

TALISMANS AND AMULETS.

By CHARLES W. KING, M.A.

ALTHOUGH these terms are usually confounded together, their proper meaning is entirely distinct. *Talisman* is no more than the corruption in the Arabian mouth of the Greek ἀποτέλεσμα the influence of a planet or Zodiacal sign upon the person born under the same ; whence came the technical term for astrology ἡ ἀποτελεσματική. Now the influence of every *degree* in each sign was typified by a fanciful figure, or group, painted in the "Table of Myriogeneses" (a term to be explained farther on), and thus, by a natural transition, in course of time the symbol itself usurped the name, *Apotelesma*, of the idea which at first it was only meant to portray. A *talisman* was therefore by its very nature a *sigil*, symbolical figure, whether engraved in stone or metal, or drawn upon parchment and paper. An excellent illustrative example is the one figured by Raspe, No. 354, where the Abraxas god, carrying the lustral vase, is encircled by the ungrammatical invocation of its Alexandrian fabricator, ΠΡΟΣ ΠΑΝΤΑΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΝ ΔΟΤΑΙ ΧΑΡΙΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΦΕΡΟΥΣΙΝ "Give unto the bearers favour in the sight of all men." The talisman, therefore, served both to procure love and to avert danger from its possessor.

The latter purpose alone was the object of the *amulet*, a word probably derived, to judge by the thing it originally designated, from rustic Latinity, its root being *amolior*, "to do away with," or baffle. The, at first sight, so specious etymology from the Arabic *hamalet*, "suspended," is overthrown by Pliny's notice of its primary signification, which shows it to be a genuine old Latin term, and not imported by the Oriental magicians of imperial times. For he cites the word as the countryfolks' name for the cyclamen, "which ought to be planted in every house, if it be indeed true that where it is grown poisonous drugs have no power to harm ;

of it in one of his tales, where the lady telegraphs there-with her husband's absence to her lover, by turning the skull in a particular direction. (Day vi. Nov. 1.)

I shall now proceed to illustrate the foregoing definitions by describing the most remarkable examples in either class that have come under my observation. Those only are quoted which declare their intention in an intelligible language, to the exclusion of the purely Gnostic, although, by the light of the former, we may safely conjecture the purport of those long inscriptions in an unknown tongue, which, if interpreted, may be supposed to contain prayers of the same kind as others less carefully shrouded from the understanding of the profane.

A large round disk of loadstone, still extremely powerful (belonging to myself) is engraved with the three Graces, and the legend—**ZHCEC ZABATI**—‘long life to thee, Sabatius!’ Reverse, Horus seated on the lotus, with **ΑΝΑΘΑΝΑΒΛΑ** in a continuous circle around him: on the margin, declaring the purpose of the talisman, **CY NIKAC ΠΑΝΤΕC** (sic). Of much the same character is another gem of mine, a bloodstone bearing a spirited engraving of a race-horse carrying the palm of victory in his mouth, and his name, **TIBERIS**, added. The reverse exhibits the Power to whose favour the pious *turfite* of old had ascribed his success, in the person of the Abraxas god with the invocation on the stone's edge, **ZACTA ΙΑΩ ΒΑΡΙΑ**. Raspe's invaluable repertory³ supplies many curious instances of the sort. His No. 630, a magic symbol inscribed with the frequently-occurring formula **CAΛΒΑΝΑ ΧΑΜΒΡΗ**, presents for reverse the inscription **ΠΑΜΦΙΛΟΣ—ΤΥΡΑΝΝΟΣ—ΠΑΡΑΔΟΞΟΣ—ΕΚΑΤΗ—ΕΠΗΚΩ—ΕΥΧΗΝ**: which seems to mark the gem for an *ex voto*, dedicated by Pamphilus to Hecate in return for some unlooked-for piece of good luck. Another, No. 625, inscribed **ΘΩΧ—ΘΩΧΑΜ—CΩZE ΒΑΡΙΝ**, invokes this oddly-titled Power⁴ to protect Baris. In No. 611, five lines of unintelligible letters have for reverse **CHC—ΟΜΟΝΟΙΑC**, showing that the former contained a charm for

³ Rud. E. Raspe, *Catalogue raisonne d'une collection generale de pierres gravées, &c., moulees par J. Tassie*. In English and French. London. 2 vols. 4to, 1791.

⁴ “Amidst, amidst them,” Heb, perhaps equivalent to “Omnipresent Spirit,” or perhaps, “Thou that sittest between the Cherubim.”

ensuring concord between the donor and the wearer of the jasper.

It may not be out of place here to observe that certain prescriptions of those eminent Roman physicians, Alexander Marcellus, and Sammonicus (to be quoted under their proper heading) afford reasonable ground for suspicion, that amongst those legacies of the hidden wisdom of Egypt, the regular as yet untranslated Gnostic formulæ, many, instead of enjoying the high dignity of being passports to eternal bliss, or else words of power over demons, were to those that understood them, mere charms against the gout and colic—complaints which seem to have provokingly set at defiance the legitimate practice of the sons of Esculapius. For Egypt continued under the Cæsars, a great centre of medical science: Pliny, when mentioning the introduction from that region, the land of lepers, into Italy, of the *mentagra*, face-leprosy, adds that it brought over to Rome a multitude of practitioners, who attended to that disease exclusively. Their mode of treatment was deep cauterization, the remedy being, says the historian, worse than the evil itself, from the frightful disfigurement of the face resulting therefrom. The profits accruing to these empirics were enormous; they contracted beforehand for a fixed sum, on the terms of “no cure no pay,” and arranged their price accordingly. Manilius Cornutus, governor of Aquitaine, is quoted as having paid H.S.CC. (*ducenta* must be meant) or about 2000*l.* for the job.

To return to amulets in their strictest sense. One of the most singular, and frequently occurring both on bas-reliefs and gems, represents the dreaded Eye itself as the centre of a circle of symbols radiating from it, and all working together to baffle its stroke. A Praun gem displays the organ of fascination, thus circumscribed by a lion, stag, dog, thunderbolt, dove, and serpent; the easily recognisable attributes of the deities presiding over the days of the week, whose influence and protection against the *malocchio* were thereby ingeniously invoked. But the completest set of all the amulets most in repute amongst the Romans was that making up the necklace lately found on the skeleton of a Pompeian lady, in the house of Holconius. Separated by beads and canopic vases hang terminal figures of Isis, Anubis, and Silenus, two jackals, two phalli, an open hand, a *manus obscæna*, astragal, wheel, die, bunch of grapes, pine-cone,

panther, with a cigala forming the centre. This discovery explains the use of the same objects so often turned up separately.

The *bullā*, a gold case, circular or heart-shaped, worn round the neck by the Roman boys, was a true amulet, for in the beginning, says Macrobius, it was the special ornament of the victorious general in the triumphal procession, "having enclosed within it such remedies as they esteemed the most efficacious against the stroke of envy."⁵ Probably this hidden safeguard was some written spell, for the *bullā* came from the Etruscans, those great charm-mongers of Italy. In fact the specimen (No. 254, Mus. Nap. III.) at Paris was found when opened to contain, folded up, a thin leaf of silver, inscribed with eighteen lines in Greek, mixed with cyphers, interpreted as a prayer to the gods of Olympus, joined with an invocation of the infernal deities. This "Etruscum aurum," restricted to patrician children, was replaced amongst the plebeians by a leather pouch, "nodus tantum et signum de paupere lozo," but with contents of equal virtue. And in addition to the *bullā*, a number of other fantastic objects, of the same character as in the Pompeian necklace just cited, were strung together around babies' necks, as their portraits often show, furnishing amusement by their clinking together, whence the whole appendage got its name of *crepundia*.

