men. But this being denied to us while we subsist in this corporeal nature, though doubtless granted to pure intelligences, we explain our rational conceptions one to another by the symbols of language and writing. Therefore letters are of high efficacy when they embrace a whole society and maintain order therein, nor is an opportunity afforded to the curious to draw omens from integral names, nor from families situations, nor from places persons, nor from persons the secrets of affairs."

Proposing his own definitions, he says:--"I am no augur nor prophet, notwithstanding that once I partook of the laurel, and reposed a few brief hours in the shadow of Parnassus; nevertheless, if I err not, I have unfolded the significance of the characters R. C. in the enigmas of the sixth book of the Symbols of the Golden Table. R signifies Pegasus, and

C, if the sense not the sound be considered, *lilium*. Let the KNOWLEDGE OF THE ARCANA be the key to thee. Lo, I give thee the Arcanum! d. wmm. l. zii. w. sgqghka. x. Open if thou canst. . . . Is not this the hoof of the Red Lion or the drops of the Hippocrene fountain?" Beneath this barbarous jargon we discern, however, an analogy with the Rose symbolism. Classical tradition informs us that the Red Rose sprang from the blood of Adonis, but Pegasus was a winged horse which sprang from the blood of Medusa, and the fountain of Hippocrene was produced by a stroke of the hoof of Pegasus.

In England the pseudonymous author of the "Summum Bonum," who is supposed to be Robert Fludd, gives a purely religious explanation of the Rose Cross symbol, asserting it to mean "the Cross sprinkled with the rosy blood of Christ."¹² The general concensus of opinion is preferable to fanciful interpretations, and we may therefore safely take the words *Rosa* and *Crux* as explanatory of the name Rosicrucian, and by *Fratres R. C.* we may understand *Fratres Roseæ Crucis*, despite the silence of the manifestos and the protests of individual alchemists.

The next question which occurs is the significance of this curious emblem--a Red Rose affixed to a red, or, according to some authors, a golden cross. This question cannot be definitely answered. The characteristic sign of a secret society will be naturally as mysterious as itself in the special meaning which the society may attach to it, but some intelligence concerning it can perhaps be gleaned from its analysis with universal symbolism. Now, the Rose and the Cross, in their separate significance, are emblems of the most palmary importance and the highest antiquity.

There is a Silver Rose, called Tamara Pua, in the Paradise of the Brahmans. "This Paradise is a garden in heaven, to which celestial spirits are first admitted on their ascent from the terrestrial sphere. The Rose contains the images of two women, as bright and fair as a pearl; but these two are only one, though appearing as if distinct according to the medium, celestial or terrestrial, through which they are viewed. In the first aspect she is called the Lady of the Mouth, in the other, the Lady of the Tongue, or the Spirit of Tongues. In the centre of this Silver Rose, God has his permanent residence."

A correspondence will be readily recognised between this divine woman or virgin--two and yet one, who seems to typify the Logos, the Spirit of Wisdom, and the Spirit of Truth--and the two-edged sword of the Spirit in the Apocalypse, the *Sapientia quæ ex ore Altissimi prodiit*, as it is called

in the sublime Advent antiphon of the Latin Church. The mystical Rose in the centre of the allegorical garden is continually met with in legend. Buddha is said to have been crucified for robbing a garden of a flower,¹³ and after a common fashion of mythology, the divine Avatar of the Indians is henceforth identified with the object for which he suffered, and he becomes himself "a flower, a Rose, a Padma, Lotus, or Lily." Thus he is the Rose crucified, and we must look to the far East for the origin of the Rosicrucian emblem. According to Godfrey Higgins, this is "the Rose of Isuren, of Tamul, and of Sharon, crucified for the salvation of men--crucified," he continues, "in the heavens at the vernal equinox." In this connection we may remember the Gnostic legend that Christ was crucified in the Empyrean; and as Nazareth, according to St Jerome, signified the flower, and was situated in Carmel, "the vineyard or garden of God," Jesus of Nazareth, by a common extension of the symbolism, is sometimes identified as this crucified flower. ¹⁴

In classical fable, the garden of Midas, the King of the Phrygians, was situated at the foot of Mount Bermion, and was glorified by the presence of roses with sixty petals, which exhaled an extraordinary fragrance. Now, the rose was sacred to Dionysius, or Bacchus, and Bacchus endowed Midas with the power of transmuting everything into gold; so here is a direct connection between the Rose and Alchemy.

In the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, Lucius is restored to his human shape by devouring a chaplet of roses. Everywhere the same typology meets us. The Peruvian Eve sinned by plucking roses, which are also called *Frute del Arbor*.¹⁵ A messenger from heaven announces to the Mexican Eve that she will bear a Son who shall bruise the serpent's head; he presents her with a Rose, and this gift was followed by an Age of Roses, as in India there was the Age of the Lotus.

