

DR. JOHN DEE:

ELIZABETHAN MYSTIC
AND ASTROLOGER

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DR. JOHN DEE

CHAPTER I

THE subject of this sketch cannot claim to rank among the world's successes.

He was, indeed, one of those who court failure rather than success ; who occupy themselves instinctively with the things which are too hard for them rather than with those they could accomplish with ease and dignity.

Dr. Dee's lot was cast, moreover, in troubled and baffling circumstances. He suffered much from his enemies, and still more from his false friends. Popular prejudice and popular ignorance, which were busy with his name in his lifetime, continued to pursue it long after his death. Butler's *Hudibras* contains a vicious caricature of him ; and writers more serious and restrained than Butler have done less than justice to his character and work, content to accept the floating tradition that blackened the one and dismissed the other as negligible ! ¹

Yet it is difficult to see how even the most hostile of them could have read the story of his life (especially those parts of it which he

¹ On the other hand, it has been contended with some show of reason that *Prospero* in *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's idealised portrait of Dee.

himself has narrated) without feeling some measure of sympathy and respect for this eager enthusiast and patient scholar, so devout yet so daring, so gentle of heart yet so inflexible of purpose.

The man was, in truth, a hero in his way. He was also an occult student of no mean order ; and there is a sense in which we may count his failures in that Quest to which he sacrificed his best years and powers, and his fair fame also, as higher and worthier than many an acknowledged success.

John Dee was born on July 13, 1527, in London, where his father, Rowland Dee, a gentleman of ancient Welsh descent, but apparently of no great fortune, held a minor post in the Royal Household.

We can form but a vague picture of the future philosopher's early childhood in Tudor London.

The times were tempestuous and transitional, and the political and religious troubles many.

The execution of Fisher and More took place, for example, when young John was eight years old ; and the passionate discontent with the enforced religious changes broke forth in the unsuccessful insurrections of the succeeding year (1536).

But children, as a rule, trouble themselves but little with public events, except in so far as their own lives are affected by some par-

ticular penalty or privilege. We may safely surmise that the principal shadow on Dee's childhood was the one which, unfortunately, was never to be very far from him in mature life—the shadow, namely, of narrow means and financial difficulty.

Rowland Dee was, apparently, rather shabbily treated by his royal master ; the advancement for which he looked never came ; and his post as “ a gentleman-server ” could have been neither very important nor very remunerative. What he and his wife, Jane (whose maiden name was Wilde, and who seems to have been always a loving and beloved mother to her gifted son), thought of the religious changes we do not hear.

It would appear that Dee had a religious upbringing, such as the times afforded.

About the year 1537, when the greater monasteries were still waiting the doom that had overtaken the lesser ones, the boy was sent to the Chantry School of Chelmsford, where the worthy chantry priest, Peter Wileigh (with whose “ honest conversation ” even the King's Commissioners, some years later, could find no fault), grounded him in the elements of Latin grammar.

In this quiet little market-town, by the slow-moving river Chelmer, the mind and manners of young John must have received some lasting impressions from what he there saw and shared of the stately ritual of the old religion.

He, together with other little scholars, must

have heard many Masses said and sung at those chantry altars, whereof we know that one of them was dedicated to "Our Lady St. Mary" and one to *Corpus Christi*. He must often have served his tutor and other priests in the capacity of "altar-boy," and grown familiar with the details of the great Mystic Ceremony which, more than any other, links the living with the dead, the seen with the unseen.

We may conjecture that his schooldays were happy ones, and that he loved both his tutors and his tasks.

On the other hand, the cravings of his eager brain for what, in after-years, he described as "good learning" must have been but ill-satisfied at Chelmsford.

The grammar-schools of that day were truer than they now are to their limiting name. They aimed at little more than familiarising the scholar with the language in which his future studies at the University would have to be pursued. The Universities, indeed, took the place of the modern upper schools, and boys entered as undergraduates at what we should call a very immature age.

Dee himself was only fifteen when he left Chelmsford for Cambridge and entered as student at St. John's.