To protect oneself against evil influences by wearing *spells*, that is, as the name denotes, mystic words *written* out upon leather or parchment, is a practice going back to immemorial antiquity, perhaps the very first use to which the art of writing was applied. Pericles, in his last illness, showed a friend calling to see him such a thing, that his women had tied round his neck for a last resource when all medicine failed, saying, with a sad smile, it proved him ill indeed to have consented to such folly (Plutarch). Anaxilas, quoted by Athenæus, describes the Athenian fop of those days as wearing the "Ephesian spell" handsomely printed upon parchment strips:—

ἐν σκυταρίοις ῥαπτοῖσι φέρων
Εφέσια γράμματα καλά.

⁵ See in the *Archæological Journal*, vol. vi. p. 112, vol. viii. p. 166, observations by Mr. James Yates on the *bullā*

worn by Roman boys; several examples are there figured.

This most venerable of charms was the words in an unknown language graven upon the zone and feet of the Ephesian Diana, and preserved to us by Hesychius, viz., **ΑΣΚΙ ΚΑΤΑΣΚΙ ΑΙΞ ΤΕΤΡΑΞ ΔΑΜΝΑΜΕΝΕΥΣ ΑΙΣΙΟΝ**, whereof the traditional interpretation was "Light, darkness, Himself, the sun, truth." These words, according to Plutarch (Sympos.), the Magi used to recite over those *possessed with devils*; and the name **ΔΑΜΝΑΜΕΝΕΥΣ** is actually found on a Gnostic amulet (De la Turbie) around the type of a mummy enfolded by a serpent, his good genius. As a title of the sun, its appropriateness to a Mithraic gem is sufficiently obvious. Another very ancient example of a spell is that composed by the diviner, Battus, to drive away pestilence, and sung for that purpose by the Milesians, which Clemens Alexandrinus has preserved:—

**ΒΕΔΥ ΞΑΜΥ ΧΘΩ ΠΛΗΚΤΡΟΝ ΣΦΙΓΕ
ΚΝΑΞΒΙ ΧΘΥΠΤΗΣ ΦΛΕΓΜΑ ΔΡΟΥ**

where he explains the first four words as meaning Air, Sea, Earth, Sun. The Jews, on the restoration of their kingdom, practised the same custom, substituting, however, for these heathenish words certain verses out of the Law, which, being supposed of power to avert all evil and mischief from the wearer (they were bound round the head), received the appellation of *phylacteries*, *φυλακτήρια*, that is, safeguards. The same belief yet flourishes amongst Mohammedans, especially the African, who employ verses of the Koran with similar confidence in their efficacy. A remarkable illustration of this is offered by certain Oriental mail-shirts, every ring of which is stamped with some holy word, thus converting the whole into an endless tissue of amulets—in every sense, "*decus et tutamen in armis*." Now-a-days the same spells, *grigris* is their proper title, are sewed profusely over the dress, enclosed in little metal or leather cases.

That the same fashion was equally prevalent under the Lower Empire is apparent from innumerable passages in writers of the time. To cite one of the most curious, Gregory Nazianzen (Or. xl. 18), exclaims, "Your child hath no need for amulets and spells, in company wherewith the Evil One likewise maketh his entrance, robbing God of his glory amongst the lighter-minded; but give to him (in baptism) the Trinity, that great and glorious mystery." And the Greek epigram—

matists, with whom, as with the wits of Moliere's time, physicians were ever held fair game, forget not to bring in the superstition for their benefit. Take this example,

Ερμυγενῇ τὸν ἱατρὸν ἰδὼν Δίοφαντος ἐν ὑπνοῖς
οὔκετ' ἀνηγέρθη, καὶ περὶ ἄμμη φέρων.

"In slumber sound was Diophantus laid,
When a dire dream Hermogenes portrayed ;
He saw the leech—enough ! he woke no more,
Spite of the guardian amulet he wore."

Pliny (xxviii. 5) quotes, with ill-disguised ridicule, the singular superstition of his all-powerful and learned friend, the "king-maker," Mucianus, who used to carry as a preservative against ophthalmia a live fly tied up in linen.⁶ Another noted man of his day, the Consul Q. Serv. Nonianus, wore for the same purpose, tied about his neck, a paper inscribed with the Greek letters *P A* ; the virtue whereof perhaps lay in their expressing the Egyptian name of the Sun.

Most of the Gnostic stones have clearly been intended for wear as amulets, and not for setting in rings, a purpose for which their often large dimensions quite unfit them. This last peculiarity would lead one to suspect that such stones were usually carried about in the purse or zone, both for their special object and also to be readily producible at pleasure, as credentials amongst the faithful, and as means of introducing one *illuminato* or *ami de la lumière* to another. To such a custom, derived from the more ancient *tessara*, by means whereof the general circulated amongst his troops the word for the day—"It belli tessara signum,"—does St. John evidently allude in the promise, "To him that overcometh will I give a white stone, and in the stone a *new Name* written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it." The word used here, *ψῆφος*, a *gem*, contains a palpable reference to the *white calcedony*, that regular material for those talismans, covered with interminable legends, the attempt at whose interpretation will, after all his pains, convince the baffled antiquary of the truth of the concluding part of the "sainted seer's" declaration. That such things were

⁶ Which notion may perhaps more reasonably explain the frequent appearance of the insect in gems than the usual theory of its reference to Baalzebub,

whose protection is supposed to have thereby been secured against those blood-thirsty swarms of whom he was the lord.

intended to be carried about the person, not ostentatiously displayed, is furthermore shown by the old Arabian storyteller's notice how that the Princess Badoura's talisman, "a cornelian engraved with strange figures and letters," was carried by her in a small purse sewed on to her jewelled girdle.

The devices seen on certain talismans, for example, the lion bestriding a corpse, or the captive bound to a pillar surmounted by a gryphon, almost prove that they were made to be given to him "that overcometh," the neophyte who had passed through all the trials preceding initiation; and their existence may explain Augustine's "image of the demon purchased with bloodshedding" in the Mithraic mysteries. As to the grand seat and authors of the manufacture we are not left in doubt, for Epiphanius, when mentioning that Manes, after his "Mysteries" and "Treasury" wrote likewise an "Astrology," adds, "For these sectaries are so far from eschewing the forbidden art, that the head and front of their boast is the science of *astronomy*;⁷ and moreover the making of *amulets*, that is to say things for wearing round the neck, *periapta*, and incantations, and all such trickery." The use of *periapta* in their proper sense yet survives amongst the German Jews, for, when the sick man is at the last gasp, the attendants bind about his head and arm certain knotted leather thongs.⁸ Similarly, a Jew about to be executed thus prepares himself to meet his fate. And in Turkish medical practice a sovereign cure for apoplexy is to encircle the head with a parchment strip painted with the signs of the zodiac.

That all such matters were properly designed to be tied round, or hung from, the person is sufficiently manifest from their generic appellation, *periapta*. This, with their universal use, appears from Spartian's remark when, to place in the strongest light the capricious cruelty of Caracalla, he says that he put to death "et qui remedia quartanis tertianisque

⁷ Another and undesigned testimony, this, to the primarily astrological nature of talismanic figures.