There are occasional allusions to the Rose in the Hebrew Scriptures, but it is used as a poetic image rather than an arcane symbol, and as such it has been always in high favour with poets. ¹⁶

In the west it appears for the first time in allegorical literature as the central figure in the "four-square garden" of the ancient "Romance of the Rose." The first part of this poem was written by Guillaume de Lorris before the year 1260, and it was completed by Jean de Meung, whose death occurred in the year 1316, according to the general opinion. This extraordinary work, once of universal popularity, is supposed by some of its commentators to admit of an alchemical interpretation, and openly professes the principles of the *Magnum Opus*.¹⁷ The garden, or *vergier*, which contains the Rose, is richly sculptured on its outer walls with symbolical figures of Hatred, Treason, Meanness, Covetousness, Avarice, Envy, Sadness, Age, Hypocrisy, Poverty--all the vices and miseries of mortality. Idleness opens the gate to him, Merriment greets him and draws him into the dance, and then he beholds the God of Love, accompanied by *Dous-Regars*, a youth who carries his bows and arrows, by Beauty, Wealth, Bounty, Frankness, Courtesy, etc. The lover, while he is contemplating the loveliness of the Rose,

Qui est si vermeille et si fine . . .

Des foilles i ot quatre paire,

Que Nature par grand mestire

I ot assises tire à tire.

Le coe ot droite comme jons,

Et par dessus siet li boutons,

Si qu 'il ne cline ne ne pent.

L' odor de lui entor s' espent;

La soatisme qui en ist,

Toute la place replenist,¹⁸

is pierced by the shafts of the deity, but he does not in spite of his sufferings abandon his project, which is to possess the Rose, and after imprisonment and various adventures,

La conclusion du Rommant

Est que vous voyez cy l'Amant

Qui prent la Rose à son plaisir,

En qui estoit tout son désir.

It will require no acquaintance with the methods of the symbolists to discern the significance of this allegory:--

La Rose c'est d'Amour le guerdon gracieux. [19](#)

But a little later the same emblem reappears in the sublime poem of Dante. The Paradise of the *Divina Commedia* consists, says Eliphas Lévi, of "a series of Kabbalistic circles divided by a Cross, like Ezekiel's pantacle; a Rose blossoms in the centre of this Cross, and it is for the first time that we find the symbol of the Rosicrucians publicly and almost categorically revealed."

The passage referred to, so far as regards the Rose, is as follows:--

"There is in heaven a light, whose goodly shine
Makes the Creator visible to all
Created, that in seeing him alone
Have peace; and in a circle spreads so far,
That the circumference were too loose a zone
To girdle in the sun. All is one beam,
Reflected from the summit of the first,
That moves, which being hence and vigour takes.
And as some cliff; that from the bottom eyes
His image mirror'd in the crystal flood,
As if to admire his brave apparelling
Of verdure and of flowers; so, round about,
Eyeing the light, on more than million thrones,
Stood, eminent, whatever from our earth
Has to the skies return'd. How wide the leaves
Extended to their utmost, of this ROSE,
Whose lowest step embosoms such a space
Of ample radiance! Yet, nor amplitude
Nor height impeded, but my view with ease
Took in the full dimension of that joy.
Near or remote, what then avails, *where God*
Immediate rules,[20](#) and Nature, awed, suspends

Her sway? Into the yellow of the Rose
Perennial, which, in bright expansiveness,
Lays forth its gradual blooming, redolent
Of praises to the never-wintering sun. . . .

Beatrice led me. . . .

In fashion as a snow-white Rose lay then
Before my view the saintly multitude,
Which in his own blood Christ espoused. Meanwhile
That other host that soar aloft to gaze
And celebrate His glory whom they love,
Hovered around, and like a troop of bees
Amid the vernal sweets alighting now,
Now clustering where their fragrant labour glows,
Flew downward to the mighty flower; a rose
From the redundant petals streaming back
Unto the steadfast dwelling of their joy.
Faces had they of flame, and wings of gold:
The rest was whiter than the driven snow.
And as they flitted down into the flower,
From range to range fanning their plummy loins,
Whispered the peace and ardour which they won
From that soft winnowing. Shadow none, the vast
Interposition of such numerous flights
Cast from above, upon the flower, or view
Obstructed aught. For through the Universe
Wherever merited, Celestial Light
Glides freely, and no obstacle prevents.

CARY'S DANTE, "The Paradise," xxx., xxxi.

"Not without astonishment will it be discovered," continues Lévi, that the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Divine Comedy* are two opposite forms of the same work--initiation into intellectual independence, satire on all contemporary institutions and allegorical formulations of the great secrets of the Rosicrucian Society. These important manifestations of occultism coincide with the epoch of the downfall of the Templars, since Jean de Meung or Clopinel, contemporary of Dante's old age, flourished during his most brilliant years at the Court of Philippe le Bel. The 'Romance of the Rose' is the epic of ancient France. It is a profound work in a trivial guise, as learned an exposition of the mysteries of occultism as that of Apuleius. The Rose of Flamel, of Jean de Meung, and of Dante, blossomed on the same rose-tree."