The reputation of St. John's stood high among its fellows. It took its origin and its name from a twelfth-century house of Austin Canons; but as a college it was comparatively

new, and had won the special commendation of Erasmus, who had discerned in it "sound learning and a truly evangelic spirit," the result of the fostering care of the enlightened and saintly Bishop Fisher, whose work lived after him, though he himself was gone.

Here Dee entered, like other newcomers, on the scholastic *Trivium*—the three years' course of grammar, logic, and rhetoric—which, in all mediæval universities, was followed by the *Quadrivium*—the four years devoted to the more practical sciences of mathematics, geography, music, and astronomy.

In his own words, he gave himself "vehemently to study." University life in those days was a strange yet not unwholesome mixture of rigid discipline and wide freedom. A student, provided he obeyed certain elementary communal rules as to attendance at lectures, chapel, and the like, could dispose of his time much as he wished. Dee was certainly not one of those who wandered "flown with insolence and wine" in the streets after nightfall, or laughed and idled through the lectures which their ignorance of the language in which these were delivered made unintelligible to them.

At one time, he only spared himself four hours for sleep and two for meals and recreation. The rest, apart from the unavoidable attendances at divine service—the "compulsory chapels" of a later day!—was devoted wholly to his books.

He had the blended fervour and patience of the true scholar. Those were the days when the New Learning was (by a seeming contradiction) turning men's thoughts more and more towards the wisdom of the ancient world. For centuries the Greek authors had been read, where read at all, in Latin translations. Now, scholarship had rediscovered that wonderful tongue of antiquity which, in our days, has been in danger of some neglect, as a musty, dusty heritage, but which, to Erasmus and his followers, was an enchanted key to the doors of all knowledge, the hall-mark of advanced, ever-advancing knowledge.

Of Roger Ascham (some twelve years Dee's senior, and himself a St. John's man) we hear that his lamp was often burning before day-break; that he curtailed his sleep to study Greek. We can be fairly sure that Dee himself had a like habit. In 1546 he was appointed Under-Reader of Greek at the newly founded Trinity College, where Robert Pember, Ascham's tutor, was Principal Reader in the same subject. Dee was also made a Fellow of Trinity; and, earlier in the same year, he had graduated as B.A. at his own college.

A curious little incident may be recorded here, since it has something of the prophetic about it.

The Greek students of Trinity—the pupils, of course, of Pember and Dee himself—were to give a representation of the *Pax* of Aristophanes; and the young under-reader—then

but a youth of nineteen—took upon himself the task of stage-management, and planned a realistic stage-effect—the actual ascent or flight of Trygæus, the vinedresser, mounted on his great scarab or dung-beetle, from the stage to the “Palace of Zeus,” situated somewhere in the roof.

The mechanical contrivance by which this was accomplished was probably suggested to Dee by the accounts he had read of the devices of the Athenian stage—devices which, as we know, were of the crudest description: such, for instance, as the use of upper windows at which an actor could suddenly appear; or of high ledges to which, when he represented a supernatural being, he could be hoisted by a crane. It is incredible that an Athenian audience should have estimated such obvious illusions at more than their face value. Indeed, historians are fond of reminding us that to eke out such scanty effects and to obtain the correct dramatic thrill, a strong imagination must have been necessary in the spectators.

Dee's audience seems to have used its imagination in a different and more disastrous manner! It was, we are told, this piece of boyish ingenuity and clever handicraft that gave rise to the first of those rumours of sorcery, those “vain reports,” as Dee himself calls them, which were so long destined to darken our scholar's reputation and, more than once, to endanger his life!

Very likely the reproach was, at first, only flung at him as a jest by some fellow-scholar. But in those days "sorcery" was too serious a matter to make a jest of. We sometimes loosely suppose that the mediæval superstitions concerning witchcraft and black magic had died down in Tudor times, and that their notorious revival under "the learned fool," James I, was a new and dreadful development, due to him and his fanaticism. It is true that in the all-too-eventful reigns of Henry VIII and his son and daughters the fear of sorcery was kept somewhat in the background, owing to the multitude of other causes for fear—the frenzy against heresies, seditions, and treasons, and the many more convenient pretexts for putting unpopular people to death. But the belief in sorcery remained a dreadful reality. An Act against Sorcery, with terrible penalties attached to its practice, stood in the Statute Book.