⁸ These are probably identical with the phylacteries, according to the actual use of objects so designated Tephillim, in the Hebrew ritual, and worn in the synagogue service on the forehead and on the left arm, being attached by long thongs

of calf-skin, curiously knotted. These objects consist of small leathern boxes, enclosing four inscribed rolls, and a single roll, respectively. To these boxes the knotted thongs are attached. The fashion of the Tephillim may be seen in Dr. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, v. Frontlets.

collo suspensa gestarunt.”⁹ In fact, the only Gnostic stone known to me as retaining its antique setting is one adapted for the purpose. It is a red jasper, oval, engraved with a mummy erect, having its head radiated, type of the soul released and glorified, inscribed **ABPACAZ**; reverse, the Abraxas god himself and **IAΩ** below. The stone, nearly an inch long, is mounted in a rudely-made gold frame, having a broad loop soldered on for the cord, after the fashion of the mounted medallions of the Lower Empire.

This unique example rewarded my search amongst the miscellaneous gems of the British Museum, where, at the same time, I recognised many of the finest in the Gnostic Series published by Chifflet more than two centuries ago—another proof of the well-known axiom, that the curiosities of the entire world ultimately gravitate towards London as their centre-point of attraction. In their number, particular attention is due to the immense sard, covered on both sides with a long formula, agreeing word for word with that on the celebrated Hertz garnet, and Chifflet’s calcedony; a repetition that declares the importance of these mystic words, intended either for recitation over a sacrifice, or to accompany the defunct *illuminato* into the grave, for the same beneficial end as the set of prayers prescribed in the “Schema of the Ophites.” A third singular relic, belonging to the last phase of the Gnosis, is a large, egg-shaped calcedony, bearing the lion-headed man (perhaps *Ourotal*, the great god of the Aúbians, identified by Herodotus with Dionysos), encompassed with a long legend in the latest Pehlevi, or rather Cufic lettering, and agreeing perfectly in style with the latest Sassanian stamps.

An appropriate conclusion to this inquiry will be a description of the “Table of Myriogeneses (properly, Moriogeneses),” alluded to in the beginning. That such Tables formed one great repertory for the talisman-makers may be inferred from Ptolemy’s observation in his “Carpus,” Aph. ix.¹: “The figures (στοιχεῖα), in their rise and decline are

⁹ Probably alluding to the famous Abracadabra, which the first physician of the age, Sammonicus, directs how to write on parchment and wear for the same purpose. De Foe mentions its general use, and the belief in its efficacy during the Great Plague of London.

¹ See the treatises entitled *De sculpturis lapidum*, and *Liber Secretus fili-*

orum Israel, printed from MS. Harl. 80, and MS. Arundel, 342, in the *Archæologia*, vol. xxx. pp. 449, 451; also the extract from “*Le Livre Techel des philosophes et des Indoïs et dit estre des enfans d’Israel*,” *ibid.*, p. 454. from the French *Lapidaire*, printed by Le Roux de Lincy, in his *Livre des Legendes*.

affected by the heavenly bodies, on which account the *στοιχειοματικοὶ* employ them by observing the entrance of the planets into them :” where the Arabic translation renders the Greek name of these professors by “talisman-makers.” And there is another interesting thing about these strange creations of the ancient astrologers’ fancy; they would seem to have supplied many of the Sigils which the Mediæval Lapidaria describe as existing on gems, or “*Pierres d’Israel*,” but which, for the most part, do not now present themselves upon any such relics of antiquity. Scaliger (Manilius, Not. p. 487), has translated the entire Table, describing the *Ascendants* in each Sign as they were represented by the Arabian astrologers, who, in their turn, pretended to be transcribing the manuals of their ancient Egyptian predecessors in the science. To give here the *degrees* of the first Ascendant in Aries alone will amply suffice to exhibit the truly unclassical nature of the representations themselves, and equally, their close affinity in taste to the Sigils so highly valued by the mediæval doctors.

Arsiccan, Mars, First Decanus in Aries, gives courage and impudence to him that is born under the same. 1st Degree. Man holding in his right hand a pruning-hook, in his left a cross-bow. 2. Dog-headed Man with right hand extended, a wand in his left. 3. Man holding out various ornaments in his right hand, his left placed in his girdle. 4. Man with curly hair; in his right hand a hawk, in his left a whip. 5. Two men; one cleaving wood with an axe, the other holding a sceptre. 6. King, carrying in his right hand the orb, in his left the sceptre. 7. Man in armour, holding an arrow. 8. Man with a helmet on his head, in his right hand a cross-bow. 9. Man bareheaded, in his left hand a sword. 10. Man spearing a wild boar.

All these types were expressive of analogous predispositions and natural qualities in the *native*, under each degree. Taking the hint from this list, Scaliger explains (and very plausibly) many of those composite figures carrying zodiacal signs in their hands, and which are commonly accounted as Gnostic works, to be in reality genuine representations of these Myriogeneses, and intended to personify the astral influence of the particular degree upon the infant whose destiny it governed.

(To be continued.)

TALISMANS AND AMULETS.¹

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MEDICINAL AMULETS AND RINGS AND PROPHYLACTICS.

THE physicians of antiquity had the advantage of one powerful auxiliary, the patient's own imagination, now totally excluded from the regular pharmacopœia, and subsisting only in the practice of those old hags in out-of-the-way country places who still cure burns and bruises, and disperse wens and warts according to the mystic lore of old. The agents employed were natural amulets and spells, of which the old Grecian doctor made as liberal use as any "medicine-man" now-a-days amongst the Red Indians. Such remedial means, according to Pindar (Pyth. III. 90), seem to have formed no unimportant part, nay rather, to have held the first place in the resources of the actual god of the healing art when he set up in business for himself after serving his apprenticeship to the Centaur, his predecessor in the same line. The poet describes how thereupon immediately flocked unto him "all people either long afflicted by natural sores, or wounded by the grey steel, or damaged in body by the burning fire or by the nipping frost; some he treated by means of *soothing spells*, others by suitable potions, some by applying medicines to their injured limbs, others again he set on their legs once more by the use of the knife."

The descendants of Esculapius long continued to follow so respectable a precedent. Hippocrates declares (and evidently without intending a joke) that spells are very useful as adjuncts to medicines, although of little service by themselves. Even the sceptical Pliny, though he indemnifies himself by an occasional sneer at their absurdity, found himself compelled, by the force of public opinion, to ensure the completeness of his work by filling it with a list of the supernatural virtues, not merely of herbs, but of all

¹ Continued from p. 24.

sorts of objects which operated when merely carried about the person.

Such being the case, it is very conceivable that the medicinal as opposed to the magical virtues of sigils upon gems, of which Camillo, physician to Cæsar Borgia, has left us so copious a list in his "*Speculum Lapidum*," as constituting a very important element in the education of the Italian doctor of the fifteenth century, were not from first to last the chimeras of dreaming mediæval monks, but were, many of them, received by tradition from the ancient masters in the art. And what confirms this view is the finding the recognition of the value of charms in the cure of disease ever and anon obtruding itself throughout the works of Alexander Trallianus (who flourished under Justinian), although his writings are in other respects highly commended by competent judges for the knowledge they display of the nature of diseases, and their proper mode of treatment. Further on will be found several extracts from his book prescribing, with the utmost minuteness, the proper mode of applying these powerful arcana. It would be interesting to know the exact nature of the rings sold in the days of Aristophanes, nine centuries before Trallianus' date, for protection against the bite of serpents and noxious insects; but there is reason to suppose, if the authority of the Arab astrologers counts for anything, that they bore the figure of the creature to be repelled by their virtue. This supposition also would account for the frequency of bronze rings of early workmanship engraved with the scorpion, the fly, and even smaller vermin.