This is ingenious and interesting, but it assumes the point in question, namely, the antiquity of the Rosicrucian Fraternity, which, it is needless to say, cannot be proved by the mere existence of their symbols in the mystical poetry of a remote period. In the Paradise of Dante we find, however, the emblem whose history we are tracing, placed, and assuredly not without reason, in the supreme, central heaven amidst the intolerable manifestation of the Untreated Light, the Shecinah of Rabbinical theosophy,²¹ the chosen habitation of God--"a sacred Rose and Flower of Light, brighter than a million suns, immaculate, inaccessible, vast, fiery with magnificence, and surrounding God as if with a million veils. This symbolic Rose is as common a hierogram throughout the vast temples and palaces of the Ancient East as it is in the immense ruins of Central America." ²²

From the time of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines a common device in heraldry is the Rose-Emblem. It figures on our English coins; it is used as a royal badge in the Civil War between the houses of York and Lancaster, it is associated above all with the great mediæval cultus of the Mother of God, being our Lady's flower *par excellence*, as the lily is characteristic of St Joseph. "As an emblem of the Virgin, the Rose, both white and red, appears at a very early period; it was especially so recognised by St Dominic, when he instituted the devotion of the rosary, with direct reference to St Mary. The prayers appear to have been symbolised as roses."²³ In Scandinavia the same flower was sacred to the goddess Holda, who is called "Frau Rosa," and "it was partly transferred, as were other emblems of Holda, Freyja, and Venus, to the Madonna, who is frequently called by the Germans, Mariën-Röschen . . . But there has been a tendency to associate the White Rose with the Virgin Mary, that being chiefly chosen for her feast-days, while the more earthly feelings

associated with the 'Frau Rosa,' are still represented in the superstitions connected with the Red Rose."

In Germany it appears as the symbol of silence. It was sculptured on the ceiling of the banquet hall to warn the guests against the repetition of what was heard beneath it. "The White Rose was especially sacred to silence. It was carved in the centre of the Refectory of the ancients for the same reason," and the expression *Sub Rosa*, which was equivalent among the Romans to an inviolable pledge, originated in the ancient dedication of the flower to Aphrodite, and its reconsecration by Cupid to Harpocrates, the tutelary deity of Silence, to induce him to conceal the amours of the goddess of love.

In mediæval alchemy Rosa signifies Tartarum, and in the twelfth Clavis of Basil Valentine there is a vase or yoni with a pointed lingam rising from its centre, and having on each side a sprig surmounted by a Rose. Above is the well-known emblem



which symbolises the accomplishment of the *Magnum Opus*, while through an open window the sun and moon shed down their benign influence and concur in the consummation of the ineffable act.²⁴

The same Rose-symbol is to be found in the hieroglyphics of Nicholas Flamel--

The mystic Rose
Of Hermetic lore, which issues bright and fair,
Strange virtues circling with the sap therein,
Beneath the Universal Spirit's breath,
From the Mercurial Stone.

Finally, in 1598, Henry Khunrath, a supreme alchemical adept, published his "*Amphitheatrum Sapientiæ Æternæ*," containing nine singular pantacles, of which the fifth is a Rose of Light, in whose centre there is a human form extending its arms in the form of a cross, and thus reversing the order.

The Cross is a hierogram of, if possible, still higher antiquity than the floral emblem. It is at any rate more universal and contains a loftier and more arcane significance. Its earliest form is the *Crux Ansata*,



which, according to some authorities, signified hidden wisdom, and the life of the world to come; according to others, it is the lingam; as the

hieroglyphic sign of Venus it is an ancient allegorical figure, and represents the metal copper in alchemical typology. The *Crux Ansata* and the Tau

T

are met with on most Egyptian monuments. In the latter form it was an emblem of the creative and generative energy, and, according to Payne Knight, was, even in pre-Christian times, a sign of salvation.

