

TRANSCENDENTAL MAGIC

ELIPHAS LEVI

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PREFACE

ELIPHAS LEVI ZAHED is a pseudonym which was adopted in his occult writings by Alphonse Louis Constant, and it is said to be the Hebrew equivalent of that name. The author of the *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* was born in humble circumstances about the year 1810, being the son of a shoemaker. Giving evidence of unusual intelligence at an early age, the priest of his parish conceived a kindly interest for the obscure boy, and got him on the foundation of Saint Sulpice, where he was educated without charge, and with a view to the priesthood. He seems to have passed through the course of study at that seminary in a way which did not disappoint the expectations raised concerning him. In addition to Greek and Latin, he is believed to have acquired considerable knowledge of Hebrew, though it would be an error to suppose that any of his published works exhibit special linguistic attainments. He entered on his clerical novitiate, took minor orders, and in due course became a deacon, being thus bound by a vow of perpetual celibacy. Shortly after this step, he was suddenly expelled from Saint Sulpice for holding opinions contrary to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The existing accounts of this expulsion are hazy, and incorporate unlikely elements, as, for example, that he was sent by his ecclesiastical superiors to take duty in country places, where he preached with great eloquence what, however, was doctrinally unsound; but I believe that there is no precedent for the preaching of deacons in the Latin Church. Pending the appearance of the biography which has been for some years promised in France, we have few available materials for a life of the "Abbe" Constant. In any case, he was cast back upon the world, with the limitations of priestly engagements, while the priestly career

was closed to him—and what he did, or how he contrived to support himself, is unknown. By the year 1839 he had made some literary friendships, including that of Alphonse Esquiros, the forgotten author of a fantastic romance, entitled "The Magician";* and Esquiros introduced him to Ganneau, a distracted prophet of the period, who had adopted the dress of a woman, abode in a garret, and there preached a species of political illuminism, which was apparently concerned with the restoration of la vraie UgitimiU. He was, in fact, a second incarnation of Louis XVII.—"come back to earth for the fulfilment of a work of regeneration." t Constant and Esquiros, who had visited him for the purpose of scoffing, were carried away by his eloquence, and became his disciples. Some element of socialism must have combined with the illuminism of the visionary, and this appears to have borne fruit in the brain of Constant, taking shape ultimately in a book or pamphlet, entitled "The Gospel of Liberty," to which a transient importance was attached, foolishly enough, by the imprisonment of the author for a term of six months. There is some reason to suppose that Esquiros had a hand in the production, and also in the penalty. His incarceration over, Constant came forth undaunted, still cleaving to his prophet, and undertook a kind of apostolic mission into the provinces, addressing the country people, and suffering, as he himself tells us, persecution from the ill-disposed. I But the prophet ceased

* M. Papus, a contemporary French occultist, in an extended study of the "Doctrine of Eliphas Levi," asks scornfully: "Who now remembers anything of Paul Augnez or Esquiros, journalists pretending to initiation, and posing as professors of the occult sciences in the salons they frequented?" No doubt they are forgotten, but Eliphas Levi states, in the *Histoire de la Magie*, that, by the publication of his romance of "The Magician," Esquiros founded a new school of fantastic magic, and gives sufficient account of his

work to show that it was in parts excessively curious. A woman who was associated with his mission, was, in like manner, supposed to have been Marie Antoinette.—See *Histoire de la Magie*, 1. 7., c. 5.

A vicious story, which has received recently some publicity in Paris, charges Constant with spreading a report of his death soon after his release from prison, assuming another name, imposing upon the Bishop of Evreux, to prophesy, presumably for want of an audience, and la vraie Ugitimité was not restored, so the disciple returned to Paris, where, in spite of the pledge of his diaconate, he effected a runaway match with Mdlle. Noëmy, a beautiful girl of sixteen. This lady bore him two children, who died in tender years, and subsequently she deserted him. Her husband is said to have tried all expedients to procure her return,* but in vain, and she even further asserted her position by obtaining a legal annulment of her marriage, on the ground that the contracting parties were a minor and a person bound to celibacy by an irrevocable vow. The lady, it may be added, had other domestic adventures, ending in a second marriage about the year 1872. Madame Constant was not only very beautiful, but exceedingly talented, and after her separation she became famous as a sculptor, exhibiting at the Salon and elsewhere under the name of Claude Vingmy. It is not impossible that she may be still alive; in the sense of her artistic genius, at least, she is something more than a memory.

At what date Alphonse Louis Constant applied himself to the study of the occult sciences is uncertain, like most other epochs of his life. The statement on page 142 of this translation, that in the year 1825 he entered on a fateful path, which led him through suffering to knowledge, must not be understood in the sense that his initiation took place at that period, which was indeed early in boyhood. It obviously refers to his enrolment among the scholars of Saint Sulpice, which, in a sense, led to suffering, and

perhaps ultimately to science, as it certainly obtained him education. The episode of the New Alliance—so Gannean termed his system—connects with transcendentalism, at least and obtaining a licence to preach and administer the sacraments in that diocese, though he was not a priest. He is represented as drawing large congregations to the cathedral by his preaching, but at length the judge who had sentenced him unmasked the impostor, and the sacrilegious farce thus terminated dramatically.