Aristophanes (Plut. 883) makes his "honest man" reply to the common informer in these terms of defiance:—

"I care not for thee since I wear a ring,
For which I paid one drachma to Eudemus."

To which the other retorts,—

"But 'tis no charm against th' informer's bite."

Antiphanes again (Athen. III. 123) mentions another sort, exactly answering to the galvanic rings, whose virtues used to be so wonderfully puffed a few years ago as preservatives from all manner of aches and pains, for he introduces his miser, exclaiming,—

"In a kettle
Beware lest I see any one boil water :

For I've no ailment : may I ever have none !
 But, if perchance a griping pain should wander
 Within my stomach or about my navel,
 I'll get a ring from Phertatus for a drachma.'

But to a much later stage of ancient society belong those magical rings whose potency was of higher order, dealing not with natural ills, but with the abstract principle of Evil, an idea totally absent from the graceful mythology of primitive Greece. To their consideration a distinct chapter has been devoted in the sequel.

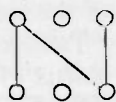
To return to the subject viewed as an auxiliary of the healing art ; the following are amongst the most interesting of the recipes given by Trallianus. Against the *gout* (B. xi.), "Take a strip of thin gold and, after engraving upon it the words **MEY . TPEY . MOP . ΦOP . TEYE . ZA . ZΩN . ΦΙΛΟΥ . ΧΡΙ . ΓΕ . ZE . ΩN .**, wrap it up in the sinews of a crane, put it into a little leather case, and wear it tied to the ankles. Inasmuch as by these *Names* the sun is strengthened and daily renewed, so is this composition restored unto its former power : '*Now, now quickly, quickly, lo ! I say the Great Name wherein quiet is confirmed.*' **ΓΑΖ . ΑΖΥΦ . ΖΥΩΝ . ΟΡΙΝΕ . ΒΑΥΝ . ΧΟΑΚ .** '*Strengthen this composition as it was at the first ; now, now quickly, quickly.*'"—It is evident that these invocations to the sun are given for translations of the two spells in an unknown tongue ; and the giver's express declaration that they contain the *names* of that luminary sufficiently explain the frequent occurrence of **TEYE**² and **BAINXO** upon our talismans.

Another of his prescriptions, good for the gout and all fluxions :—"When the moon is in Aquarius or Pisces, dig up before sunset the sacred herb called *hyoseyamus* with the forefinger and thumb of the left hand without touching its root, and say, 'I speak unto thee, I speak unto thee, O sacred herb ! I call thee that thou come to-morrow into the house of Phileas, that thou mayest stop the fluxion in the feet or hands of such and such a one. But I conjure thee in the great Name **ΙΑΩΘ ΣΑΒΑΩΘ**, who hath fixed the earth and fastened the sea abounding in flowing waves, who hath dried up Lot's wife and made of her a pillar of salt, receive into thyself the spirit and the forces of thy mother the earth, and

² It is actually inscribed under Sol in his quadriga on a large hæmatite of my own.

dry up the fluxion in the feet or hands of such and such a one.' Next day take the bone of any dead animal, and before sunrise dig up the root therewith, saying, 'I conjure thee, by the holy names, Iaoth, Sabaoth, Adonai, Elohim.' Then sprinkle a little salt upon the root, saying, 'As this salt shall not increase, so let not the pains of the patient increase.' Then take the small end of the root and tie upon the patient, but hang up the remainder thereof over the fireplace for 360 days."

As a remedy for the *colic* (seemingly a much more frequent complaint with the ancients than in our days), he prescribes the wearing of an iron ring, engraved with this figure, which again is a regular Gnostic device, and to be seen conspicuously upon one of the leaden scrolls from the Vigna Marini tombs.³ The ring itself is to be eight-sided, and on each side to bear two syllables of the formula :—ΦΕΥΓΕ ΦΕΥΓΕ ΙΟΥ ΧΟΛΗ Η ΚΟΥΔΑΛΟΣ ΣΕ ΖΗΤΕΙ. "Fly, fly, ho there! Bile, the lark is looking for thee." He adds :—"Of this recipe I have had long experience, and have deemed it unreasonable not to make it known, being as it is of such great virtue as an *antipathic* to the disease. But I recommend you not to communicate such things as this to the vulgar, but only unto the lovers of virtue and those able to keep a secret. Wherefore also, the divine Hippocrates exhorts us, saying, 'These matters being holy you must declare to holy men alone : to the profane it is not lawful.' Observe that the prescribed ring must be made upon the first, or else the seventeenth, day of the moon's age." For the same complaint, he also recommends the wearing an intaglio of Hercules strangling the Lion, cut upon a "Median Stone." Now such engravings in the rudest style of the Lower Empire are frequently to be met with, having, moreover, the initial of the malady they are intended to combat repeated four or six times on the reverse, in the form of a square, or in two rows, so as to leave no doubt upon the object of the amulet. But all that I have seen are in red jasper, whereas Pliny describes the Lapis Medicus, "so called after the Medea of fable," as black with veins of gold. For the *stone* in the bladder, the same high authority recommends you "to get



³ Matter, "Excursion gnostique en Italie." Pl. xii.

a piece of copper ore, either Cyprian or Nicanian (as being the purest sorts, one must suppose), that has never felt the fire; to pick out the veins of metal and beat them up together into the shape of a signet-stone, on which you must engrave a *lion with the sun and moon*, and set the same in a gold ring." This device is often met with engraved on jasper; perhaps its popularity arose from the general faith in this its particular virtue. And, as regards the special material ordered by Trallianus, I have in my own experience observed disks of a reddish metal set in gold rings, although none bearing the sigil in question. The *colic*, if we may judge from the number of charms against it that have been transmitted from Roman times, must have been a very prevalent complaint amongst the *bon-vivants* of the Empire. Nor is the fact to be wondered at after reading the recipes for the dishes then in most esteem, as given us by the famous Apicius: vegetables uncooked and strong pickles forming so considerable a proportion of their meals, all washed down by oceans of sour much diluted wine. Strange to say, this disease had been unknown in Italy before the reign of Tiberius, and the emperor himself was the first sufferer from the unpleasant novelty. Pliny records how all Rome was puzzled on first reading the word *colum* in the edict put forth by the prince to excuse his non-appearance in the senate. The great frequency of charms against the disorder, an irregular mode of treatment to which we find the most eminent physicians of the day having recourse, is a very convincing evidence that the colic then set at defiance all cure *secundum artem*. Amongst these recipes, the most curious that have come in my way are the amulets recommended by Marcellus Empiricus,⁴ an authority well worthy of his surname, such is his fondness for these now unrecognized branches of the *materia medica*. "Take a thin plate of gold, cut it square, and engrave thereon with a point of the same metal these letters. Roll it up and put it within a tube of gold, stopping up the ends with bits of goat's skin. Then tie the tube with a strip of the same skin upon the right or the left foot, according to which side the pain affects.

L*M⊙RIA
L*M⊙RIA
L*M⊙RIA
L*M⊙RIA

⁴ A native of Eordeaux who flourished under Theodosius.