The Cross, "the symbol of symbols," was used also by the Chaldæans; by the Phoenicians, who placed it on their coins; by the Mexicans, who paid honour to it and represented their God of the Air, nailed and immolated thereon; by the Peruvians, who, in a sacred chamber of their palace, kept and venerated a splendid specimen carved from a single piece of fine jasper or marble; and by the British Druids. It was emblazoned on the banners of Egypt, and in that country, as in China, was used to indicate "a land of corn and plenty." When divided into four equal segments it symbolised the primeval abode of man, the traditional Paradise of Eden. It entered into the monograms of Osiris, of Jupiter Ammon, and of Saturn; the Christians subsequently adopted it, and the Labarum of Constantine is identical with the device of Osiris. It is equally common in India, and, according to Colonel Wilford, is exactly the Cross of the Manichees, with leaves, flowers, and fruits springing from it. It is called the divine tree, the tree of the gods, the tree of life and knowledge, and is productive of all things good and desirable.²⁵

According to Godfrey Higgins we must go to the Buddhists for the origin of the Cross, "and to the Lama of Thibet, who takes his name from the Cross, called in his language Lamh." The Jamba, or cosmic tree, which Wilford calls, the tree of life and knowledge, figures in their maps of the "world as a cross 84 joganas (answering to the 84 years of the life of Him who was exalted upon the Cross), or 423 miles high, including the three steps of the Calvary, with which, after the orthodox Catholic fashion, it

was invariably represented. The neophyte of the Indian Initiations was sanctified by the sign of a Cross, which was marked on every part of his body. After his perfect regeneration it was again set upon his forehead **T** and inverted **⊥** upon his breast.²⁶

The paschal lamb of the Jewish passover was roasted on a cross-shaped wooden spit, and with this sign Ezekiel ordered the people to be marked who were to be spared by the destroyer. Thus it figures as a symbol of salvation, but classical mythology attributes its invention to Ixion, who was its first victim. As an instrument of suffering and death, it is not, however, to be found on ancient monuments. It had no orthodox shape among the Romans when applied to this purpose, and the victims were either tied or nailed, "being usually left to perish by thirst and hunger."²⁷

In the Christendom of both the East and West this divine symbol has a history too generally known to need recapitulation here. On this point the student may consult the "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities," where a mass of information is collected.

The following interesting passage will show the connection which exists between the Cross and alchemy. "In common chemistry," says Pernetz, crosses form characters which indicate the crucible, vinegar, and distilled vinegar. But as regards hermetic science, the Cross is . . . the symbol of the four elements. And as the philosophical stone is composed of the most pure substance of the grosser elements . . ., they have said, In *cruce salus*, salvation is in the Cross; by comparison with the salvation of our souls purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ who hung on the tree of the Cross. Some of them have even pushed their audacity further, and fear not to employ the terms of the New Testament to form their allegories and enigmas. Jean de Roquetaillade, known under the name of *Jean de Rupe Scissa*, and Arnaud de Villeneuve, say in their works on the composition of the Stone of the Philosophers:--It is needful that the

Son of Man be lifted up on the Cross before being glorified; to signify the volatilisation of the fixed and igneous part of the matter."²⁸

I have briefly traced the typological history of the Rose and Cross. It is obvious, as I have already remarked, that the antiquity of these emblems is no proof of the antiquity of a society which we find to be using them at a period subsequent to the Renaissance. It does not even suppose that society's initiation into the hieratic secrets which the elder world may have summarised in those particular symbols. In the case which is in question, such a knowledge would involve the antiquity of the Rosicrucians, because it is only at a time long subsequent to their first public appearance that the past has been sufficiently disinterred to uncover the significance of its symbols to uninitiated students. Can a correspondence be established between the meaning of the Rose and the Cross as they are used by the ancient hierogrammatists, and that of the Rose-Cross as it is used by the Rosicrucian Fraternity? This is the point to be ascertained. If a connection there be, then in some way, we may not know what, the secret has been handed down from generation to generation, and the mysterious brotherhood which manifested its existence spontaneously at the beginning of the seventeenth century, is affiliated with the hierophants of Egypt and India, who, almost in the night of time, devised their allegories and emblems for the blind veneration of the vulgar and as lights to those who knew.

In the fifth book of the "Histoire de la Magie," Eliphas Lévi provides the following commentary on the Rosicrucian symbol:--

"The Rose, which from time immemorial has been the symbol of beauty and life, of love and pleasure, expressed in a mystical manner all the protestations of the Renaissance. It was the flesh revolting against the oppression of the spirit, it was Nature declaring herself to be, like grace, the daughter of God, it was love refusing to be stifled by the celibate, it was life desiring to be no longer barren, it was humanity aspiring to a natural religion, full of love and reason, founded on the revelation of the harmonies of existence of which the Rose was for initiates the living and blooming symbol. The Rose, in fact, is a pantacle; its form is circular, the leaves of the corolla are heart-shaped, and are supported harmoniously by one another; its colour presents the most delicate shades of primitive hues; its calyx is purple and gold. . . . The conquest of the Rose was the problem offered by initiation to science, while religion toiled to prepare and establish the universal, exclusive, and definitive triumph of the Cross.

"The reunion of the Rose and the Cross, such was the problem proposed by supreme initiation, and, in effect, occult philosophy, being the universal synthesis, should take into account all the phenomena of Being."

