

Summary of the Rosary of Arnold de Villa Nova

In Giovanni Lacinus, *Pretiosa margarita novella...* Venice, 1546, there is a section 'Collectanea Lacinii ex Arnoldo de Villa Nova', which is a summary of the Rosarius of Arnold de Villa Nova. This text obviously influenced the 1550 edition of the *Rosarium philosophorum*.

Extracts made by Lacinus from the works of Arnold de Villa Nova, in which the composition of our stone is practically and lucidly set forth.

We have learned all that Bonus could tell us about the first principles of metals and their generation. We will now proceed to consider, practically and theoretically, the composition of our Stone, since practice and theory are mutually helpful: practice is informed by theory, and theory is corrected and checked by practice. Now, as Arnold de Villa Nova has, in his Rosary, given us a practical treatise on the Philosophers' Stone, I will arrange some of his remarks in chapters according to the following plan:

Chapter the First shows that there is one Philosophers' Stone, because there is one essence, and one method, both in the red and white Medicine. The red Medicine is merely a further development of the white.

Chapter the Second shows whence is the Stone extracted. Observe well the answer.

Chapter the Third shows the chief difficulty of our work to be the discovery of the first matter of metals.

Chapter the Fourth shows our first physical object must be to dissolve the Stone into its Mercury, or primal matter of all metals. Hence the philosopher says that we must first be at pains to dissolve and sublime the two luminaries, because the primal grade of operation in Our Art is to reduce them to quicksilver. Unless the bodies lose their corporeal nature, and become spiritual, we shall make no progress with our work. The solution of a body takes place through the operation of the spirit, and is attended with the coagulation of the spirit. Then the body mingles with the spirit, and the spirit with the body.

Chapter the Fifth shows the four principal methods in this Magistry: Dissolution, Purification, Reduction, Fixation. To dissolve is to make the gross subtle; to purify is to make the dark bright; reduction is of the humid into the dry; fixation is by resolution and coagulation of the spirit into its own body, or solid substance.

Chapter the Sixth shows the dissolution of the Stone, and its inhumation, which are the first regimen. Dissolution is brought about by purified Mercury. This is done in order that we may have sulphur and Mercury of that matter whereof gold and silver are developed beneath the earth.

Chapter the Seventh shows the second regimen: Ablution and purification of the black, corrupt, fetid matter, so that it may become exceeding bright, clear, and spotless - which ablation is performed by division of the Stone into its four elements and the cleansing of each element.

Arnold tells us truly that all metals are generated from quicksilver and sulphur, which coagulate the quicksilver by means of its heat or vapour; since every dry element naturally drinks up its humid element. Quicksilver in its essence is a compound of very subtle, white, sulphureous earth, with bright water, so as to make up one substance, which finds no rest upon a plane surface.

It is homogeneous in nature, and is either wholly fixed, or else wholly evaporates in the fire. By constant sublimation it is purified, digested, and thickened, and so gradually coagulated into white and red sulphur. This process of constant dissolution and coagulation is performed by Nature in not less than a thousand years; but Art, through the mediation of Nature, accomplishes it in a very short time. If, then, we would prepare the medicine, we must both accelerate and imitate Nature.

Quicksilver is the matter and element of all metals alike; all of them when melted are converted thereto, and it also combines with them; at the same time, in some it is more and in some less pure, on account of its corruptive external sulphur. But quicksilver is coagulated by virtue of its own inward, non-combustive sulphur. The philosopher tells us that white, incombustible sulphur congeals mercury, and is the best thing that can possibly be used for conversion of mercury into good silver. If the sulphur be pure, good, but, on the other hand, of a red brilliancy, containing the gentle heat without the combustive violence of natural sulphur, it is the best thing that can possibly be used for converting Mercury into the Sun. The result of good quicksilver and impure combustive sulphur is copper. Porous,

impure quicksilver and impure sulphur produce iron. Tin has good, pure quicksilver but its sulphur is bad and ill mixed. Lead has gross, bad, ponderous, and earthy quicksilver, and bad, fetid, and feeble sulphur. So, at least, Aristotle tells us.