The operation must take place upon the twenty-first day of the moon's age. The wearer must observe strict chastity, neither should he touch a corpse nor enter a tomb."

A second recipe of his for the same malady is to make a ring out of gold thread melted down, engrave on its face a fish or dolphin, and on the shank the verse—

ΘΕΟΣ ΚΕΛΕΥΕΙ ΜΗ ΚΥΕΙΝ ΚΩΛΟΝ ΠΟΝΟΝ.

A good specimen of a ring made according to these directions is preserved in the Galleria, Florence, with, however, a slight variation in the reading :

+ΘΕΟΣ ΚΕΛΕΥΕΙ ΜΗ ΕΧΕΙΝ ΠΟΝΟΥΣ ΚΟΛΟΝ.

A remedy for the *pleurisy*, from which, as he promises, "you will obtain wonderful results," is the wearing of a cerulean Scythian jasper (our sapphirine calcedony) engraved with that common Gnostic sigil⁵ s s s upon a bar ; probably a sketchy representation of Esculapius's staff, (the serpent-twined wand of Egyptian priesthood).

For a *sore throat* you are to write on a bit of paper,

ἔιδον τριμερῇ χρύσειον τοάναδον
καὶ ταρταροῦχον⁶ τουσάναδον
σῶσον με σεμνὲ νεπτέρων Ὑπέρτατε

Interesting on many accounts is the large Praun hæmatite, now added to the Gnostic series in the British Museum. The type is Mars standing, executed in a very debased style, legend **ΑΡΗΣ ΕΤΕΜΕΝ ΤΟΥ ΗΠΛΑΤΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΠΟΝΟΝ.**

In the field are several unknown letters : in those behind the god's head, Professor Stephens of Copenhagen has discovered the Runes **ÆFL**(*able*) "Help," which he conjectures to be the *addition* of some Northman, subsequent owner of the amulet. But it is clear to a practised eye that *all* the inscriptions on the stone were cut at the same time, and by the same hand ; and it is easily conceivable that some Goth in the imperial service (they or Franks almost entirely manned the armies of the Lower Empire) had carried with him spells in the mystic language of his ancestral religion, and caused

⁵ Which invariably accompanies the Chnuphis Agathodæmon on green jasper, which last Galen says was prescribed by King Nechepsos, to be worn as a protection to the chest.

⁶ Some epithet has dropped out here, for the iambic is incomplete, probably the missing word may have been *αργυρέην*, for the barbarous names manifestly denote Phœbus and Hecate.

them to be added to the regular formula of the kabalists upon the amulet made to his order. Upon another gem (in my possession) are added characters to the Greek, that have all the appearance of Runes. The high antiquity of this alphabet has been disputed, but on no tenable ground. F. Schlegel has sagaciously adduced one convincing argument in support of the old theory, that the *Scandinavian* Runes were introduced by the Phœnician traders, (being indeed their own alphabet slightly modified,) in the fact of their limited number, the actual *sixteen* of the original Punic. Had they been as most antiquaries now hold, nothing more than the Roman letters simplified for the convenience of cutting them upon sticks, they would have equalled the number of their parent. In proof of this comes the Welsh Bardic alphabet, the latest of the Runic, and which possesses no fewer than 43 characters. And again, the genuineness of the Scandinavian is established by repeated occurrence upon the *umbos* found in the Thorsberg moss, Flensburg, found in company with denarii of Severus, and legionary inscriptions.

The *formula* upon the stone last quoted may serve to explain another which, from its frequent appearance, must have been held in high esteem in the same ages of the Empire. It is the figure of a reaper at his work, the reverse inscribed in large characters **ΧΙΩΝ**. The very nature of the subject suggests the reading of the mystic word as a contracted form of *σχίσων*, "about to cut," whilst from the previous example we may infer that the idea of *cutting*⁷ was considered an essential element in the cure of liver complaints, and therefore this sigil of the reaper was esteemed an equally efficacious remedy for that incurable disease. And to conclude, the often cited Marcellus directs any one choking with a bone sticking in his throat to repeat the Homeric,—

μή μοι Γοργείην κεφάλην δεινοῖο πελώρου
 ἐξ Ἄϊδος πέμψειεν ἀγανὴ Περσεφονεία

which done would procure him immediate relief.

Old Cato's sure remedy for sprains, which Pliny transcribes for the amusement of his readers, was the utterance of the words HAVT, HAVT, ISTA PISTA VISTA. But the same

⁷ Perhaps on the same principle by which the belemnite cured the pleurisy, its *pointed* form being analogous to the *piercing* pains of the disease.

historian seriously relates that Julius Cæsar having once had a dangerous upset in a chariot never afterwards entered one without repeating thrice a certain spell, *carmine ter repetito*, (xviii. 4,) which however he very provokingly omits to give us.

That most famous spell of all, ABRACADABRA, is first mentioned by Serenus Sammonicus, the most learned Roman of his times, and physician to Caracalla, to whom he dedicated his poetical Guide to Health, entitled, "De Medicina præcepta saluberrima." This work, remarks Spartian, was the favourite study of the unfortunate Cæsar, Geta, for attachment to whose cause this true son of Apollo was afterwards put to death by the imperial fratricide. Severus Alexander, also, "who had known and loved Serenus," greatly admired his poetry, putting him on a level with Horace, as Lampridius' expressions seem to intimate. This high authority orders the word to be written out in the form of an inverted cone, and declares it of virtue against all disease :—

"Thou shalt on paper write the spell divine,
Abracadabra called, in many a line ;
Each under each in even order place,
But the last letter in each line efface.
As by degrees the elements grow few,
Still take away, but fix the residue,
Till at the last one letter stands alone
And the whole dwindles to a tapering cone.
Tie this about the neck with flaxen string ;
Mighty the good 'twill to the patient bring.
Its wondrous potency shall guard his head,
And drive disease and death far from his bed."

The belief in the virtue of this recipe flourished through the Middle Ages. It seems alluded to in the Dialogue on Masonry, ascribed by Leland to Henry VI., for amongst "the things that Masons conceal" is "the winnyng of the facultye of *Abrac*," perhaps signifying the possession of this mystical arrangement of letters ; unless, indeed, one chooses to suspect in this "facultye" a deeper sense,—some traditional knowledge of the ancient abraxas religion. Again, De Foe mentions how people commonly wore the word written in the manner above prescribed, as a safeguard against infection during the Great Plague.

As for the etymology of the word, the most satisfactory yet offered is the compound of the Hebrew *Ha-Brachahs*,

"blessing," and *dabberals*, "speak, pronounce," that is, the Holy Name, or Tetragrammaton, itself the mightiest of charms.

It is very remarkable, considering its high repute, that no Gnostic stone bearing such an inscription should be known to exist. On the other hand, that normal address to Iao **ABΛANAΘANAΛBA**, "Thou art our Father!" is to be found on talismanic jaspers arranged in the exact pattern recommended by Serenus for the paper spell, and probably so done in compliance with his directions.

(*To be continued.*)

TALISMANS AND AMULETS.¹

By C. W. KING, M.A.

MEDIÆVAL TALISMANS.