This extremely suggestive explanation has the characteristic ingenuity of the hierophants of theosophical science, but it has no application whatsoever to the ostensible or ascertainable aims of the Rosicrucian adepts. It is the product of intellectual subtlety and the poetic gift of discerning curious analogies; it is quite beside the purpose of serious historical inquiry, and my object in quoting it here is to show by the mere fact of its existence that the whole question of the significance of the Crucified Rose, in its connection with the society, is one of pure conjecture, that no Rosicrucian manifestos and no acknowledged Brother have ever given any explanation concerning it, and that no presumption is afforded by the fact of its adoption for the antiquity of the society or for its connection with universal symbolism.

The researches of various writers, all more or less competent, have definitely established the *Crux Ansata* as typical of the male and female generative organs in the act of union, the Egyptian Tau, with its variants as typical of the masculine potency, and the Rose as the feminine emblem. Then by a natural typological evolution the Cross came to signify the divine creative energy which fecundated the obscure matrix of the primeval substance and caused it to bring forth the universe. The simple union of the Rose and the Cross suggests the same meaning as the *Crux Ansata*, but the crucified Buddhistic Rose may be a symbol of the asceticism which destroys natural desire. There is little correspondence, in either case, with known Rosicrucian tenets, and, therefore, the device of the Rose-Cross is separated from ancient symbolism, and is either a purely arbitrary and thus unexplainable sign, or its significance is to be sought elsewhere.

Now, I purpose to show that the Rosicrucians were united with a movement, which, originating in Germany, was destined to revolutionise the world of thought and to transform the face of Europe; that the symbols of the Rose and the Cross were prominently and curiously connected with this movement, and that the subsequent choice of these emblems by the secret society in question, followed naturally from the fact of this connection, and is easily explainable thereby. To accomplish this task satisfactorily, I must first lay before my readers the facts and documents which I have collected concerning the Fraternity.

CHAPTER 1. ON THE STATE OF MYSTICAL PHILOSOPHY IN GERMANY AT THE CLOSE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

On the state of Mystical Philosophy in Germany at the close of the Sixteenth Century--Perpetuation of Neo-Platonic traditions--Revolution in Religion, Science, and Philosophy--Paracelsus and his successors--Rise of the Spiritual Alchemists

THE traditions of the Neo-Platonic philosophy, with its elaborate theurgical system, were to some extent perpetuated through the whole period of the Middle Ages, for beside the orthodox theology of the great Latin Church, and amidst the clamour of scholastic philosophy, we find the secret theosophy of the magician, the Kabbalist, and the alchemical adept borrowing, directly or indirectly, from this prolific fountain of exalted mysticism. The traces of its influence are discoverable in Augustine, in Albertus Magnus, in St Thomas, the angel of the schools, and in other shining lights of western Christendom, while the metaphysical principles of Johannes Scotus Erigena, even so early as the close of the ninth century, were an actual revival of this philosophy. He translated the extraordinary works of Pseudo-Dionysius on the celestial hierarchies, the divine names, &c., which were an application of Platonism to Christianity,²⁹ "and proved a rich mine to the mystics." This translation was largely circulated and held in the highest repute, more especially in Germany, where the Areopagite was appealed to as an authority by Eckhart at the beginning of the fourteenth century. At this time Germany was a stronghold of mysticism, which, according to Ueberweg,³⁰ was at first chiefly developed in sermons by monks of the Dominican Order; its aim was to advance Christianity by edifying speculation, and to render it comprehensible by the transcendent use of

the reason. "The author and perfecter of this entire development was Master Eckhart," who taught that the creature apart from the Absolute, that is, from God, was nothing, that "time, space, and the plurality which depends on them," are also nothing in themselves, and that "the duty of man as a moral being is to rise beyond this nothingness of the creature, and by direct intuition to place himself in immediate union with the Absolute."³¹

Eckhart was followed by Tauler, a great light of German mysticism, and one profoundly versed in the mysteries of the spiritual and interior life. A century later, with the revival of Platonism, came the Cardinal Nicolas Cusanus, "a man of rare sagacity, and an able mathematician, who arranged and republished the Pythagorean ideas, to which he was much inclined, in a very original manner, by the aid of his mathematical knowledge."³² This representative of the mysticism of Eckhart provided Giordano Bruno with the fundamental principles of his sublime and poetical conceptions. Bruno "renewed the theory of numbers, and gave a detailed explanation of the decadal system. With him, God is the great unity which is developed in the world and in humanity, as unity is developed in the indefinite series of numbers."³³

The death of Giordano Bruno in the year 1600 brings us to a period of palmary importance and interest in the history of religion, science, and philosophy. The revival of learning had for some two centuries been illuminating and enlarging the intellectual horizon of Europe; the Reformation was slowly removing in several countries those checks which had hindered freedom of inquiry on most speculative subjects; that which had been practised in the privacy of the study might be displayed almost on the house top, that which had been whispered at the Sabbath of the Sorcerers could be canvassed with impunity in the market place. The spirit of the age which had dethroned the crucifix, burnt candles before the busts of Plato and Plotinus. The revolution in theology was followed by a general revolt against the old philosophical authorities, the seeds of which revolt must be looked for at the time when Aristotle and the Peripatetic successors were enthroned upon the ashes of the scholiasts, who pretending to follow Aristotle, had perverted and disfigured his doctrines. As the birthplace of the