* Including Black Magic and pacts with Lucifer, according to the silly calumnies of his enemies.

on the side of hallucination, and may have furnished the required impulse to the mind of the disciple ; but in 1846 and 1847, certain pamphlets issued by Constant under the auspices of the Libraire Societaire and the Libraire Phalanste'rienne shew that his inclinations were still towards Socialism, tinged by religious aspirations. The period which intervened between his wife's desertion* and the publication of the *Dogme de la Haute Magie*, in 1855, was that, probably, which he devoted less or more to occult study. In the interim he issued a large " Dictionary of Christian Literature," which is still extant in the encyclopaedic series of the Abbe* Migne; this work betrays no leaning towards occult science, and, indeed, no acquaintance therewith. What it does exhibit unmistakably is the intellectual insincerity of the author, for he assumes therein the mask of perfect orthodoxy, and that accent in matters of religion which is characteristic of the voice of Rome. The *Dogme de la Haute Magie* was succeeded in 1856 by its companion volume the *Rituel*, both of which are here translated for the first time into English. It was followed in rapid succession by the *Histoire de la Magie*, 1860; *La Clef des Grands Mysteres*, 1861 ; a second edition of the *Dogme et Rituel*, to which a long and irrelevant introduction was unfortunately prefixed, 1862; *Fables et Symboles*, 1864; *Le Sorcier de Meudon*, a beautiful pastoral

idyll, impressed with the cachet cabalistique ; and *La Science des Esprits*, 1865. The two last works incorporate the substance of the amphlets published in 1846 and 1847. The precarious existence of Constant's younger days was in one sense but faintly improved in his age. His books did not command a large circulation, but they secured him admirers and pupils, from whom he received remuneration

* I must not be understood as definitely attaching blame to Madame Constant for the course she adopted. Her husband was approaching middle life when he withdrew her—still a child—from her legal protectors, and the runaway marriage which began by forswearing was, under the circumstances, little better than a seduction thinly legalised, and it was afterwards not improperly dissolved.

in return for personal or written courses of instruction. He was commonly to be found chez lui in a species of magical vestment, which may be pardoned in a French magus, and his only available portrait —prefixed to this volume—represents him in that guise. He outlived the Franco-German war, and as he had exchanged Socialism for a sort of transcendentalised Imperialism, his political faith must have been as much tried by the events which followed the siege of Paris as was his patriotic enthusiasm by the reverses which culminated at Sedan. His contradictory life closed in 1875 amidst the last offices of the church which had almost expelled him from her bosom. He left many manuscripts behind him, which are still in course of publication, and innumerable letters to his pupils—Baron Spedalieri alone possesses nine volumes—have been happily preserved in most cases, and are in some respects more valuable than the formal treatises.

No modern expositor of occult science can bear any comparison with Sliphaz Levi, and among ancient expositors, though many stand higher in authority, all yield to him in living interest, for he is actually the spirit of modern thought forcing an answer for the times from the

old oracles. Hence there are greater names, but there is no influence so great—no fascination in occult literature exceeds that of the French magus. The others are surrendered to specialists and the typical serious students to whom all dull and unreadable masterpieces are dedicated, directly or not; but he is read and appreciated, much as we read and appreciate new and delightful verse which, through some conceit of the poet, is put into the vesture of Chaucer. Indeed, the writings of filiphas Levi stand, as regards the grand old line of initiation, in relatively the same position as the " Earthly Paradise " of Mr William Morris stands to the " Canterbury Tales." There is the recurrence to the old conceptions, and there is the assumption of the old drapery, but there is in each case the new spirit. The " incommunicable axiom " and the " great arcanum," Azoth, Inri, and Tetragrammaton, which are the vestures of the occult philosopher, are like the " cloth of Bruges and hogsheads of Guienne, Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery " of the poet. In both cases it is the year 1850 ct seq., in a mask of high fantasy. Moreover, " the idle singer of an empty day " is paralleled fairly enough by " the poor and obscure scholar who has recovered the lever of Archimedes." The comparison is intentionally grotesque, but it obtains notwithstanding, and even admits of development, for as Mr Morris in a sense voided the *raison d'etre* of his poetry, and, in express contradiction to his own mournful question, has endeavoured to " set the crooked straight " by betaking himself to Socialism, so filiphas LeVi surrendered the rod of miracles and voided his Doctrine of Magic by devising a one-sided and insincere concordat with orthodox religion, and expiring in the arms of " my venerable masters in theology," the descendants, and decadent at that, of the " imbecile theologians of the middle ages." But the one is, as the other was, a man of sufficient ability to make a paradoxical defence of a position which

remains untenable. Students of Eliphas LeVi will be acquainted with the qualifications and stealthy retractations by which the somewhat uncompromising position of initiated superiority in the " Doctrine and Ritual," had its real significance read out of it by the later works of the magus. I have dealt with this point exhaustively in another place,* and there is no call to pass over the same ground a second time. I propose rather to indicate as briefly as possible some new considerations which will help us to understand why there were grave discrepancies between the " Doctrine and Ritual of Transcendent Magic" and the volumes which followed these. In the first place, the earlier books were written more expressly from the standpoint of initiation, and in the language thereof; they obviously contain much which it would be mere folly to construe after a literal fashion, and