CERTAIN Gnostic figures and "Holy Names" continued during the Middle Ages to enjoy as high a reputation as in the classical times. At the very close of the mediæval period, Camillus Leonardi (Camillo di Leonardo), in his "*Speculum Lapidum*," written in 1502, and dedicated to Cesare Borgia, whose physician he was, when treating upon the virtues of gems and of the sigils cut in them, lays down this fundamental rule:—"Magical and necromantic figures bear no resemblance to the Signs or constellations, and therefore their virtues are only to be discovered by persons versed in those particular arts, viz., Magic and Necromancy; yet is it most certain that the virtue of the figure may be in some measure discovered from observing the qualities of the stone it is cut upon. And inasmuch as the same stone often possesses different properties, so are figures found made up out of the parts of different animals, expressing the various virtues of the gem itself. This is apparent in a jasper of my own, which represents a figure with the head of a cock, the body of a man clad in armour, a shield in the one hand, a whip in the other, and serpents instead of legs; all expressive of the several virtues inherent in the jasper, which are, to drive away evil spirits, fevers, and dropsies, to check lust, prevent conception, render the wearer virtuous and beloved, and to stanch the flowing of blood. All such figures are of the greatest virtue and potency." Again, he quotes from Ragiel's "*Book of Wings*" (a work he styles indispensable to all students of magic) the axiom, "*The Names of God*"²

¹ Continued from page 157.

² The Rosicrucians made great use of this notion. One of their legends is that Shem and Japhet by repeating six times, as they walked backwards, the great name IABEMIAH, "The God of Increase," restored the virility of Noah, of which he had been deprived by Ham. For they

applied the Greek legend of the mutilation of Coelus by Saturn to the Jewish story of Noah's drunkenness. Again, "The potent name NEHMAHMIHAH, coupled with the delicious name ELIAEL, puts all the powers of darkness to flight."—Comte de Gabalis.

engraved upon belemnite preserve places against thunderstorms, and likewise give power and victory over one's enemies." In this doubtless lurks a traditionary reminiscence of the potency originally attributed to the divine titles in Semitic tongues, that so common decoration of Gnostic talismans, and also of the sense in which those mystic words were at that time interpreted. Ragiél cannot be supposed to allude here to names inscribed in the Latin tongue or character, seeing that nothing of the sort is ever found upon gems known to his early period. The Italian Esculapius declares more than once in the course of his treatise, that all sigils of potency were the work of the Children of Israel in the wilderness, whereas those engraved by the old Romans or the artists of his own times, were merely fancy subjects (*voluntariæ*), and possessed no other virtue beyond the natural one of the stone itself. For this reason these *efficacious* gems went by the name of "Pierres des Juifs," or "Pierres d'Israel," and are often found so denominated in old inventories of jewels. "Cy après s'ensuyvent plusieurs pierres entaillées et erlentées lesquelles sont appellées *Pierres d'Israel*. Selon les saiges philosophes les aucunes sont artificielles, c'est à dire qu'elles ont esté ouvrées. Premièrement, en quelque manière de pierre que tu trouveras entaillée à l'ymage du mouton, ou du lyon, ou du Sagittaire, elles sont consacrées du signe du ciel. Elles sont très vertueuses car elles rendent l'homme aimyable et gracieux à tous, elles resistent aux fièvres quotidiennes, quartanes, et autres de froide nature, &c." (Mandeville's Lapidary, written 1372; Archæologia, vol. xxx. p. 454).

In the grand focus of iconoclasm does the most remarkable example present itself of an adopted relic of heathenism in the form of the very Kaaba of Mecca. This is a *black*³ stone, four feet high by two wide, on which is sculptured a figure of Venus with the crescent. It is described by Zachder as a talisman anciently set up to scare away all noxious reptiles. But the popular notion (which prevailed as early as the time of Suidas) was, that Abraham begat Ishmael upon this very stone; or, according to another tradition, tied his camel to it when he went up into the mountain. The Venus the Arabs take for the likeness of the hostess of the two angels Arol and Marol.

³ Probably an aerolite like the Baal of Emesa; the Venus of Paphus, &c.

But the sacred names of the Gnosis in process of time suffered sad degradation; **IAO** and **SABAOTH** themselves became mere spells for making fish come into the net. The mediæval doctors had, long before, read **IAO** as **AIO**, and construing this as representing the peacock's cry, promised wonderful effects from a stone engraved with this fowl having a sea-turtle below, and these letters in the field.

The celebrated "Xenexicon" or plague-amulet of Paracelsus, in whose efficacy the learned Gaffarel⁴ (librarian to Card. Richelieu) firmly believed, was a paper inscribed with the figures of a serpent and scorpion, to be made when Sol was entering the latter Sign. Another of equal virtue represented a sheep pierced full of holes. But the latest surviving relic of this class of superstitions, is that charm against the plague still believed in by the German boors. The material is a thin silver plate engraved with those holy names of the ancient Kabala thus arranged,—

	+ ELOHIM + ELOHI +				
+ ADONAI +	4	14	15	1	+ ZEBAOth +
	9	7	6	12	
	5	11	10	8	
	16	2	3	13	
	+ ROQYEL + IOSEPHIEL +				

The numerals added together either downwards, across, or from corner to corner, give the same sum, 34; though why that particular number should have any special merit must be left for some profound Kabalist (if any yet survive) to explain. This same tablet is seen suspended over the head of "Melancholy" in Albert Durer's wonderful engraving so entitled,—a convincing proof of the importance attached to it in the days of that artist. Its introduction in so conspicuous a place long puzzled me, until I met with the notice of its specific virtue in Justinus Kerner's little treatise "On Amulets."

⁴ In his *Curiositéz Inouyes*. 1632.

The extreme barbarism marking the execution of many Gnostic talismans would lead one to suspect that their manufacture survived considerably beyond the date usually assigned for the extinction of the Glyptic Art in Europe. The mere mechanical processes of this art are so easily acquired, and the instruments employed therein so simple and inexpensive, that the only cause for its cessation in any age must have been the cessation of demand for its productions. But the Arab astrologers under the Caliphate continue to speak of talisman-makers and their mode of proceeding as a regular trade; the Manichæan branch of Gnosticism flourished far down into the Middle Age; the old symbolism was, after that, taken up and improved upon by the alchemists and Rosicrucians; so that such barbarous works, in which every trace of ancient design is extinct may, with good reason, be assigned to times long posterior to the fall of the Western Empire. Of this the most convincing proof that can be adduced is the so-called seal of St. Servatius,⁵ still preserved in Maestricht Cathedral. It is a jasper, 2 in. in diameter, set in silver, bearing the rudest intaglio bust of the saint in the style of a Byzantine medallion; the reverse, a Gorgon's head, with a legend plainly a phonetic rendering of the common exorcism, *Μοῖρα μελαινομένη ὡς ὄφις*. Again, we actually find Marbodius, at the end of the eleventh century, when describing the virtues of the sard, turquoise, and beryl, directing certain sigils to be cut upon them for the purpose of enduing the gems with supernatural powers. This he would hardly have done had gem-engraving been unknown at the time when he was writing, for at a later period, when such had really become the case, we observe the mediæval doctors using the expression, "if a stone be *found* with such or such a figure upon it;" thus showing them to be entirely dependent on chance for their supply of such highly prized articles, and to have no artists within reach capable of transferring to gems the potent figures prescribed by Chael, Ragiell, and Rabanus Maurus. It was not their antiquity that gave the sole virtue to these gems, for we have abundance of sigils and charms cut in *metal* of ostentatiously Gothic manufacture. Inasmuch as gems, from their inherent virtues, were esteemed an infinitely more potent vehicle for similar arcana than the inoperative metal, the very fact of

⁵ Figured in the *Archæological Journal*, vol. xxi. p. 275.

their not occurring upon gems conclusively proves the incapacity of the age for bringing that material into use.