Reformation, Germany enjoyed a greater share of intellectual unrestraint than any other country of Europe, and it was a chaos of conflicting opinions on all debateable topics. The old lines were loosened, the old tests failing, the chain of tradition was breaking at every point, a spirit of restless feverish inquiry was abroad, and daily new facts were exploding old methods. Copernicus had revolutionised astronomy by his discovery of the true solar system, Galileo already had invented the thermometer, and was on the threshold of a glorious future; a century previously Columbus had opened the still illimitable vistas of the western world; great minds were appearing in every country; amidst a thousand blunders, the independent study of the Bible was pursued with delight and enthusiasm, and in every city the hearts of an emancipated people were glowing with hope and expectation at the promise of the future.

Now, in an age of progress, of doubt, and of great intellectual activity, it is singular to remark the almost invariable prevalence of mysticism in one or other of its manifold phases, and the close of the sixteenth century beheld spreading over the whole of Germany and passing thence into Denmark, France, England, and Italy, a mighty school of mysticism in the great multitude of magicians, alchemists, &c., who directly or indirectly were followers of the renowned Paracelsus. The sublime drunkard of Hohenheim, the contemporary of Agrippa, but grander in his aspirations, vaster in his capacities, and, if possible, still more unfortunate than the brilliant pupil of Trithemius, was the intellectual product of the great school of Kabbalism represented by Reuchlin and Picus de Mirandola. He united to his theoretical knowledge of theosophical mysteries an unrivalled practical acquaintance with every form of magic, and was as much an innovator in occult science as a reformer in medicine. For all orthodox alchemists, magicians, and professors of hidden knowledge, Paracelsus is a grand hierophant second only to the traditional Hermes. His brief and turbulent career closed tragically in the year 1541, but the works which he left secured him a vast posthumous audience, and the audacity of his speculations were undoubtedly instrumental in the emancipation of the German mind from the influence of traditional authority.

At the close of the sixteenth century, then, we find the disciples of Paracelsus seeking, after the principles of their master and by the light of experimental research; 1. The secret of the transmutation of metals, or of the *magnum opus*, and applying to chemistry the usages of Kabbalism and ancient astrology.³⁴ 2. The universal medicine, which included the Catholicon, or Elixir of Life and the Panacea, the first insuring to its

possessor the prolongation or perpetuity of existence, the second restoring strength and health to debilitated or diseased organisms. 3. The Philosophic Stone,³⁵ the great and universal synthesis which conferred upon the adept a sublimer knowledge than that of transmutation or of the Great Elixir, but on which both of these were dependent.³⁶ "This stone," says a modern writer, who fairly interprets the more exalted and spiritual side of Hermetic traditions, "is the foundation of absolute philosophy; it is the supreme and immoveable reason. . . . To find the Philosophic Stone is to have discovered the Absolute,"³⁷ that is, the true *raison d'être* of all existences. Thus the initiate aspired to that infallible knowledge and wisdom which is afforded by divine illumination, his search for which is sometimes spoken of as the search for the quadrature of the circle, that is, for the extent or area of all sciences human and divine.

Among the concourse of inquirers, and the clamour of supposed and pretended discoverers, there rose gradually into deserved prominence an advanced school of illuminati, who, employing the terminology of the *turba philosophorum*, under the pretence of alchemical pursuits appear to have concealed a more exalted aim. The chief representative of this sect at the end of the sixteenth century was Henry Khunrath, and the work in which its principles are most adequately expressed is the "Amphitheatrum Sapientiæ Æternæ." The student is directed by these writers from the pursuit of material gold to the discovery of incorruptible and purely spiritual treasures, and they pretend to provide a mystical key or *Introitus apertus* to the "closed Palace of the King," in which these treasures are contained. Physical transmutation, the one and supreme end of the practical alchemist, sinks into complete insignificance; nevertheless, it is performed by the adept and is a landmark in his sublime progress. Rejecting the material theory even for this inferior process, they declare its attainment impossible for the unspiritual man, and just as the alchemical nomenclature is made use of in a transfigured sense, so the terminology of metaphysics appears to be pressed into the service of a conception far transcending the notions commonly conveyed by the words wisdom, spirituality, &c. The result of this singular division in the camp of the alchemists was the inevitable mental confusion of that great crowd of inquirers into the secrets of nature who formed the audience of professional adepts.