In 1541—Dee's last year at Chelmsford—a certain Welsh minstrel had been denounced as "a false prophet" and put to death on that charge! The mere claim to any sort of supernatural powers might become at any time unspeakably dangerous to the claimant. So we can easily understand how the jest of Dee's friends might turn to a weapon for his enemies, and how he must have resented and feared the imputation.

At first, however, it could have done him but little harm. He had, in those days, more

friends than enemies, and moved in an academic society which popular superstition could not absolutely dominate.

What he himself calls his "boyish attempts and exploits scholastical" won for him much favourable notice. And his energies led him on to ever greater efforts and achievements.

About this time he began to be occupied with practical astronomy, and took countless observations of the heavens. Then, in the May of 1547—his twentieth year—his increasing thirst for knowledge carried him to the Low Countries—to the great University of Louvain—the resort of so many learned men, mathematicians and philosophers.

Among the friendships he made at this time, that with the famous Gerardus Mercator seems to have been the most fruitful and significant. Mercator is remembered, even by the general reader, as the originator of a method of cosmographical projection, in which latitude and longitude are indicated by straight instead of curved lines, to serve the purposes of navigation and steering by compass. Dee brought back with him to England and to his university two of Mercator's globes, as well as some astronomical instruments "newly devised," which he presented to Trinity College.

His stay at Cambridge was short. Indeed, he seems to have returned there chiefly to take his M.A. degree, and to obtain from the authorities a written testimonial to his character and scholarship, with which he could

return to Louvain, where he was formally entered as student in the summer of 1548.

The University of Louvain—founded in 1426 by John, Duke of Brabant—was, as Rashdall tells us, “one of the earliest and, for a time, by far the most famous home of the New Learning in Europe.”

Its federation of colleges included the *Collegium Trilingue*, or “College of Three Tongues,” for the study of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; and its system of competitive honours—which it seems to have been the first university to develop—was a spur to the ambitious and promising scholar. It will be remembered also that such a scholar had, in those days, an advantage that he does not enjoy quite so freely now. No university of Europe but was a kind of native land to him! In all of them the teaching was conducted in a tongue which he already knew—the *Esperanto* of the learned—Latin.

The young clerk from Cambridge, who had already friends in the town, found at Louvain a congenial environment, and gained, we are told, a great reputation as a mathematician and philosopher.

Mathematics, we may note in passing, were far more *philosophical* than they are in our time!

The teaching of Pythagoras as to the mystical meaning of numbers had deeply impressed mediæval scholasticism; the propositions of Euclid were often treated as parables, and became the basis of conjectures and theories

concerning those spiritual bodies of which the geometrical were types and shadows.

The mathematician of that day was no cut-and-dried materialist. He thought, dreamed, and speculated from the visible to the invisible, guided therein by the maxim of St. Thomas Aquinas that the sources of knowledge are *two—reason and revelation*.

Dee's studies at Louvain must have done much to feed his interest in occult matters. In alchemy and astrology he was now an eager explorer; nor does he seem to have been troubled here by any reproach of sorcery.

Louvain had been, indeed, the home and refuge of the great alchemist, Cornelius Agrippa, who had acted as secretary and librarian to Margaret of Parma, and whose great work *De Occulta Philosophia* had been published at Antwerp in 1531. The opinions of Agrippa (who, in this book, defends the practice of magic as one of the lawful ways by which man can attain to a knowledge of God and Nature) evidently made a lasting impression upon the restless yet profoundly religious mind of Dee. Throughout his life this view of occult practices as being no hindrance to a devout faith, and in some cases a positive aid to it, remained strong and clear in him. . . . But of this we shall have occasion to speak, at more length, later on in his story.

At Louvain, Occultism was but one of his many interests. He taught logic, arithmetic, and the use of the globes; and was visited

by great men—"a noble crowd," as Isaac Disraeli calls them—from the court of Charles V, then resident at Brussels. . . . He himself, narrating years afterwards to Queen Elizabeth's Commissioners the story of those proud days, says that his fame had even wider wings. "Beyond the seas, was a good opinion conceived of my studies mathematical and scholastical." And probably those who saw and spoke with him conceived a good opinion of more than his attainments !