The common outward sulphur, then, is the cause of the imperfection of metals. There are two kinds of sulphur in every metal except gold, the outward combustive and the inward non-combustive, which belongs to the substantial composition of the quicksilver. The outward sulphur is separable, and is removed by calcination; the internal sulphur is inseparable from the quicksilver by calcination in fire. The latter the quicksilver retains, nor can it ever be taken away, as being homogeneous with it: the former it spurns and rejects, and exposes to the action of the fire, which consumes it. It is the property of this external sulphur, always either to be burned in the fire, or in its composition with quicksilver to burn, corrupt, and denigrate. It is quicksilver, then, which perfects bodies, and saves them from combustion, because the more bodies are of the nature of quicksilver, the less are they liable to combustion. And as quicksilver prevents combustion, so it is the cause of metallic fusibility, and it is that by means of which the tincture pervades the metals, since it receives the homogeneous tinctural influence in all its smallest parts. Quicksilver adheres most readily to quicksilver, then to gold, then to silver, because these two metals are most homogeneous to it. It is not so with the other metals, till they are purged of their corruptive sulphur.

Those are, then, the most perfect bodies which contain the largest proportion of quicksilver, while those which contain less are less perfect. It contains in itself its own good sulphur, by means of which it is coagulated into gold and silver, but by different methods of digestion. If the sulphur be white, it will digest the quicksilver into silver; if, on the other hand, it shew a red brilliancy, and have a noble but not destructive fire, it will coagulate the quicksilver into gold, and the elixir of gold is composed from it. Observe that both white and red sulphur are in reality the same metallic matter; but they are more and less powerful because of the different degree of their digestion. Hence the philosopher says that all gold has red sulphur, and all silver white sulphur. But this sulphur is not found upon the earth, as Avicenna assures us, otherwise than in these two; hence we most subtly prepare these bodies, that we may have red sulphur and quicksilver of the same matter on the earth of which gold and silver are made under the earth: for these are lucent bodies, whose rays tinge other bodies with true white and red. Thus the red tincture is obtained from gold, and the white tincture from silver.

Chapter I.

Showing that there is but one Philosophers' Stone.

Arnold de Villa Nova says that there is but one Philosophers' Stone, and there is but one Medicine, to which nothing foreign is added, and from which nothing is removed, except that which is foreign to it. Its external sulphur of vulgar quicksilver is foreign to it; its inward sulphur belongs to its own nature, and into this it must be converted by our magistry. Do not introduce into it, then, any powder, or water, or any other foreign substance, because no heterogeneous material can possibly enter into its composition. If any foreign matter be added to it, it is straightway corrupted, and does not become what you desire. The Stone itself, in order that it may enter the common-metals, must attain a state of great fixation and subtleness, that it may become a medicine for corrupt bodies.

Chapter II.

Whence the Physical Stone is extracted.

Our physical Stone, or Medicine, may be obtained from all metals; but it is found in the highest perfection in gold and silver. Without the Sun and its shadow, the Moon, we can have no tinging quicksilver, and he is foolish who attempts to accomplish our Magistry in their absence. On the other hand he who knows how to tinge quicksilver with the Sun and Moon is in possession of our arcanum which may become red sulphur, but at first is called white sulphur. Gold is the father, and silver the mother of the proximate substance of our Stone, for out of these bodies, prepared with their sulphur or arsenic, is our medicine elicited. It may, indeed, be possible to derive it from other bodies, but it is found nearer to the hand, and more easily, in quicksilver, which is the father of those lights and the root of all metals. Of this were they all made, and into the same all of them return. That which is now our Stone is not quicksilver, but once formed part of it, and it is this which imparts to it its brightness, preserves it from combustion, and is the cause of its perfection. Do not work with anything except Mercury and the Sun for the Sun, and Mercury and the Moon for the Moon.

Chapter III.

It is impossible for the Stone to be perfected by the substance of metals only.

As water cannot rise above the level of its spring, so the wonderful Tincture, which is to transmute all common metals into gold and silver, cannot possibly be perfected out of the substance of metals only, not even of gold and

silver. The elixir must be far more purified and digested than these. If gold and silver gave of their perfection to other metals, they themselves would become imperfect. The tincture which is to impart perfection to all other metallic bodies must itself possess a superabundance of digestive perfection and matured excellence. Most of our Alchemists leave off with the substance with which they ought to have begun, and consequently nothing comes of their projection.

Chapter IV.

Of the first Operation of our Magistry.