Every year books and pamphlets were issued from the German press, and purported to contain the secret of the *Magnum Opus*, expressed for the first time in plain, unmistakeable terms, but no writer proved more intelligible than his predecessors; the student, surrounded by authors whose search had been crowned with complete and unexampled success, could himself make no progress, new methods, though warranted infallible, were as barren as the old in their operation, and the universal interest in the subject was an incentive to innumerable impostors, who reaped large profits from the publication of worthless speculations and lying recipes.

At such a juncture the isolated investigator naturally sought the assistance which is afforded by association; meetings of like-minded took place for the discussion of different questions concerning the secret sciences; doctrines and practices were compared; men travelled far and wide to exchange opinions with distant workers in the same fields of experimental research, and the spirit of the time seemed ripe for the establishment of a society for the advancement of esoteric science and the study of natural laws.

It was at this interesting period that the Rosicrucian Fraternity made public for the first time the fact of its existence, and attracted universal attention by its extraordinary history, and by the nature of its claims.

CHAPTER 2. THE PROPHECY OF PARACELSUS, AND THE UNIVERSAL REFORMATION OF THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD

The Prophecy of Paracelsus and the Universal Reformation of the whole Wide World

PARACELSUS, in the eighth chapter of his "Treatise on Metals," gave utterance to the following prognostication:--*Quod utilius Deus patefieri sinet, quod autem majoris momenti est, vulgo adhuc latet usque ad Eliæ Artistæ adventum, quando is venerit.* "God will permit a discovery of the highest importance to be made, it must be hidden till the advent of the artist Elias." In the first chapter of the same work, he says:--*Hoc item verum est nihil est absconditum quod non sit relegendum; ideo, post me veniet cujus magnale nundum vivit qui multa revelabit.* "And it is true, there is nothing concealed which shall not be discovered; for which cause a marvellous being shall come after me, who as yet lives not, and who shall reveal many things." These passages have been claimed as referring to the founder of the Rosicrucian order, and as prophecies of this character are usually the outcome of a general desire rather than of an individual inspiration, they are interesting evidence that then as now many thoughtful people were looking for another saviour of society. At the beginning of the seventeenth century "a great and general reformation," says Buhle,--a reformation far more radical and more directed to the moral improvement of mankind than that accomplished by Luther,--"was believed to be impending over the human race, as a necessary forerunner to the day of judgment." The comet of 1572 was declared by Paracelsus to be "the sign and harbinger of the approaching revolution," and it will be readily believed that his innumerable disciples would welcome a secret society whose vast claims were founded on the philosophy of the master whom they also venerated, as a supreme factor in the approaching reformation. Paracelsus, however, had recorded a still more precise prediction, namely, that "soon after the decease of the Emperor Rudolph, there would be found three treasures that had never been revealed before that time." It is claimed that these treasures were the three works which I proceed to lay before my readers in this and in the two succeeding chapters.

Somewhere about the year 1614 a pamphlet was published anonymously in German, called "Die Reformation der Ganzen Weiten Welt," which,

according to De Quincey, contained a distinct proposition to inaugurate a secret society, having for its object the general welfare of mankind. This description is simply untrue; the "Universal Reformation" is an amusing and satirical account of an abortive attempt made by the god Apollo to derive assistance towards the improvement of the age from the wise men of antiquity and modern times. It is a fairly literal translation of Advertisement 77 of Boccacini's "Ragguagli di Parnasso, Centuria Prima;" its internal connection with Rosicrucianism is not clear, but it has been generally reprinted with the society's manifestos, alchemical interpretations have been placed on it, and it is cited by various authors as the first publication of the Fraternity. I have determined to include it in this collection of authoritative documents, and have made use for this purpose three versions already existing in English. The literal translation from the Italian, made by Henry Earl of Monmouth,³⁸ has been taken as the base. I have compared it with the original, and with the later versions which appeared in 1704³⁹ and 1706,⁴⁰ and, where possible, I have abridged it by the elision of unnecessary and embarrassing prolixities.

It is needless to say that the unfortunate Trajano Boccacini had no connection himself with the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. The first "Centuria" appeared in 1612 at Venice, and he met his tragical and violent death in the following year.

A Universal Reformation of the Whole Wide World, by order of the God Apollo, is published by the Seven Sages of Greece and some other Litterati.

The Emperor Justinian, that famed compiler of the Digests and Code, the other day presented to Apollo, for the royal approbation, a new law against self-murder. Apollo was mightily astonished, and fetching a deep sigh, he said, "Is the good, government of mankind, Justinian, then fallen into so great disorder that men do voluntarily kill themselves? And whereas I have hitherto given pensions to an infinite number of moral philosophers, only that by their words and writings they may make men less apprehensive of death, are things now reduced to such calamity that even they will now live no longer, who could not formerly frame themselves to be content to die? And am I amongst all the disorders of my Litterati all this while supinely asleep?" To this Justinian

answered, that the law was necessary, and that many cases of violent deaths having happened by many men having desperately made themselves away, worse was to be feared if some opportune remedy were not found out against so great a disorder.