Aubrey described him even in his worn old age as a singularly handsome man. In youth he must, indeed, have been goodly to look on, with that tall slender figure of his, regular chiselled features, fair skin, and bright colour. The melancholy, austere expression with which the portrait in the Ashmolean Museum has familiarised us could not have been natural to him then. Among his supernatural gifts we cannot reckon prevision of his own misfortunes ; and it must have been full of self-confidence and exuberant hope that, in the summer of 1550, just after his twenty-third birthday, he left Louvain and set out on his homeward journey to England, pausing on his way at Paris, the seat of another great university, and an ideal show-place for a scholar of parts.

In Paris Dee tarried for some months. His fame had preceded him there, and he was able, during his stay, considerably to add to it.

At the College of Rheims (one of the University federation of forty odd colleges, and named after its founder, Guy de Roye, Archbishop of Rheims) he gave a course of lectures on Euclid, free to all who chose to attend—an innovation in the educational methods of those days.

We have already spoken of the philosophical and mystical element that the scholars of the time discerned in mathematics. In Dee's teaching, this element must have bulked very large; even as we know it did in the *Preface* which he wrote, in later years, for the first English edition of Euclid.

A great audience flocked to hear him. The hall of the College would not hold the eager crowd, and many climbed the outer walls and looked in at the windows.

The University grew anxious to keep this brilliant bird of passage; Dee was offered a professorship of mathematics and a stipend of two hundred crowns.

But mere routine work, however honourable, was never, either now or later, greatly to his mind. He refused the post, and pursued his journey towards England, where he probably knew that Sir John Cheke (another of the Greek scholars of St. John's College, and now tutor to the young King, Edward VI) was ready to stand his friend at court.

CHAPTER II

THERE is no actual warrant for the very general belief that Dee took, at Louvain, the doctor's degree which had not been conferred on him at Cambridge.

The chances are that the title "Doctor," so inseparable from his name in after-life and in the popular idea of him, was merely bestowed in its original complimentary sense, when it had become self-evident that he was verily and indeed *doctus*, or learned.

As "Doctor" he was doubtless known at the court of Edward VI. Towards the close of the year 1551, Sir John Cheke introduced him to Secretary Cecil, and accepted on behalf of his royal pupil two MS. treatises on astronomical subjects, which Dee, already an industrious writer, had dedicated to the young King.

A yearly pension of a hundred crowns was now granted him by Edward. This was exchanged (not very profitably, as it afterwards appeared) for the lay-rectorships of Upton-on-Severn in Worcestershire and Long Leadenham in Lincolnshire. Soon after we hear of Dee's refusing the offer of a lectureship in Mathematical Science from the University of Oxford!

He was seemingly content with his income from the aforesaid rectorships, and with the patronage of the Duchess of Northumberland, which he enjoyed at this time, writing, at her request, a treatise on the cause of tides and another on the heavenly bodies.

The Duchess's ill-fated husband (the father-in-law of Lady Jane Grey) is better known to the general reader as an ambitious politician than as a literary student. But he was actually a man of considerable culture, a friend of Ascham's, and, for a short time, Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. Dee may well have believed that, in the shadow of such powerful patrons, he would be able to live a life of learned leisure, independent of formal appointments, and devoted more and more to his favourite lines of study.

What those lines were, and how increasingly he was attracted to them, was soon to appear.

In 1552 Jerome Cardan, the famous physician of Padua, visited England, and lodged at the house of Sir John Cheke, where Dee must frequently have seen and talked with him. Cardan was then in his prime; an occultist, surrounded by all the mysterious glamour of Padua, the supposed school of the necromantic art, with an intense belief in his own powers, and a keen, commanding intellect.