* See the Critical Essay prefixed to " The Mysteries of Magic : a Digest of the Writings of Eliphas Levi." London : George Redway. 1886.

what Eliphas LeVi wrote at a later period is not so much discrepant with his earlier instruction—though it is this also — as the qualifications placed by a modern transcendentalist on the technical exaggerations of the secret sciences. For the proof we need travel no further than the introduction to " The Doctrine of Magic," and to the Hebrew manuscript cited therein, as to the powers and privileges of the magus. Here the literal interpretation would be insanity; these claims conceal a secret meaning, and are trickery in their verbal sense. They are what Eliphas LeVi himself terms "hyperbolic," adding: "If the sage do not materially and actually perform these things, he accomplishes others which are much greater and more admirable" (p. 223). But this consideration is not in itself sufficient to take account of the issues that are involved; it will not explain, for example, why Eliphas Levi, who consistently teaches in the " Doctrine and Ritual" that the

dogmas of so-called revealed religion are nurse-tales for children, should subsequently have insisted on their acceptance in the sense of the orthodox Church by the grown men of science, and it becomes necessary here to touch upon a matter which, by its nature, and obviously, does not admit of complete elucidation.

The precise period of study which produced the " Doctrine and Eitual of Transcendent Magic" as its first literary result is not indicated with any certainty, as we have seen, in the life of the author, nor do I regard filiphas LeVi as constitutionally capable of profound or extensive book study. Intensely suggestive, he is at the same time without much evidence of depth; splendid in generalisation, he is without accuracy in detail, and it would be difficult to cite a worse guide over mere matters of fact. His "History of Magic" is a case in point; as a philosophical survey it is admirable, and there is nothing in occult literature to approach it for literary excellence, but it swarms with historical inaccuracies ; it is in all respects an accomplished and in no way an erudite performance, nor do I think that the writer much concerned himself with any real reading of the authorities whom he cites. The French verb parcourir represents his method of study, and not the verb appro-fondir. Let us take one typical case. There is no occult writer whom he cites with more satisfaction, and towards whom he exhibits more reverence, than William Postel, and of all Postel's books there is none which he mentions so often as the *Clavis Absconditorum* a *Constitutione Mundi* ; yet he had read this minute treatise so carelessly that he missed a vital point concerning it, and apparently died unaware that the symbolic key prefixed to it was the work of the editor and not the work of Postel. It does not therefore seem unreasonable to affirm that had LeVi been left to himself, he would not have got far in occult science, because his Gallic vivacity would have been blunted too quickly by the horrors of mere research; but he

did somehow fall within a circle of initiation which curtailed the necessity for such research, and put him in the right path, making visits to the Bibliotheque Rationale and the Arsenal of only subsidiary importance. This, therefore, constitutes the importance of the " Doctrine and Eitual"; disguised indubitably, it is still the voice of initiation; of what school does not matter, for in this connection nothing can be spoken plainly, and I can ask only the lenience of deferred judgment from my readers for my honourable assurance that I am not speaking idly. The grades of that initiation had been only partly ascended by filiphas Levi when he published the " Doctrine and Ritual," and its publication closed the path of his progress : as he was expelled by Saint Sulpice for the exercise of private judgment in matters of doctrinal belief, so he was expelled by his occult chiefs for the undue exercise of personal discretion in the matter of the revelation of the mysteries. Now, these facts explain in the first place the importance, as I have said, of the " Doctrine and Eitual," because it represents a knowledge which cannot be derived from books ; they explain, secondly, the shortcomings of that work, because it is not the result of a full knowledge; why, thirdly, the later writings contain no evidences of further knowledge ; and, lastly, I think that they materially assist us to understand why there are retractations, qualifications, and subterfuges in the said later works. Having gone too far, he naturally attempted to go back, and just as he strove to patch up a species of modus vivendi with the church of his childhood, so he endeavoured, by throwing dust in the eyes of his readers, to make his peace with that initiation, the first law of which he had indubitably violated. In both cases, and quite naturally, he failed.

It remains for me to state what I feel personally to be the chief limitation of LeVi, namely, that he was a transcendentalist but not a mystic, and, indeed, he was scarcely

a transcendentalist in the accepted sense, for he was fundamentally a materialist—a materialist, moreover, who at times approached perilously towards atheism, as when he states that God is a hypothesis which is "very probably necessary "; he was, moreover, a disbeliever in any real communication with the world of spirits. He defines mysticism as the shadow and the buffer of intellectual light, and loses no opportunity to enlarge upon its false illuminism, its excesses, and fatuities. There is, therefore, no way from man to God in his system, while the sole avenues of influx from God to man are sacramentally, and in virtue merely of a tolerable hypothesis. Thus man must remain in simple intellectualism if he would rest in reason; the sphere of material experience is that of his knowledge; and as to all beyond it, there are only the presumptions of analogy. I submit that this is not the doctrine of occult science, nor the summum "bonum of the greater initiation; that transcendental pneumatology is more by its own; hypothesis than an alphabetical system argued kabbalistically; and that more than mere memories can on the same assumption be evoked in the astral light. The hierarchic order of the visible world has its complement in the invisible hierarchy, which analogy leads us to discern, being at the same time a process of our perception rather than a rigid law governing the modes of manifestation in all things seen and unseen; initiation takes us to the bottom step of the ladder of the invisible hierarchy and instructs us in the principles of ascent, but the ascent rests personally with ourselves; the voices of some who have preceded can be heard above us, but they are of those who are still upon the way, and they die as they rise into the silence, towards which we also must ascend alone, where initiation can no longer help us, unto that bourne from whence no traveller returns, and the influxes are sacramental only to those who are below. An annotated translation exceeded the scope of the present undertaking, but there is much in the text