The completest example known of a mediæval talisman is one figured by Caylus (Rec. d'Antiq. vi. p. 404, pl. 130): a gold ring, in shape a plain four-sided hoop, weighing 63 grains, and found in cutting turf a league from Amiens, in 1763. Each side is occupied by a line of Lombardic letters, in seemingly corrupt Greek, mixed up with easily recognisable Gnostic titles.

+ OEQVTAA + SAGRA + HOQOQRA + IOTHE +
HENAVEAET
+ OCCINOMOC + ON + IKC + HOQOTE + BANQVES +
ALPHA 7IB
+ ANA + EENETON + AIRIE + OIPA + AQLA +
OMEIGA + ADONAI
+ HEIEPNATHOI + QEBAI + QVTQVTTA + IEOTHIN

In most of these spells, the letters **QVQVTTA** seem to form an essential part. To give other and full examples of cognate formulæ:—

The first covers the shank of a silver ring of the fourteenth century (from Berne), on the face of which is cut the *Ave Maria* in disjointed letters: + YRYRRAQVQVBERAL TERAMIALPLAEZERAE. The second, a silver brooch (Waterton Coll.) has on the upper side, + EZERA · EZERA · ERAVERAÇAN · + QVQVRALTERANI · ALPHA · ET · Ω. On the flat surface underneath, + AOTVONO OIO MO OOIO AV. A silver ring (Collegio Romano), reads + MEL + QEREL + QOT + QVT + HAI + DABIR + HABER + HEBER.

A clue is given with respect to the nature of these interminable formulæ, though not as to their exact meaning, by our knowledge that the very popular **EBERDIABER** is nothing more than an aid to memory, each letter being the *initial* of the word beginning each verse of a prayer, protective against the plague, written in Latin.⁶ But the awful **AQLA**, that most potent of all exorcisms, is compounded of the initials of the Hebrew *Atha Gebir Leilam Adonai*. "Thou art mighty for ever, O Lord!" Mottoes so composed go back very

⁶ This interesting discovery was made by Mr. Waterton, in a book on similar

subjects published at Venice in the sixteenth century.

far : witness, the famous inscription on the banner which gave their name to the Maccabees, *Mi Camonah Baalim Jehovah*. "Who amongst the gods is like unto Jehovah!"

Another example (and of more recent date) that tends to illustrate the construction of these mystic forms, composed entirely out of initials, intended for no deeper purpose than to assist the memory in reciting the words of the prescribed charm or prayer, is furnished by the "Cross of St. Benedict," often stamped upon a medal so as to read both vertically and horizontally. The vertical letters stand for

C.	C	S.	
	S		
N	D	S	M
	M		
P.	B.		
	L.		

in the four cantons for "Crux sancti Petri Benedicti." Around runs the legend **VRNSMVSMQLIVB**—being the initials in the quatrain,

"Vade retro Satana,
Ne suade mihi vana
Sunt mala quae libas,
Ipse venena bibas."

Lastly, we have an astrological spell, of admirable efficacy, for it is produced by each planet contributing his own initial to make up the mystic **SIMSV M** :

"Post **SIMSV M** sequitur septima Luna subest."

Some Hebrew exorcism is probably expressed in the **BBPPNENA** ordered by *Solomon* to be engraved on a brass or iron ring, to be set with a jasper representing a man's head, and which gave the wearer protection in travel, success at court, &c., &c. **IHS NAZARENVS** was very good against epilepsy, and therefore is still frequently met with on silver rings of later mediæval make ; so was the verse

"Vulnera quinque Dei sunt medicina mei."

But the most notable of all prophylactics for this disease was the letter **T** with the legend **ANAZAPTA . DEI . EMANUEL**. In the Devonshire Cabinet is a cameo converted into an amulet, by the addition of this word, the meaning whereof is as yet shrouded in night, "res alta nocte et caligine mersa." But no charm was of greater force according to the saying,

"Est mala mors capta cum dicitur Ananazapta,
Ananazapta ferit illum qui lædere quærit."⁷

The belief in the virtue of the letter that accompanies the spell, the Egyptian Tau, or "Tau mysticum," goes back to the remotest antiquity. Although undoubtedly originating in the hieroglyphic "Sign of Life," otherwise the "crux ansata," yet the Christian source of name and notion was afforded by Ezekiel (ix. 4): "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark (*lit.* "a Tau") upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Where the Vulgate actually reads "Signa eis Tau," perhaps from a tradition of the true meaning of the word. It is a remarkable exemplification of the persistency of ancient beliefs, amidst all the apparent revolutions of religious creeds, that this symbol, after figuring in the Bacchic Mysteries, should have been universally accepted by mediæval faith as the very "Signet of the Living God" mentioned in the Apocalypse. In the painted glass at S. Denys, the Angel was figured stamping the seal upon the forehead of the elect: the legend explaining the subject as **SIGNVM TAV**. The same mark is the distinctive badge of St. Anthony, an *Egyptian* hermit be it remembered, and in the old Greek paintings is always coloured *blue*.⁸

The phrase "**IHS** autem transiens per medium illorum ibat," was a safeguard against all dangers in travelling both by sea and land. "And therefore seyen some men when they dreden them of thefes on any way, or of enemyes, 'Jesus autem, &c.' in tokene and mynde that our Lord passed through oute of the Jewes' crueltie and scaped safely fro hem. So surely mowen men passen the perele of thefes. And than say men 2 vers of the pseume, 3 sithes, 'Irruat super eos formido et pavor in magnitudine brachii tui, Domine. Fiant immobiles quasi lapis donec pertranseat populus tuus Domine donec pertranseat populus tuus iste quem pos-

⁷ The complete distich is engraved on a gold ring, found in a tomb at Milan (Waterton Collection). The nearest approximation to a meaning that a very learned Hebraist can elicit from *ananazapta* is "The Joy of Shapta."

⁸ Clarkson states (but without giving his authority—a defect pervading the whole of his learned memoir on the symbolical evidence of the Temple Church),

that the T cross was the *mark* received by the Mithraicists upon their foreheads at the time of initiation. He adds that the present Masonic jewel of the G. A. is the same symbol, thrice combined thus,



The three orders of the Egyptian priesthood had for badges respectively the circle, interpreted as signifying the *sun*; the triangle, *pleasure*; and the tau, *eternal life*.

sedisti.' And thanne may thei passe withouten peine." (Mandeville, Chap. X.) Edward III. put these same words for a legend or motto upon his gold noble in memory of his miraculous escape in the great naval fight off Sluys, an event also commemorated by the type of the obverse, the king fully armed standing in a ship. But the same words being likewise regarded in those times as an alchemical axiom, they were construed into a testimony to the then current story that Raymond Lully, the famed possessor of the Philosopher's Stone, had made (being shut up in the Tower till he complied) the amount of gold required for the new coinage.

Equally popular, too, was the figure of St. Christopher, and for very good reason, so long as people believed in the distich—

"Christophori faciem die quocunque tueris
Illo nempe die mala morte non morieris."