He had been invited to prescribe for the young King, whose health gave increasing anxiety; and, since Astrology was then a recognised aid to medicine, he drew the horo-

scope of the royal boy. His report was cautious enough. He prophesied the possibility of long life, if certain dangers from grave illnesses could be surmounted. But to Sir John Cheke, himself an astrologer, and to Sir John's learned young friend, the English scholar of Louvain, we can easily imagine that he spoke more freely, both on this and on kindred matters.

Dee was considerably Cardan's junior, and may well have looked up to him with something of a disciple's reverence, eager to learn what the Italian, on his part, would not have been unwilling to teach. The range of their discussions may be guessed when we remember the supernormal powers that Cardan claimed to possess and to exercise at will. He could, he declared, project his soul out of his body ! He had a peculiar kind of clairvoyant vision ! He practised divination, and dreamed prophetic dreams !

Also—and this is a fact particularly significant in the light of Dee's after-history!—Cardan believed himself to be accompanied by a genius or guardian spirit, like the dæmon of Socrates, which gave him counsel and assisted him in his undertakings.

At the same time he was a bold and independent thinker, by no means credulous, nor bound by the accepted superstitions of his time.

For instance, he confidently pronounced "witchcraft" to be a form of insanity ; and

in physical science and his own profession of medicine he anticipated many modern theories and methods.

The whole life of this remarkable and, in his last years, unfortunate man is of unusual interest ; but we are here concerned only with his influence on the gentler, less enterprising spirit of Dee, and with the stimulus and inspiration his companionship must have given to the younger man.

From this time the bent of Dee's studies is no longer in doubt : henceforth we see him committed, for good or ill, to the pursuit of occult knowledge.

The troubles following on the death of Edward VI (which took place soon after Cardan's return to Italy) could not have failed to distress and disturb the peace-loving scholar. Northumberland's tragic fate must have been also a blow to him. But the new Queen seems to have been kindly disposed to the son of Rowland Dee, and she had sufficient culture to respect and patronise his learning.

Apparently Dee was invited by the Queen to draw her horoscope. At any rate he did draw it, and, in due time, that of her Spanish bridegroom also.

The favour, however, of the elder sister was not destined to advance his fortunes very far. His eyes and thoughts were already turning toward the younger ; and soon, with the connivance of her personal servants, the young "Astrologer Royal" entered into correspond-

ence with the Princess Elizabeth, in her semi-captivity at Woodstock.

It was inevitable that he should wish to know what the stars predicted for *her* future ; whether to the daughter of Anne Boleyn a better fate was promised than to the daughter of Catherine of Aragon ; inevitable also that Elizabeth should be eager to hear anything that could raise her hopes, or, at least, allay her fears.

Dee drew her horoscope ; then, seemingly, was imprudent enough to show her that of her sister, and to discuss with her the differing aspects of the planets in the two maps.

Such discussions, in the case of royal personages, are easily suspected to be treasonable, and again we hear the ominous cry of " black magic "—more dangerous now, and urged with a more malignant will. There is a wild tale of children whom Dee had bewitched, and even of enchantments directed against the Queen's life !

Dee's lodging in London was searched, and his papers and his person seized.

All the cumbrous machinery of the law was brought against him ; and even after he had been acquitted by the Star Chamber on the charge of *treason*, it seemed as if the popular accusation of *heresy* would give his enemies their will.

He was very near the flames ! With him in the Bishop of London's prison, sharing his room and his very bed, was one Barthlet

Green, "a meek, religious man," but a suspected heretic, and, to his inexpressible horror, Dee saw his companion in misfortune dragged forth to his terrible doom. The passionate sympathy he showed could have done his own cause little good; but it is to Mary's credit that she recognised that there was no substantial evidence against him. He had, as Disraeli phrases it, "no leisure to become a heresiarch"; and though he doubtless held but loosely by the Faith in which he had been brought up, he could have had no violent animus against it. His learning in Divinity seems even to have won the confidence of Bishop Bonner; though the story that he assisted the Bishop to examine some suspected heretics is now generally discredited.

When set at liberty again, Dee occupied himself for a while with projects for founding a State National Library, and he drew up and presented to the Queen "a Supplication for the Recovery and Presentation of Ancient Writers and Monuments."¹

His own library was by this time considerable; so, too, in spite of, or perhaps, because of his late misfortunes, was his reputation as an astrologer and a sage.