which follows that offers scope for detailed criticism, and there are points also where further elucidation would be useful. One of the most obvious defects, the result of mere carelessness or undue haste in writing, is the promise to explain or to prove given points later on, which are forgotten subsequently by the author. Instances will be found on p. 65, concerning the method of determining the appearance of unborn children by means of the pentagram; on p. 83, concerning the rules for the recognition of sex in the astral body; on p. 9*7, concerning the notary art; on p. 100, concerning the magical side of the Exercises of St Ignatius; on p. 123, concerning the alleged sorcery of Grandier and Girard; on p. 125, concerning Schroepffer's secrets and formulas for evocation; on p. 134, concerning the occult iconography of Gaffarel. In some cases the promised elucidations appear in other places than those indicated, but they are mostly wanting altogether. There are other perplexities with which the reader must deal according to his judgment. The explanation of the quadrature of the circle on p. 37 is a childish folly; the illustration of perpetual motion on p. 55 involves a mechanical absurdity ; the doctrine of the perpetuation of the same physiognomies from generation to generation is not less absurd in heredity ; the cause assigned to cholera and other ravaging epidemics, more especially the reference to bacteria, seems equally outrageous in physics. There is one other matter to which attention should be directed; the Hebrew quotations in the original — and the observation applies generally to all the works of Le'vi—swarm with typographical and other errors, some of which it is impossible to correct, as, for example, the passage cited from Eabbi Abraham on p. 266. So also the Greek conjuration, pp. 277 and 278, is simply untranslatable as it stands, and the version given is not only highly conjectural, but omits an entire passage owing to insuperable difficulties. Lastly, after careful consideration, I have

judged it the wiser course to leave out the preliminary essay which was prefixed to the second edition of the " Doctrine and Ritual "; its prophetic utterances upon the mission of Napoleon III. have been stultified by subsequent events; it is devoid of any connection with the work which it precedes, and, representing as it does the later views of Levi, it would be a source of confusion to the reader. The present translation represents, therefore, the first edition of the Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, omitting nothing but a few unimportant citations from old French grimoires in an unnecessary appendix at the end. The portrait of Levi is from a carte-de-visite in the possession of Mr Edward Maitland, and was issued with his " Life of Anna Kingsford," a few months ago.



INTRODUCTION

BEHIND the veil of all the hieratic and mystical allegories of ancient doctrines, behind the shadows and the strange ordeals of all initiations, under the seal of all sacred writings, in the ruins of Nineveh or Thebes, on the crumbling stones of the old temples, and on the blackened visage of the Assyrian or Egyptian sphinx, in the monstrous or marvellous paintings which interpret to the faithful of India the inspired pages of the Vedas, in the strange emblems of our old books of alchemy, in the ceremonies at reception practised by all mysterious societies, traces are found of a doctrine which is everywhere the same, and everywhere carefully concealed. Occult philosophy seems to have been the nurse or god-mother of all intellectual forces, the key of all divine obscurities, and the absolute queen of society in those ages when it was reserved exclusively for the education of priests and of kings. It reigned in Persia with the magi, who at length perished, as perish all masters of the world, because they abused their power; it endowed India with the most wonderful traditions, and with an incredible wealth of poesy, grace, and terror in its emblems ; it civilised Greece to the music of the lyre of Orpheus ; it concealed the principles of all the sciences and of all human intellectual progress in the bold calculations of Pythagoras ; fable abounded in its miracles, and history, attempting to appreciate this unknown power, became confused with fable; it shook or strengthened empires by its oracles, caused tyrants to tremble on their thrones, and governed all minds, either by curiosity or by fear. For this science, said the crowd, there is nothing impossible; it commands the elements, knows the language of the stars, and directs the planetary courses; when it speaks, the moon falls blood-red from heaven; the dead rise