The earliest to make its appearance amongst these spells, and occurring the most frequently of them all, is—

QVTTV. THEBAL. EBAL. ADROS. (VDROS.) MADROS.

in which one is tempted to discover the similarly sounding Hebrew words, signifying *time, the world, vanity, seek after, sought*, in the sense of "time flies, the world is vanity, seek after what is worth seeking for." And this interpretation is rendered more plausible by what Baccius (*De Gemmis*) mentions under "Topazius," that Hadrianus Gulielmus of Naples possessed one engraved in "antique" Roman letters, with the maxim to much the same effect "*Natura deficit, Fortuna mutatur, Deus omnia cernit.*" But inasmuch as such aphorisms, and couched in that language, have no precedent amongst existing relics of *ancient* superstitions, I more than suspect that Baccius' *antique* Roman letters meant the Lombardic, quite obsolete in his day, when the true *antique* alphabet, revived, was alone in use; and, moreover, that we have here the true interpretation of the enigma which has so long puzzled archæologists. Besides the obvious correspondence in the sense, there seems an intentional agreement in the number of syllables in each legend. Epiphanius (*Hæres. xxv.*) laughs at the fondness of the Gnostics for certain Hebrew words, the sound of which had struck their ear as fraught with deep mystery, although in fact of utterly trivial import. "Attempting to impose upon the

imagination of the unlearned by the terror of the Names, and the fictitious barbaric sound of the appellations, they give to one of the Powers the title "Caulau cauch," words taken from Isaiah (xviii.), and signifying there nothing more than "hope upon hope." Nevertheless, the sound of **ADROS**, **VDROS**, irresistibly reminds the ear of the invocation to the Agathodæmon Cunphis in the Hartwell House Collection, **APTOC ΠΕΙΝΗ ΥΔΩΡ ΔΙΥΗ**, and that some amongst mediæval spells contain fragments of corrupted Greek is a fact that cannot be disputed.⁹

CASPAR or **IASPAR**, **MELCHIOR**, **BALTASAR**, the traditional names of the Three Magi, yet more famed as the "Three Kings of Cologne," was an inscription for rings and cups,¹ almost as much in vogue as the words last discussed. The importance so long attached to these names of the "Wise Men out of the East," is evidently connected with some reminiscences of the former Mithraic worship so prevalent throughout the later empire, there being every reason to accept Seel's plausible hypothesis ("Mithra") that under the cloak of Mithraicism early Christianity first grew up and flourished in Gaul and Germany, secure from molestation from the older national creeds. Or again, the same reverence may have had its source at a later period in Manichæism, which was itself only a modification of the Zoroastrian doctrine, for Manes was put to death as a *heretic* by the decree of the œcumenical council of Magi, convoked by Varanes II. to consider the nature of his new teaching. The Magi, therefore, professional brethren of the writer, may well be supposed to have played a very conspicuous part in the "Gospel of Manes," now unfortunately lost. When their names were first published cannot be ascertained; they do *not* occur where one would naturally expect to find them, in the "Gospel of the Infancy," which gives so particular an account of their visit to Bethlehem. They had been led thither by a prophecy of *Zerdusht*, and received from Mary, in requital for their offerings, the infant's swaddling-clothes, of which present the result is thus narrated.² "On

⁹ For example **ΑΓΙΟΣ.Ο.ΤΗΕΟΣ. ΑΓΙΟΣ. ΑΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ.** (words from the Mass-service) often occur, more or less distorted, on rings of this kind. Byzantine influence long continued to tinge the superstition of the Franks. Niquitas (*Nicetus*) of Constantinople and his col-

league Udros are named amongst the first apostles of the Albigenses.

¹ As upon the silver rim of a chalice-shaped goblet amongst the Parker plate, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

² Gospel of the Infancy, ch. iii.

their return their kings and princes came to them, inquiring what they had seen and done. . . . But they produced the swaddling-cloth which St. Mary had given to them ; on account whereof they kept a feast, and having, according to the custom of their country, made a fire, they worshipped it. And casting the swaddling-cloth into the fire, the fire took it and kept it. And when the fire was put out, they took forth the swaddling-cloth unhurt as much as if the fire had not touched it. Then they began to kiss it, and put it upon their heads and their eyes, saying,—‘This is certainly an undoubted truth, and it is really surprising that the fire could not burn it and consume it.’ Then they took it and, with the greatest respect, laid it up amongst their treasures.”

The notion that the Three Kings typify the three ancient divisions of the earth—the first being painted as an European, the second an Asiatic, the third a Negro—seems borrowed from some ancient representation of the same regions paying their homage at the “Birth of Mithras,” the *Natale Invicti*, celebrated on the 25th day of December. Hence arose the restriction of their number to *three*, although that of the “wise men” is nowhere specified by either the canonical or the apocryphal evangelists. Their traditional names in fact appear from their marked analogy to the attributes of the Solar deity to have been originally no more than the regular epithets of Mithras himself ; Caspar signifying the *White one* ; Melchior, *King of light* ; Baltasar (the Vulgate form of Belshazzar), the *Lord of treasures*. And the origin of our festival of Christmas Day is best stated in the words of S. Chrysostom himself (Hom. xxxi.), “On this day the birthday of Christ was *lately* fixed at Rome, in order that whilst the heathens were occupied in their profane ceremonies the Christians might perform their holy rites undisturbed But they call this day ‘The Birthday of the Invincible One :’ who is so invincible as the Lord that overthrew and vanquished Death ? Or, because they style it the ‘Birthday of the Sun.’ He is the Sun of Righteousness, of whom Malachi saith, ‘Upon you, fearful ones, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings.’”

The very popular spell, already considered, is met with under many and strangely-distorted forms ; being either corrupted through ignorance, or, what is more probable, purposely disguised by the insertion of a foreign letter in

each word. For example, a gold ring lately exhumed in an old castle, co. Limerick, reads,—

+ ADROCS . VDROCS . ADROCS . TEBRAL.

+ TQVSTVS . QVS . TAMQVE.

where, for some mystic reason, the C, thrice inserted, greatly alters the appearance of the familiar charm. Another, in the Collection of the Royal Irish Academy, actually introduces genuine Greek letters, although there is every reason for supposing that the groundwork of the formula remains substantially the same.

+ ΠΟΡΟΣ . SVORCOS . ΠΟΡCOS . TERRAL.

QVSCYSCVSTRMCVET.

It is much to be regretted that such useful defences of our households should have been allowed to fall into oblivion as were the spells alluded to by Pope in his lines,

“One sings the fair, but songs no longer move,
No rat is rhymed to death, nor maid to love.”³

Spells contrived especially for the destruction of noxious animals were perhaps amongst the oldest of their kind; Virgil has

“Frigidus in pratis cantando rumpitur anguis.”

Justin Martyr likewise⁴ mentions, with manifestly the fullest belief in their efficacy, the τελέσματα made by Apollonius Tyaneus against mice, and wild beasts; accounting for the fact, by that philosopher's deep knowledge of the secrets of nature. Gaffarel quotes Jonctinus that “Nicolas of Florence, a religious man, made an amulet for driving away gnats under a certain constellation, in certain determinate forms; he made use of the constellation Saturn in a bodily shape, and he thereby drove away the gnats.” Something of the kind yet survives in the East: the Persians manage to scare away cockroaches by writing up the name of the cockroach king, Kabikaj, in the places infested by his subjects. In the University Library at Cambridge may be seen a Persian MS. thus defended against their attacks by this venerated name, inscribed thrice upon its cover—how invaluable an ornament to a London kitchen, supposing the title to retain its power over those dusky colonists from the Indies!

³ Dr. Donne's Sat. II.

⁴ Quæst. xxiv.