Apollo then began diligently to inform himself, and found that the world was so impaired, that many valued not their lives nor estate, so they might be out of it. The disorders necessitated his Majesty to provide against them with all possible speed, and he absolutely resolved to institute a society of the men most famous in his dominions for wisdom and good life. But in the entrance into so weighty a business he met with insuperable difficulties, for amongst so many philosophers, and the almost infinite number of vertuosi, he could not find so much as one who was endowed with half the requisite qualifications to reform his fellow-creatures, his Majesty knowing well that men are better improved by the exemplary life of their reformers than by the best rules that can be given. In this penury of fitting personages, Apollo gave the charge of the Universal Reformation to the Seven Wise Men of Greece, who are of great repute in Parnassus, and are conceived by all men to have found the receipt of washing blackmoors white, which antiquity laboured after in vain. The Grecians were rejoiced at this news for the honour which Apollo had done their nation, but the Latins were grieved, thinking themselves thereby much injured. Wherefore Apollo, well knowing that prejudice against reformers hinders the fruit that is to be hoped by reformation, and being naturally given to appease his subjects' imbittered minds more by giving them satisfaction than by that legislative power with which men are not pleased withal, because they are bound to obey it, that he might satisfy the Romans, joined in commission with the Seven Sages of Greece, Marcus and Annæus Seneca, and in favour to the modern Italian philosophers, he made Jacopo Mazzoni da Cesena Secretary of the Congregation, and honoured him with a vote in their consultations.

On the fourteenth of the last month the seven wise men, with the aforesaid addition, accompanied by a train of the choicest vertuosi of this State, went to the Delfick Palace, the place appropriated for the Reformation. The Litterati were well pleased to see the great number of pedants, who, baskets in hands, went gathering up the sentences and apothegms which fell from those wise men as they went along. The day after the solemn entrance they assembled for the first time, and 'tis said that Thales the Milesian, the first of the Grecian sages, spake thus:--

"The business, most wise philosophers, about which we are met, is the greatest that can be treated on by human understanding; and though there be nothing harder then to set bones that have been long broken, wounds that are fistuled, and incurable cancers, yet difficulties which are able to affright others ought not to make us despair, for the impossibility will increase our glory, and I do assure you that I have

already found out the true antydote against the poyson of these present corruptions. I am sure we do all believe that nothing hath more corrupted this age then hidden hatreds, feigned love, impiety, and the perfidiousness of double-dealers under the specious cloke of simplicity, love to religion, and charity. Apply yourselves to these, evils, gentlemen; make use of fire and razor, lay corrosive plasters to these wounds which I discover unto you, and mankind, which by reason of their vices, that lead them the highway to death, may be said to be given over by physitians, will soon be made whole, become sincere and plain in their proceedings, true in what they say, and such in their sanctity of life as they were in former times. The true and immediate cure, then, for these present evils consists in necessitating men to live with candour of mind and purity of heart, which cannot be better effected then by making that little window in men's breasts which his Majesty hath often promised to his most faithful vertuosi; for when those who use such art in their proceedings shall be forced to speak and act, having a window whereby one may see into their hearts, they will learn the excellent virtue of being, and not appearing to be; they will conform deeds to words, and their tongues to sincerity of heart; all men will banish lies and falsehood, and the diabolical spirit of hypocrisy will abandon many who are now possest with so foul a fiend."

The opinion of Thales was so well approved by the whole Congregation that it was unanimously voted just, and Secretary Mazzoni was commanded to give Apollo a sudden account thereof, who perfectly approved the opinion, and commanded that they should begin that very day to make windows in the breasts of mankind. But at the very instant that the surgeons took their instruments in hand, Homer, Virgil, Plato, Aristotle, Averroes, and other eminent Litterati went to Apollo, and said his Majesty must needs know that the prime means whereby men do govern the world with facility is the reputation of those who command, and they hoped his Majesty would be tender of the credit which the reverend Philosophical Synod and the honourable Colledg of Vertuosi had universally obtained for sanctity of life and manners. If his Majesty should unexpectedly open every man's breast, the philosophers who formerly were most highly esteemed ran evident hazard of being shamed, and that he might, peradventure, find fowlest faults in those whom he had held to be immaculate. Therefore, before a business of such importance should be taken in hand, they entreated that he would afford his vertuosi a competent time to wash and cleanse their souls. Apollo was greatly pleased by the advice of so famous poets and philosophers, and, by a publick edict, prorogued the day of incision for eight days, during which everyone did so attend the cleansing of their souls from all fallacies, hidden vice, hatred, and counterfeit love, that there was no more honey of roses, succory, cassia, scena, scamony, nor laxative syrups to be found in any grocer's or apothecary's shop in all