in their graves and articulate ominous words as the night wind blows through their skulls. Mistress of love or of hate, the science can dispense paradise or hell at its pleasure to human hearts; it disposes of all forms, and distributes beauty or ugliness; with the rod of Circe it alternately changes men into brutes and animals into men; it even disposes of life or death, and can confer wealth on its adepts by the transmutation of metals and immortality by its quintessence or elixir compounded of gold and light. Such was magic from Zoroaster to Manes, from Orpheus to Apollonius of Tyana, when positive Christianity, at length victorious over the brilliant dreams and titanic aspirations of the Alexandrian school, dared to launch its anathemas publicly against this philosophy, and thus forced it to become more occult and mysterious than ever. Moreover, strange and alarming rumours began to circulate concerning initiates or adepts; these men were everywhere surrounded by an ominous influence; they killed or drove mad those who allowed themselves to be carried away by their honeyed eloquence or by the fame of their learning. The women whom they loved became Stryges, their children vanished at their nocturnal meetings, and men whispered shudderingly and in secret of bloody orgies and abominable banquets. Bones had been found in the crypts of ancient temples, shrieks had been heard in the night, harvests withered and herds sickened when the magician passed by. Diseases which defied medical skill at times appeared in the world, and always, it was said, beneath the envenomed glance of the adepts. At length an universal cry of execration went up against magic, the mere name became a crime, and the common hatred was formulated in this sentence : " Magicians to the flames!" as it was shouted some centuries earlier: " To the lions with the Christians !" Now the multitude never conspires except against real powers; it possesses not the knowledge of what is true, but it has the instinct of what is strong. It

remained for the eighteenth century to deride both Christians and magic, while infatuated with the homilies of Eousseau and the illusions of Cagliostro.

Science, notwithstanding, is at the basis of magic, as at the foundation of Christianity there is love, and in the Gospel symbols we see the Word incarnate adored in his cradle by three magi, led thither by a star (the triad and the sign of the microcosm), and receiving their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, a second mysterious triplicity, under which emblem the highest secrets of the Kabbalah are allegorically contained. Christianity owes, therefore, no hatred to magic, but [^]human ignorance has ever stood in fear of the unknown. The science was driven into hiding to escape the impassioned assaults of a blind love ; it clothed itself with new hieroglyphics, dissimulated its labours, denied its hopes. Then it was that the jargon of alchemy was created, a permanent deception for the vulgar, a living language only for the true disciple of Hermes.

Extraordinary fact! Among the sacred books of the Christians there are two works which the infallible Church makes no claim to understand and has never attempted to explain; these are the prophecy of Ezekiel and the Apocalypse, two Kabbalistic Keys assuredly reserved in heaven for the commentaries of magician Kings, books sealed with seven seals for faithful believers, yet perfectly plain to an initiated infidel of the occult sciences. There is also another book, but, although it is popular in a sense and may be found everywhere, this is of all most occult and unknown, because it has the key of all others; it is in public evidence without being known to the public; no one dreams of seeking it where it actually is, and elsewhere it is lost labour to look for it. This book, possibly anterior to that of Enoch, has never been translated, but is still preserved unmutilated in primeval characters, on detached leaves, like the tablets of the ancients. A distinguished scholar has revealed, though no one has observed it, not indeed its

secret, but its antiquity and singular preservation ; another scholar, but of a mind more fantastic than judicious, passed thirty years in the study of this book, and has merely suspected its whole importance. It is, in fact, a monumental and extraordinary work, strong and simple as the architecture of the pyramids, and consequently enduring like those—a book which is the sum of all the sciences, which can resolve all problems by its infinite combinations, which speaks by evoking thought, is the inspirer and regulator of all possible conceptions, the masterpiece perhaps of the human mind, assuredly one of the finest things bequeathed to us by antiquity, an universal key, the name of which has been explained and comprehended only by the learned William Postel, an unique text, whereof the initial characters alone exalted the devout spirit of Saint Martin into ecstasy, and might have restored reason to the sublime and unfortunate Swedenborg. We shall speak of this book later on, and its mathematical and precise explanation will be the complement and crown of our conscientious undertaking. The original alliance of Christianity and the science of the magi, once it is thoroughly demonstrated, will be a discovery of no second-rate importance, and we question not that the serious study of magic and the Kabbalah will lead earnest minds to the reconciliation of science and dogma, of reason and faith, heretofore regarded as impossible.

We have said that the Church, whose special office is the custody of the Keys, does not pretend to possess those of the Apocalypse or of Ezekiel. In the opinion of Christians the scientific and magical clavicles of Solomon are lost; yet, at the same time, it is certain that, in the domain of intelligence ruled by the Word, nothing which has been written can perish; things which men cease to understand simply cease to exist for them, at least in the order of the Word, and they enter then into the domain of enigma and

mystery. Furthermore, the antipathy, and even open war, of the official church against all that belongs to the realm of magic, which is a kind of personal and emancipated priesthood, is allied with necessary and even with inherent causes in the social and hierarchic constitution of Christian sacerdotalism. The Church ignores magic—for she must either ignore it or perish, as we shall prove later on; yet she does not the less recognise that her mysterious founder was saluted in his cradle by the three magi— that is to say, by the hieratic ambassadors of the three parts of the known world and the three analogical worlds of occult philosophy. In the school of Alexandria, magic and Christianity almost joined hands under the auspices of Ammonius Saccas and of Plato ; the doctrine of Hermes is found almost in its entirety in the writings attributed to Denis the Areopagite; and Synesius sketched the plan of a treatise on dreams, which was later on to be annotated by Cardan, and composed hymns which might have served for the liturgy of the Church of Swedenborg, could a church of the illuminated possess a liturgy. With this period of fiery abstractions and impassioned warfare of words there must also be connected the philosophic reign of Julian, called the Apostate because in his youth he made an unwilling profession of Christianity. Everyone is aware that Julian was sufficiently wrongheaded to be an unseasonable hero of Plutarch, and was, if one may say so, the Don Quixote of Roman Chivalry ; but what most people do not know is that Julian was one of the illuminated and an initiate of the first order; that he believed in the unity of God and in the universal doctrine of the Trinity; that, in a word, he regretted nothing of the old world but its magnificent symbols and its exceedingly gracious images. Julian was not a pagan; he was a Gnostic allured by the allegories of Greek polytheism, who had the misfortune to find the name of Jesus Christ less sonorous than that of Orpheus. The Emperor personally paid for the academical tastes of the