Our first business, according to Arnold, must be to dissolve our Stone into its Mercury or first matter. Species can be transmuted only by the reduction of their matter to the generic First Matter. Hence we must reduce our Stone to quicksilver. By the projection of our Tincture, the species, or properties of the species, are not changed, but only individual quantities of metal belonging to the species. Silver as a metallic species is never changed into gold, which has immediately its own species, but individuals of this or another metallic species may well so change. Your first step, then, must be to bring about the dissolution of gold and silver into quicksilver. Hence the Sages say: Unless the bodies become incorporeal, and the spirits corporeal, no progress will be made. The true beginning, then, of our work is the solution of our body, because bodies, when dissolved, become spiritual in their nature, and are yet at the same time more fixed than the spirit, though they are dissolved with it. For the solution of the body means the coagulation of the spirit, and vice versa; each gives up something of its own nature: they meet each other half-way, and thus become one inseparable substance, like water mixed with water.

Chapter V.

On the Perfect Investigation of the Physical Stone.

It is clear, then, that the operation of our Stone is the operation of Nature. As ice is water because it is dissolved into water, so our Stone, which is dissolved into quicksilver, is thereby proved to be quicksilver. Our operation is a conversion of the elements, an amicable conjunction of the humid with the dry, and of the cold with the hot. But the dry becomes humid, and the cold becomes hot, only by means of an intermediate substance. If, then, the dry be converted into the cold, and the cold into the humid, and the humid into the hot, and the hot into the dry, then you have the whole Magistry. The four stages of our work, then, are solution, purification, reduction, and fixation, the significance of which terms has already been explained. Solution is of the gross into the subtle; purification is of the dark into the bright; reduction is of the humid into the dry; fixation is of the volatile over its own body. Let the Stone, therefore, be dissolved with best Mercury, purged from its terrestrial and humid nature, by means of sublimation, and afterwards reduced. With this let it be twice pounded, and then placed in the Balneum Mariae

How Mercury is Cleansed.

Sublime your Mercury once or twice with vitriol and salt, till its substance is very white and brilliant. When it is in a volatile state, plunge it into boiling water, till it once more becomes quicksilver; remove the water, and proceed to use it for our Magistry. Pound it, soak it in its own water, and digest it in S. Mary's bath; distil it through a filter. Watch for a black oil appearing on the surface, which is the true sign of the dissolution being completed. Watch it well, I repeat, lest it evaporate into smoke, and what you do with the white, do also with the red. The difference between the Solar and the Lunar Medicine is this, that the Solar includes the Lunar, but the Lunar does not include the Solar, the Solar having in addition a reddish or golden colouring substance. Be patient and do not attempt to extract the Tincture in a hurry; haste burns up, instead of maturing and digesting, our substance. Bear in mind that the chief error in this Art is haste, which ends in the combustion of everything. Much fire at the beginning is to the detriment of the tincture, and consumes the medicine.

Pound and cool; with patience, and reiterate the process again and again, because that which is soaked with water is softened. The more you pound the substance, the softer it will become, and the softer it becomes, the more the gross parts are subtilized, till perfect union of body and spirit supervenes. For by means of pounding and softening and digestion, the parts held together by the viscosity of the water in bodies are separated. Bodies that are dissolved, are reduced to the nature of spirits, and their union is thenceforward indissoluble, like that of water mixed with water: for Nature rejoices when the bridegroom is united to the bride. Things which cannot be dissolved are devoid of subtle or soft parts. I pray you, therefore, labour in the dissolution of the Stone, disintegrating the grosser parts that the gross may be rejected and the work performed with the subtle.

Chapter VI.

On the Inhumation of the Stone.

When the Stone is dissolved, expose the whole of it to gentle heat, for its better putrefaction and digestion, and for

the consummation of the connubial rite, during the space of a month of the Sages, i.e., of thirty days, since the danger of combustion is removed by digestion and inhumation. Let all be boiled together over a gentle fire, till the whole substance resolves into its first matter, and becomes truly like quicksilver. The sign that the solution is complete, is a blackness which appears after a certain time, which also we denominate the Raven's Head. When the Stone is fully dissolved in S. Mary's Bath, it should be passed through a filter. The blackness is a sign that the process of volatilization is accomplished.

Recapitulation of the First Regimen.

Sublime the Mercury, and dissolve it; then subject the whole substance to coction, till it is reduced to its first nature, i.e., till we have sulphur and quicksilver, of the same matter which in mines is digested into gold and silver. And he that has this Magistry has an everlasting treasure.

Chapter VII.

The second Regimen, or that of Purification.