The rest of Mary's troubled reign passed for him peacefully enough. He lodged in London, though we do not know in what quarter, pursued his studies, and eked out the modest income that came from his rectorships

¹ Practically nothing came of this.

by drawing horoscopes and giving astrological advice to people of all classes who came to consult him.

In 1558 Queen Mary died, and her younger sister, remembering the sage whose prophecies had beguiled her dark hour, at once sent for Dee to come to court and to calculate a favourable day for her crowning. Dee named January 14, 1559, and was, from this time on, as his biographer, Miss Charlotte Fell-Smith, expresses it, "continually busied about one thing and another at the fancy of the Queen."

This was not, perhaps, in itself undesirable. Dee's attachment to Elizabeth seems to have been quite sincere, and he was never unwilling then or later to come at her bidding to give his judgment on any strange circumstance which troubled her—such as the discovery in Lincoln's Inn Fields of a wax image of herself, with significant pins driven through its heart, the appearance of a great comet, and so on! But Elizabeth had much of the Tudor close-fistedness; and her astrologer's services were not substantially repaid. Preferments for which he sought were given to others, and he seems to have grown weary of his ambiguous position.

It is also possible that the Statute against Sorcery (a re-enactment of the former statute of Henry VIII) passed in 1562, had some influence on his desire again to leave England.

Sir Walter Scott and other authorities think this Act was chiefly aimed against those who

falsely pretended to be magicians or victims of magic, and that it was not intended to convict anyone seriously of sorcery. But a man who had been twice accused of "black magic" may well have felt uneasy while such legal machinery was in motion.

Dee's expressed object in this new journey abroad was to take to the great printing press of Antwerp some of his more important MS.; among them the *Monas Hieroglyphica*—that curious cabalistic treatise on the Elements which, Mr. Arthur Waite has reminded us, had much to do with the later tradition of Dee as the founder of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. The tradition, however, as Mr. Waite shows, is quite spurious; and, in any case, the *Monas*—an unpractical, mystical work, which says little or nothing of the means by which alchemy was to attain its ends—cannot be said to support it.

In these dissertations on "the primal Monad, the mortal and immortal Adam, and the horizon of Eternity," we are in the region of pure theory. Later writers employed the symbols used by Dee in their own more utilitarian alchemical works, and Dee got the credit of the association.

But the *Monas*, useless as a proof of Dee's Rosicrucianism, has a value of another kind. It serves to show that its author (however, under stress of circumstances in later life, he may have prostituted his gifts, and used spiritual things for material ends) was really

unworldly, a lover of wisdom for wisdom's sake, a dreamer and a thinker.

The book was dedicated to the Emperor Maximilian II; and Dee presented him with a copy, which was, apparently, graciously accepted.

In June 1564, two months after the publication of the *Monas*, its writer returned to England. He was kindly received by the Queen, who, as he says, deigned to become a scholar in his book, and greatly comforted and encouraged him.

Preferment, however, though promised, did not come; and in the Preface which Dee wrote for Henry Billingsley's *Elements of Euclid* (published by an English press in 1570), the disappointed scholar bitterly laments the reproach and suspicion under which he still labours. Honest students and modest Christian philosophers, he significantly says, are counted as magicians and conjurers. "He that seeketh by St. Paul's advertisement in the creatures' properties and wonderful virtues, to find just cause to glorify the Eternal and Almighty Creator . . . is condemned as a companion of hell hounds and a caller and conjurer of wicked damned spirits."

This sounds preposterous language to be applied to one so high in royal favour as Dee then was! Even in those days of ferocious superstition, the violent prejudice against him and the dark construction persistently put upon all his actions seem in need of some

explanation. In the *Preface* he infers that it is his scientific studies and experiments—so much beyond his age!—that have blackened his character in the popular eye; and there is, beyond doubt, considerable truth in this. But as all the learned men of his time did not suffer—even among the ignorant!—the same dark reproach, and as Astrology and Alchemy had, with some reservations, a recognised place among the Sciences, we must find the explanation of Dee's peculiar unpopularity in his increasing obsession with what we now call the Psychic, in the atmosphere of mystery which surrounded his attempts to develop those supernormal powers which he believed to exist in man and to be capable of lawful use.