philosopher and rhetorician, and after affording himself the spectacle and satisfaction of expiring like Epaminondas with the periods of Cato, he had in public opinion, already thoroughly Christianised, anathemas for his funeral oration and a scornful epithet for his ultimate celebrity.

Let us skip the little men and small matters of the Bas-Empire, and pass on to the Middle Ages. . . . Stay, take this book! Glance at the seventh page, then seat yourself on the mantle I am spreading, and let each of us cover our eyes with one of its corners. . . . Your head swims, does it not, and the earth seems to fly beneath your feet ? Hold tightly, and do not look around. . . . The vertigo ceases; we are here. Stand up and open your eyes, but take care before all things to make no Christian sign and to pronounce no Christian words. We are in a landscape of Salvator Rosa, a troubled wilderness which seems resting after a storm; there is no moon in the sky, but you can distinguish little stars gleaming in the brushwood, and you can hear about you the slow flight of great birds, who seem to whisper strange oracles as they pass. Let us approach silently that cross-road among the rocks. A harsh, funereal trumpet winds suddenly, and black torches flare up on every side. A tumultuous throng is surging round a vacant throne; all look and wait. Suddenly they cast themselves on the ground. A goat-headed prince bounds forward among them; he ascends the throne, turns, and by assuming a stooping posture, presents to the assembly a human face, which, carrying black torches, every one comes forward to salute and to kiss. With a hoarse laugh he recovers an upright position, and then distributes gold, secret instructions, occult medicines, and poisons to his faithful bondsmen. Meanwhile, fires are lighted of fern and alder, piled over with human bones and the fat of executed criminals. Druidesses crowned with wild parsley and vervain immolate unbaptised children with golden knives and prepare horrible love-feasts. Tables are spread, masked

men seat themselves by half-nude females, and a Bacchanalian orgie begins; there is nothing missing but salt, the symbol of wisdom and immortality. Wine flows in streams, leaving stains like blood; obscene talk and fond caresses begin, and presently the whole assembly is drunk with wine, with pleasure, with crime, and singing. They rise, a disordered throng, and hasten to form infernal dances. . . .

Then come all legendary monsters, all phantoms of nightmare ; enormous toads play inverted flutes and blow with their paws on their flanks; limping scarabaei mingle in the dance; crabs play the castanets ; crocodiles beat time on their scales ; elephants and mammoths appear habited like Cupids and foot it in the ring ; finally, the giddy circles break up and scatter on all sides. . . . Every yelling dancer drags away a dishevelled female. . . . Lamps and candles formed of human fat go out smoking in the darkness. . . .

Cries are heard here and there, mingled with peals of laughter, blasphemies, and rattlings of the throat. Come, rouse yourself, do not make the sign of the cross ! See, I have brought you home ; you are in your own bed, somewhat worn-out, possibly a trifle shattered, by your night's journey and dissipation ; but you have witnessed something of which everyone talks without knowledge; you have been initiated into secrets no less terrible than the grotto of Triphonius; you have been present at the Sabbath. It remains for you now to preserve your reason, to have a wholesome dread of the law, and to keep at a respectful distance from the Church and her faggots.

Would you care, as a change, to behold something less fantastic, more real, and also more truly terrible ? You shall assist at the execution of Jacques de Molay and his accomplices or his brethren in martyrdom. . . . Do not, however, be misled, confuse not the guilty and the innocent! Did the Templars really adore Baphomet ? Did they offer a shameful salutation to the buttocks of the goat

of Mendes ? What was actually this secret and potent association which imperilled Church and State, and was thus destroyed unheard ? Judge nothing lightly ; they are guilty of a great crime ; they have allowed the sanctuary of antique initiation to be entered by the profane. By them for a second time have the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil been gathered and shared, so that they might become the masters of the world. The sentence which condemns them has a higher and earlier origin than the tribunal of

pope or king: " On the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," said God Himself, as we see in the book of Genesis.