The second regimen of the Stone is its ablation, that is to say, the removal of all that is black, corrupt, and fetid in it, whereby it is rendered very brilliant, and clear, and pure. This is brought about by the division of the elements, the distillation of the waters, and the solution of the Stone, because there are two dry or stony, and two humid or watery elements. The dry elements are fire and earth, the aqueous are air and Water. Fire purifies water by distillation, and thus all the elements cleanse and become assimilated to each other. So is our Stone divided into four elements, that it may be the better subtilised, and cleansed from stains, and afterwards more firmly conjoined. But nothing ever was born, has grown, or is animated, except after putrefaction and digestion. If there be no putrefaction, there can be no melting and no solution, but if there be no solution, then nothing is accomplished.

Division of the Stone into four Elements.

Take the Stone in its putrefied state, cleanse it by the cleansing of the four elements, by distillation, by a light and equable fire. Take the water. Then increase the fire a little, till all the air is mixed with fire, and that which remains at the bottom, in a burnt state, is dry, black earth. The water is cleansed in the bath of S. Mary, but air and fire are distilled through the ashes, and the grosser parts of the earth remain below, while the more subtle parts are carried upward. Earth desiccates and fixes, water Purifies and cleanses. Air and fire tinge, and cause fluidity; hence it is necessary to have much water and air. The quantity of the Tincture will be in proportion to the quantity of air. Seek, therefore, my dearest, in all thy works to overcome Mercury in commixtion, that thou mayest have enough of air; and if thou art able to perfect this by itself, thou will be the explorer of the conquering potency which resides in the highest perfection of Nature. After this operation it is still necessary for the Medicine to be matured and nourished over the fire, as the child is nourished at the breast.

On the Ablution of Water.

When you have separated the elements of the Stone, cleanse them; cleanse the air and water by a sevenfold distillation. The fire and earth, on the other hand, must be well calcined. Distil the air and water separately, for the air is more precious than the water. The air tinges the earth, and infuses into it life and the sensible soul. Air and water must be guarded from excessive heat, or they will be dried up. This is brought about by inhumation. When the purification is complete, the whole substance is wonderfully white and brilliant. The sediment of the water in distillation must be carefully removed and set apart with the blackness of the earth, already mentioned. Set also apart the seven times distilled water, for the same is the medicine and the Water of Life which washes the Laton. As you do with the white water, so do also with the red; there is no difference between the two, except that one tinges white, and the other red.

On the Ablution of Air.

Separate the air from the fire by distillation, viz., through the ashes. That which is distilled is most pure air; that which remains at the bottom, is dry fire. The air is the oil and tincture, the gold and soul of the Sages, the ointment by means of which the whole Magistry is effected. Fire and air must be distilled together because they are of the same nature. If you mix the Stone with fire, it will be red, and have all the virtues of the Red Tincture.

How oil is extracted from all things.

Place over the body, whence you wish to extract oil, sufficient purified Mercury to cover it completely, that is, to the height of four inches, or better if more; then put it over a slow fire. The oil, or air, will soon begin to bubble up through the quicksilver. Collect it carefully, and, if necessary, that is, should the quicksilver begin to diminish, add

more pure and warm quicksilver and continue the coction till all the oil has been obtained. This oil must then be purified by inhumation and sevenfold distillation through the alembic, till it be brilliantly white. It will float on the surface of our water. Set it apart, for it is the Oily Tincture, the Golden Soul, and the Unguent of the Philosophers, which colours, tinges, fixes, and makes fluid. A thin plate of metal steeped into it, will be changed into silver if it be of the white, and into gold if it be of the red grade. But do not mix the oil of gold with the oil of silver, or the reverse; for each has its own special purpose, one to tinge white, and the other to tinge red.

Difference between Water and Oil.

Water only cleanses, oil tinges and colours. If you dip a rag in clean water, it will become cleaner than it was; but the water will evaporate. If you dip it in coloured oil, it will be saturated with the colour of the oil, and you will be able to remove this colour only by burning the whole rag. For oil is thicker and more intense, and yet, at the same time, lighter than water. Nevertheless, it is by means of water, and from water that we obtain this oil. The water is the spirit, which retains the oil, or soul, as the soul retains the body. Through the oil our coagulation is effected, because it retains the volatile substance. Sow the soul in white flaky earth, for it will retain it: since, when it has ascended from earth to heaven, and descended to, the earth, it will have received the strength of things above, and of things below.

The cleansing of Fire and Earth.