What is taking place in the world, and why do priests and potentates tremble ? What secret power threatens tiaras and crowns ? A few madmen are roaming from land to land, concealing, as they say, the philosophical stone under their ragged vesture. They can change earth into gold, and they are without food or lodging ! Their brows are encircled by an aureole of glory and by a shadow of ignominy ! One has discovered the universal science and goes vainly seeking death to escape the agonies of his triumph—he is the Majorcan Raymond Lully. Another heals imaginary diseases by fantastic remedies, giving a formal denial in advance to the proverb which enforces the futility of a cautery on a wooden leg—he is the marvellous Paracelsus, always drunk and always lucid, like the heroes of Rabelais. Here is William Postel writing naively to the fathers of the Council of Trent, informing them that he has discovered the absolute doctrine, hidden from the foundation of the world, and is longing to share it with them. The council does not concern itself with the maniac, does not condescend to condemn him, and proceeds to examine the weighty questions of efficacious grace and sufficing grace. He whom we see perishing poor and abandoned is Cornelius Agrippa, less of a magician than any, though the vulgar

persist in regarding him as a more potent sorcerer than all because he was sometimes a cynic and mystifier. What secret do these men bear with them to their tomb ? Why are they wondered at without being understood ? Why are they condemned unheard ? Why are they initiates of those terrific secret sciences of which the Church and society are afraid ? Why are they acquainted with things of which others know nothing ? Why do they conceal what all men burn to know ? Why are they invested with a dread and unknown power ? The occult sciences ! Magic ! These words will reveal all and give food for further thought! De omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis.

But what, as a fact, was this magic ? What was the power of these men who were at once so proud and so persecuted ? If they were really strong, why did they not overcome their enemies ? But if they were weak and foolish, why did people honour them by fearing them ? Does magic exist ? Is there an occult knowledge which is truly a power, which works wonders fit to be compared with the miracles of authorised religions? To these two palmary questions we make answer by an affirmation and a book. The book shall justify the affirmation, and the affirmation is this. Yes, there existed in the past, and there exists in the present, a potent and real magic; yes, all that legends have said of it is true, but, in contrariety to what commonly happens, popular exaggerations are, in this case, not only beside but below the truth. There is indeed a formidable secret, the revelation of which has once already transformed the world, as testified in Egyptian religious tradition, symbolically summarised by Moses at the beginning of Genesis. This secret constitutes the fatal science of good and evil, and the consequence of its revelation is death. Moses depicts it under the figure of a tree which is in the centre of the Terrestrial Paradise, is in proximity to the tree of life and has a radical connection therewith ; at the foot of this tree is the source of the four mysterious rivers; it is

guarded by the sword of fire and by the four figures of the Biblical sphinx, the Cherubim of Ezekiel. . . . Here I must pause, and I fear already that I have said too much. Yes, there is one sole, universal, and imperishable dogma, strong as the supreme reason; simple, like all that is great; intelligible, like all that is universally and absolutely true; and this dogma has been the parent of all others. Yes, there is a science which confers on man powers apparently superhuman ; I find them enumerated as follows in a Hebrew manuscript of the sixteenth century : —

" These are the powers and privileges of the man who holds in his right hand the clavicles of Solomon, and in his left the branch of the blossoming almond. « Aleph. —He beholds God face to face, without dying, and converses familiarly with the seven genii who command the entire celestial army, n Beth. — He is above all afflictions and all fears. J Ghimel. — He reigns with all heaven and is served by all hell. 1 Daleth. — He disposes of his own health and life and can equally influence that of others, n He. —He can neither be surprised by misfortune, nor overwhelmed by disasters, nor conquered by his enemies. 1 Vau. —He knows the reason of the past, present, and future. ? Dzain. —He possesses the secret of the resurrection of the dead and the key of immortality.

" Such are the seven chief privileges, and those which rank next are as follows :—

" n Cheth. —To find the philosophical stone. B Teth. —To enjoy the universal medicine. s lod. —To be acquainted with the laws of perpetual motion and in a position to demonstrate the quadrature of the circle. 3 Caph. —To change into gold not only all metals, but also the earth itself, and even the refuse of the earth. ? Lamed. —To subdue the most ferocious animals and be able to pronounce the words which paralyse and charm serpents. » Mem. —To possess the Ars Notoria which gives the universal science. 3 Nun. —To speak learnedly on all

subjects, without preparation and without study.

" These, finally, are the seven least powers of the magus —

" D Samech. —To know at first sight the deep things of the souls of men and the mysteries of the hearts of women. V Gnain. —To force nature to make him free at his pleasure, a Phe. —To foresee all future events which do not depend on a superior free will, or on an undiscernible cause. V Tsade. —To give at once and to all the most efficacious consolations and the most wholesome counsels. P Copli. —To triumph over adversities. "» Resch. —To conquer love and hate. W Schin. — To have the secret of wealth, to be always its master and never its slave. To know how to enjoy even poverty and never become abject or miserable, n Tau. —Let us add to these three septenaries that the wise man rules the elements, stills tempests, cures the diseased by his touch, and raises the dead!

" At the same time, there are certain things which have been sealed by Solomon with his triple seal. It is enough that the initiates know, and as for others, whether they deride, doubt, or believe, whether they threaten or fear, what matters it to science or to us ?"