Collect the impure sediments obtained from the cleansing of the oil, and place them with the fire, since they are fire, and have blackness and redness which must be pounded with the first water, and gently burned till they become a dry powder, without and of the humidity of air. So, also, the sediment of water must be combined with earth, and thrice calcined till it becomes white and dry. Calcine fire with fire and earth with earth, till they are pure and free from blackness, what ascends from the fire is the red oil; what ascends from the earth is the white precious oil. Perform all these processes, and preserve each part carefully by itself.

The cause of Ablution according to Plato.

According to Plato, you should to the fullest extent of your ability effect the separation of the elements: cleanse water and air by distillation, and earth by heat and calcination, till nothing of the soul is left in the body i.e. when nothing more evaporates from it, if placed on a red-hot metallic plate. In no part of our operation do we need any water but our white water, nor any oil but our white or orange-coloured oil, nor any fire except our red fire, nor any earth except that which is pallid or slightly white. But if you thus prepare the elements, the earth will be ready for solution, the water efficacious for digestion, and the oil, in which is the fire, eminently fitted for tinging. If the end of your process should not present you with such elements, this is an indication of error; set about the correction thereof, for it will be easier than beginning again. Keep each element carefully sealed up in a well-stoppered jar, write upon each its own name, and a record of its properties, for it would be fatal to mistake one for the other.

On the third Regimen, which is that of Reduction.

The third regimen consists in bringing back the humid water to the dry earth, that it may recover its lost humidity. Since fire and earth are both dry elements, they must first be combined before this restoration can take place. Then the dry elements will be in a condition to drink up more moisture than they had before, for calcination disintegrates a body and so empties it of all moisture, that it will imbibe its aqueous humidity very greedily.

Arnold here places a chapter on the albification and sublimation of the earth by frequent pounding, imbibition, and digestion of the Mercury. When this process is fully accomplished, that is, when it ascends white as snow, we have the good, flaky, brilliantly white earth, or the white incombustible sulphur. If you wish to obtain red sulphur, dissolve this white sulphur in red water, by means of pounding, and saturation, and good decoction; coagulate it alternately into a stone and alternately dissolve what is coagulated in the red water. After the third time, sublime the whole in a fierce fire, and that which rises upward will be snowy white sulphur, while that which remains at the bottom will be red, like scarlet. Hence you see that while there are two different stages of our magistry, there is in reality only one Stone.

The true method of bringing back the Water to the Earth.

Pour at first upon the earth (which you have carefully pounded) one-fiftieth part its own quantity of water; for it is necessary at the beginning to give the earth little water, just as an infant has to be given at first little nutriment. and then gradually more. This should be repeated over and over again, with great patience, more and more water being poured over the earth each time, but not more than the earth can conveniently drink up; after each trituration and effusion, the whole should be subjected to thorough coction for eight days at a time. Without constant, patient

irrigation the earth cannot bring forth fruit. Continue the trituration and assation until all the water has been absorbed and dried up, while the earth has become white. The water is to be administered temperately after each calcination; too much of it will produce a tempestuous condition; too little will convert the matter into glowing ashes.

The degree of heat applied should be that of horse dung. After imbibition, it should be inhumed for seven days.

There are three colours, marking the three stages of this process. The black colour shows that the substance is still imperfect: after its appearance the heat of the fire should be slightly increased. By constantly repeating the process you will soon make the earth white; and then you should behold the orange colour. The more limpid the water, the more limpid the earth will be; the more the earth is washed, the whiter it will become.

Things are sublimed either by themselves, if they are spirits, or, if bodies, they are sublimed by means of some spiritual substance. Our earth is not sublimed in its condition as calx, unless it be first subtly incorporated with mercury. Hence you should pound the earth, saturate it with mercury, and digest them till they become one body. This must be repeated over and over again, or else the sublimation cannot take place, because the earth will not be properly incorporated with the mercury. Sublimation is contingent upon the reduction of the body into a subtle matter and nature. By means of this sublimation bodies are freed from their grosser elements, and reduced to their first matter, which can then be perfectly developed. If you wish to develop the sublimed substance into silver, both earth and mercury should be white: if you wish to develop it into gold, they should both be red, and the ponder should be incerated. When Mercury is sublimed for the Moon, nothing else should be mixed with it, for the colour of the Sun does not enter into the Moon, nor that of the Moon into the Sun. Do not mix that which ascends and that which remains below. That which remains below should be again pounded and saturated, till the whole is sublimed or incorporated with Mercury. In the sublimation of Mercury you will see a most white earth, like snow, and, as it were, a dead powder adhering to the sides of the aludel. Reiterate sublimation thereon, without the faeces remaining below. Soon that which ascends will settle in the shape of a white, flaky powder. These are the superior ashes, while that which remains below is the foul sediment, and should be removed. In this way the white sulphur or white tincture is perfected.

The fourth Regimen, which consists in Fixation, and for this purpose we need a certain Ferment.

The fourth operation is to fix the white and red sulphur over a fixed body, i.e., silver and gold respectively. Without a proper ferment the Moon cannot become the Sun, but the substance, having nothing to prevent it from doing so, will again revert into water. It must therefore be incorporated with the body from which it was first prepared, viz., the Moon or the Sun. It is necessary, in fact, to Unite it to its own proper body. For this purpose mix it with the ferment (either white or red), which will completely assimilate it to its own nature. Do not mix the ferment of one (white) sulphur with another (red) sulphur: the result would be disappointing. The ferment of gold is gold, and the ferment of silver is silver, and there are no other proper ferments in all the world, because nothing fixes which is not itself fixed.

The weight of the Ferment must exceed, or at least be equal to, the weight of its Sulphur.

The quantity of volatile sulphur in any ferment must not be greater than that of its body. If there be a preponderance of the body, says Plato, it will quickly change the volatile sulphur into a powder of its own colour, i.e., either that of gold or of silver. The sulphur cannot enter the bodies except through the medium of water, the intermediate substance between the sulphur and the ferment. Therefore put first the earth, then the water, and then the air (Avicenna). If you wish to obtain the red Tincture, put in the fourth place fire, since the white Tincture needs only three elements, but the red Tincture needs fire as well. Open, therefore, and seal, solve and coagulate, wash and dry, for water is the medium which joins the tinctures of oil, air, and fire. If you first take oil and then earth, the oil will mortify in the earth, for the water will enter. If you first take water and then oil, the oil will float upon the water. But if you first take water and afterwards earth, the water will outweigh the earth. Fix, therefore, the water with the earth till it adheres to it. If one of the four be destroyed, all will die; if one have more soul than another, it will be worthless. The ferment is the soul, see that you arrange fermentation so as to produce a calcined, dissolved, and indurated dust. If the fermentation be not rightly performed, the whole Magistery will fail.

The practical uses of dividing the elements.

If you do not divide the Stone into its four elements, the soul cannot well be united to the body. If you do not mix of the body with that over which you desire to make the projection, the body will not love the spirit. If you do not combine the ferment with the elixir, the body over which the projection is made is not properly coloured. If you do not sublime all you put into the elixir, it will be rough gold and silver, and if the whole be not prepared, it will not sustain the fire. Finally, without pains in softening and hardening, the gold and silver will want ductility in operating. The earth which is put into the elixir must be sublimed, in order that the whole may be completely united.

If you wish to project the elixir, make earth of that substance whose body you wish to change, and put in the ferment (as above), if it be gold, of gold, and if it be silver, of silver. You must combine the ferment with the body on which you desire to project the elixir. The body and the ferment which are combined in the elixir must be a powder twice or thrice sublimed. Each sublimation will intensify the virtue of the elixir, namely, one upon a hundred, a hundred upon a thousand, and so on to infinity.

We must be careful about the proper quantity of each substance.

If you wish to prepare our Stone, you should know how much water, and air, and fire, and earth it contains when it is calcined when it is dissolved, and when it is reduced respectively. In the first case, there will be greater dryness, greater heat, less moisture, less cold. In the second, there will be greater cold, less heat, more moisture, and less dryness. In the third, there will be greater heat, less moisture, more dryness, and less cold.

How the Elements are improved, and how the Fusion of the Medicine is affected.

In the conjunction of the Stone, expect three principal colours, first the black, then the white, then the red. Take care that the tincture does not become red before it becomes black, for then it will perish by combustion, and that none of the colours appear before their proper time, or out of their proper order. Should the red appear before the black, or before the white, decoct the whole in white water till the proper colour is restored. Note also that decoction by inhumation obviates the error of combustion, and restores lost humidity. If the medicine does not combine properly, correct by dissolution. The purification and dissolution are brought about, not by common, but by mercurial water. We calcine the medicine that we may the better dissolve it, that it may the better be cleansed, fixed, and melted. and that the bodies may receive a better impression therefrom, and may be more fully permeated thereby. Towards the end of the Magistry, it is a good plan to dissolve the body of the ferment whether white or red, in order that it may amalgamate all the more readily. Not all the parts are separated in dissolution, but the separation is sufficiently complete to ensure the removal of all impurities. If the metal which is to be changed by means of the Medicine, have not sufficient colour, more of the Medicine should be added; if it have too much, the dose should be smaller. If the Medicine be not sufficiently fixed, the remedy lies in repeating the dissolution and coagulation several times. If it be too firm, more of oil, that is, the air of the Stone, should be added; and observe, as a general rule, that for fixation you must have more of the cold and dry, and less of the hot and humid elements.