Such are actually the issues of occult philosophy, and we are in a position to withstand an accusation of insanity or a suspicion of imposture when we affirm that all these privileges are real. To demonstrate this is the sole end of our work on occult philosophy. The philosophical stone, the universal medicine, the transmutation of metals, the quadrature of the circle, and the secret of perpetual motion, are thus neither mystifications of science nor dreams of madness. They are terms which must be understood in their veritable sense; they are expressions of the different applications of one same secret, the several characteristics of one same operation, which is defined in a more comprehensive manner under the name of the great work. Furthermore, there exists in nature a force which is immeasurably more powerful than steam, and by means of

which a single man, who knows how to adapt and direct it, might upset and alter the face of the world. This force was known to the ancients ; it consists in an universal agent having equilibrium for its supreme law, while its direction is concerned immediately with the great arcanum of transcendent magic. By the direction of this agent it is possible to change the very order of the seasons; to produce at night the phenomena of day; to correspond instantaneously between one extremity of the earth and the other; to see, like Apollonius, what is taking place on the other side of the world; to heal or injure at a distance; to give speech an universal success and reverberation. This agent, which barely manifests under the uncertain methods of Mesmer's followers, is precisely that which the adepts of the middle ages denominated the first matter of the great work. The Gnostics represented it as the fiery body of the Holy Spirit; it was the object of adoration in the secret rites of the Sabbath and the Temple, under the hieroglyphic figure of Baphomet or the Androgyne of Mendes. All this will be proved.

Such are the secrets of occult philosophy, such is magic in history; let us now glance at it as it appears in its books and its achievements, in its initiations and its rites. The key of all magical allegories is found in the tablets we have already mentioned, and these tablets we regard as the work of Hermes. About this book, which may be called the keystone of the whole edifice of occult science, are grouped innumerable legends which are either its partial translation or its commentary renewed endlessly under a thousand different forms. Sometimes these ingenious fables combine harmoniously into a great epic which characterises an epoch, though how or why is not clear to the uninitiated. Thus, the fabulous history of the Golden Fleece both resumes and veils the Hermetic and magical doctrines of Orpheus, and if we recur only to the mysterious poetry of Greece, it is because the sanctuaries of Egypt and India to

some extent dismay us by their resources, and leave our choice embarrassed in the midst of such abundant wealth. We are eager, moreover, to reach the Thebaid at once, that dread synthesis of all doctrine, past, present, and future, that, so to speak, infinite fable, which comprehends, like the Deity of Orpheus, the two extremities of the cycle of human life. Extraordinary fact! The seven gates of Thebes, attacked and defended by seven chiefs who have sworn upon the blood of victims, possess the same significance as the seven seals of the sacred book interpreted by seven genii, and assailed by a monster with seven heads, after being opened by a living yet immolated lamb, in the allegorical work of St John. The mysterious origin of (Edipus, found suspended from the tree of Cytheron like a bleeding fruit, recalls the symbols of Moses and the narratives of Genesis. He makes war upon his father, whom he slays without knowing—alarming prophecy of the blind emancipation of reason without science ; he then meets with the sphinx — the sphinx, that symbol of symbols, the eternal enigma of the vulgar, the granite pedestal of the science of the sages, the voracious and silent monster whose invariable form expresses the one dogma of the great universal mystery. How is the tetrad changed into the duad and explained by the triad ? In more common but more emblematic terms, what is that animal which in the morning has four feet, two at noon, and three in the evening ? Philosophically speaking, how does the doctrine of elementary forces produce the dualism of Zoroaster, while it is summed by the triad of Pythagoras and Plato ? What is the ultimate reason of allegories and numbers, the final message of all symbolisms ? QEdipus replies with a simple and terrible word which destroys the sphinx and makes the diviner King of Thebes ; the answer to the enigma is Man ! . . . Unfortunate ! He has seen too much, and yet with insufficient clearness; he must presently expiate his calamitous and imperfect clairvoyance by a

voluntary blindness, and then vanish in the midst of a storm, like all civilisations which may at any time divine the answer to the riddle of the sphinx without grasping its whole import and mystery. Everything is symbolical and transcendental in this titanic epic of human destinies. The two hostile brethren express the second part of the grand mystery divinely completed by the sacrifice of Antigone; then comes the last war; the brethren slay one another, Capaneus is destroyed by the lightning which he defies, Amphiaraiis is swallowed by the earth, and all these are so many allegories which, by their truth and their grandeur, astonish those who can penetrate their triple hieratic sense. ^Eschylus, annotated by Bal-lanche, gives only a weak notion concerning them, whatever the primeval sublimities of the Greek poet or the beauty of the French critic.

The secret book of antique initiation was not unknown to Homer, who outlines its plan and chief figures on the shield of Achilles, with minute precision. But the gracious fictions of Homer replaced speedily in the popular memory the simple and abstract truths of primeval revelation.

Humanity clung to the form and allowed the idea to be forgotten; signs lost power in their multiplication; magic also at this period became corrupted, and degenerated with the sorcerers of Thessaly into the most profane enchantments. Thejcrime of (Edipus brought forth its deadly fruits, and the science of good and evil erected evil into a sacrilegious divinity. Men, weary of the light, took refuge in the shadow of bodily substance; the dream of the void, which is filled by God, soon appeared to be greater than God himself in their eyes, and thus hell was created. When, in the course of this work, we make use of the consecrated terms God, Heaven, and Hell, let it be thoroughly understood, once for all, that our meaning is as far removed from that which the profane attach to them as initiation is distant from vulgar thought. God, for us, is the