Of the quantities to be observed in Fixation.

All Nature is ruled by ratio and proportion; hence, in the fixation of our Stone, we must know how much we need of water, air, earth, and fire. If the right proportions are not observed, our whole work will be a failure. Either too much or too little of earth, air, fire, and water would entail some corresponding defect. I speak here of elixirs in general, but fire is not introduced as an element of the white elixir. The heavy elements in our substance and the ferment are called earth: those which rise upward are described as air and water. For fixation into earth, in the case of the white Tincture, there should always be more of earth than of the other elements. If there be 1 1/2 oz. of air, and 2 oz. of water, there must be 2 3/4 oz. of earth, and thrice as much of the ferment of earth as there is of white sulphur. If there be 1 oz. of white sulphur, there must be 3 ozs. of the ferment. Add 2 oz. of water, 1 1/2 oz. of air, and the elixir will be complete. For the solar Tincture, which is of hotter quality than that of the Moon, we need 2 ozs. of earth, 3 of water, as many of air, and 1 1/2 oz. of fire - for if there be much water and little fire, the fire will be extinguished. The heavy elements, like earth and water, are more useful for the purpose of producing fixation and rest; the lighter elements, viz., air and fire. are more useful for the purposes of fusion and of the Tincture. Do not eat what you do not drink, neither drink what you do not eat, but eat and drink one after the other according to the requirements of our art.

On the Fixation and Composition of the White Elixir.

No body which has not first been purified can possibly retain its soul. Let there be drinking after eating, not vice versa. Fix well, mix well, tinge well: and you have the whole Magistry. Pound three parts of pure powdered silver well with twice its quantity of white quicksilver in a mortar of porphyry, till the Mercury has drunk up all the silver, and the compound is of the consistency of butter.

Purify it with vinegar and common salt, till the vinegar comes out pure and clear; then wash away the salt with clean, sweet water, and dry before the fire. Pound it with one part of the white sulphur till the two become one body, incerate it with one part of its white water, and sublime little by little over the fire, till all that is volatile in it has ascended upward; take it out when cool and collect the particles which have settled on the sides of the vessel; then repeat the process of pounding, saturation, and sublimation - constantly reducing that which ascends upward to that which lies fixed below, till all is fixed, which is naturally brought about by the coagulative virtue of the fixed

sulphur. In short, study Nature, and supply her with all necessary outward conditions: then you may trust to her to do the rest. When your earth is impregnated you may expect a birth in Nature's own good time; when the birth has taken place, nourish and strengthen it to support the fire, and you will be able to make projections.

Of the Reduction of Air upon the White Elixir.

When the water is fixed with the earth, pound it, saturate it by sprinkling with one part of its air, sublime it with a gradually increasing fire, till by constant sublimation the whole is fixed. Then expose it to a good fire for twenty-four hours, to a still fiercer fire for another day and night, and to a very fierce fire, proper for melting, on the third day and night. The air will then be fixed with the earth and water.

Inceration of the White Elixir.

Take one drachm of the crystal plate which you find at the bottom of the vessel; pound it, and drop on it slowly, in a thin crucible, over a gentle fire, some of its white air, till it becomes liquid, like wax, without any smoke. Test upon a hot plate, and if it melt swiftly like wax, the ceration is complete. If not, complete the process by dropping its white oil gradually thereon, till it becomes like smokeless melted wax. Continue the sublimation until the whole substance is fixed. That is, when by sublimation you have fixed the purest part of the earth, reiterate the sublimation upon the unfixed part over the fixed part, until all is fixed. Try its fusibility over a good fire; if the result be satisfactory, the sublimation need not be continued. If not, continue sublimation in respect of the unfixed part. Then let it cool, and you have a priceless Tincture, one part of which - with salt dissolved in vinegar - will transmute 1,000 parts of Mercury, or common metal, into the purest silver, better than that of the mine.

The Composition of the Red Elixir.

The Red Elixir - for changing metals into gold - is prepared in the same way as the White Elixir, gold being in this case substituted for silver. For every white thing substitute a red thing of the same kind; in the place of powdered silver put powdered gold, and the water of Mercury made red with the fire of the Stone. Sublime the substance again and again till all the quicksilver has become fixed. When three-quarters of the red water are fixed, place the whole for twenty-four hours over a very gentle fire, that it may be the better cleansed and fixed. Remove it subsequently and cerate in a crucible, also over a very slow fire. Drop upon it its red oil, till it becomes liquid as wax without smoke. One part of this Red Tincture projected upon silver, or purified quicksilver - with salt and vinegar - changes 1,000 parts of either into the purest gold better than that of the mine and withstanding every test. Hence the Sages say that their gold and silver are not as the gold and silver of the multitude seeing that they are distinguished by infinitely greater purity.

On the Multiplication of the Medicines.

If you dissolve those medicines, after their fixation and saturation with their white or red oils, till they flow like wax, and then in their white or red Mercury, till they look like clear water, and afterwards coagulate them by gentle digestion, and again make them liquid with their oils over the fire till they flow very swiftly, their virtue in projection will be doubled. If, when they are dissolved, you distil them once, their powers are multiplied an hundred fold. To multiply the medicines, dissolve the spirit of each respectively in its water by inhumation. Separate from each its oil by distillation, then their water, then their fire, and the earth will remain below. Reduce the water by sublimation over the earth, till it is fixed with the earth; then saturate it with the oil, or air, and the tincture till it is fixed and liquid like wax; its virtue will then be multiplied tenfold; repeat the operation, and its virtue will each time be enhanced 100, 1,000, 10,000 fold, etc. The oftener the Medicine is dissolved, sublimed, and coagulated, the more potent it becomes; in each sublimation its projective virtue is multiplied by ten.

What do we mean by Dissolution and Sublimation ?

When I speak of solution, you must not think that the elixir is to be altogether resolved into water, but is only to be subtilized as far as possible to have its parts divided, that which is dry in it made humid, and that which is gross made simple, since dissolution is practised for the work of subtilization only, but not sublimation, and for the purpose of uniting the body and the spirit. The subtilization of bodies is the dissolution into water, because distillation or dissolution educes the Stone from potentiality into effect, in which the body and the spirit meet each other halfway, and are thus inseparably conjoined. The confirmation of spirits with bodies takes place when bodies are subtilized, for not otherwise will these retain the spirits. I have not said too much; but if there be anything in my remarks which you do not understand, read them over again and again, until you have become completely possessed of my meaning. What we have said is the strict rule of truth, and you must not depart from it either to the right or to the left, or you will go wrong. If you do not understand my wrong meaning, do not blame me, but your own

ignorance.

How to make the Projection.

Now, seeing that it is a matter of some difficulty to melt a million parts together, when you wish to make projection proceed as follows: Take a hundred parts of Mercury, cleansed with vinegar and salt; place it in a crucible over the fire; when it begins to bubble up, add one part of your Elixir, and project the whole upon one hundred other parts of boiling purified Mercury. Then project one part of this entire mixture upon one hundred parts of purified Mercury, and the whole will be turned into our Elixir. Then project one part of this last, coagulated, upon a hundred parts of purified Mercury, and it will become the purest gold, or silver, according as the Tincture is red or white. And this is the Rosary of the Philosophers, bearing fragrant roses, both white and red, the essential extract of many books, having nothing superfluous, omitting nothing needful, for the infinite production of true Sun and Moon. Our Medicine has also power to heal all infirmity and diseases, both of inflammation and debility: it turns an old man into a youth. If the illness be of one month's standing, it may be cured in a day; if of one year's standing it may be healed in twelve days; if of many years' standing, it may be healed in a month. Hence this Medicine is not without reason prized above all other treasures that this world affords.

Recapitulation of the whole work.

First sublime the substance, and purge it of all corrupting impurity; dissolve also, therewith, its white or red additament till the whole is as subtle and volatile as it can possibly become. Then fix it by all methods till it is able to stand the test of the fire. After that, sublime the fixed part of the Stone together with its volatile part; make the fixed volatile, and the volatile fixed, by alternate solution and sublimation; so continue, and then fix them both together till they form a white or red liquid Tincture. In this way you obtain the priceless arcanum which is above all the treasures of the world. Give yourself wholly to this study; meditate on it day and night; and, above all, check the truth of your theoretic notions by constant reference to practice. You will not find in all the books of the Sages anything clearer and plainer than what I have told you. Praise to the Trinity and glory to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

End of the Collectanea of Arnold.