One of the faculties which he believed that he himself possessed was that of discovering hidden treasure. He offered to use this in the service of the State, and told Cecil (now Lord Burleigh) that if he were allowed to exercise his gift under the protection of Royal Letters Patent, he would do his utmost to discover mines of gold and silver “for her Grace's only use.”

It must be remembered that the ancient belief that treasure buried in the earth was in the keeping of demons, and only to be discovered by their help, still influenced the opinion of those days in regard to treasure hunting. The Statutes against Sorcery made the discovery of hidden treasure “by the aid

of magic " a penal offence, punishable, if persisted in, by death itself !

Dee's anxiety for a licence from the State is therefore very explainable. And there is a certain boldness even in his cautious proposal. He practically sets aside the idea that such "discoveries" come under the head of "magic," and will see in them nothing but the lawful putting forth, in a scientific, well-trained way, of supernormal powers with which human nature itself is dowered !

Elizabeth's astrologer still enjoyed the royal favour. She was gracious and friendly in all her dealings with him, and made him occasional gifts of money. But his researches, in which he now needed paid assistants, were greatly hindered by lack of funds. There is little doubt that it was his desire for knowledge, rather than avarice, that made him hanker after hidden hoards.

Little or nothing seems to have come of his request, though a later grant to him of a royalty on mines may have been an indirect result of it.

Fortunately for him he had now a roof of his own. His widowed mother owned a house at Mortlake ; and this she practically ceded to her son, only reserving a set of rooms in it for her own use.

The Thameside village of Mortlake was then a village indeed, near enough to London to make it easy of access by the river to which the garden of Mistress Dee's house sloped

down, yet remote enough for the solitude and freedom from interruption that the scholar, now past middle age and sobered by several disappointments, desired to secure.

Here Dee worked ceaselessly in his library and laboratory, and received with due dignity the visits of his royal patroness and of the great folk who sought his counsel.

Here also, in 1574, he married as his first wife, a young woman of whom we know nothing save that she died in the following year, and was buried in Mortlake churchyard, on the very day of one of the Queen's informal, unexpected visits. Elizabeth, on this occasion, refused to enter the house of mourning, but dismounted from her horse in a field near by, in order that Dee might show her the curious properties of a convex mirror.

After being a widower for two years, Dee married Jane Fromond, lady-in-waiting to Lady Howard of Effingham, who was to be the mother of his eight children, and his faithful and beloved companion for many years, though she was considerably his junior.

About a month before her eldest grandchild's birth—which happened on his father's fifty-second birthday!—Mistress Dee made over to her son, in due legal form, her house and lands at Mortlake. She continued, however, to live in the house, where, in 1580, Dee records her "godly end," at the age of seventy-seven.

These years at Mortlake were not unprosperous. Dee produced a good deal of literary work of the more practical sort; wrote a treatise on naval defence, and made some geographical researches of which Burleigh spoke highly to the Queen. Navigators employed him to draw up instructions for their course; and Elizabeth graciously received some charts and maps, which he had made with wonderful skill and mathematical accuracy. These were designed to set forth the Queen's title to undiscovered countries. He was also employed in making the calculations necessary for the proposed reform of the Calendar.

But Dee was one of those in whom many normal tastes and outside interests may exist and flourish without weakening the bonds of the inner life or the claims of the ruling passion. It was still in Darkness that he sought for light, from Silence that he asked a message. . . .

In his *Private Diary*, among numerous notes of domestic and political matters, we get, ever and anon, a brief reference to things psychic, to some sign, real or supposed, that had reached him from the Other World.

He carefully records dreams, mysterious rappings, and the like. But these chance phenomena, which might come unasked to any man, do not satisfy his intense desire for real intercourse with the Unseen—an intercourse which he hopes to establish by other means.

The *Diary* for May 25, 1581, has this significant entry :

“ I had sight offered me in *Chrystallo* ; and I saw.”

We have now to consider at greater length the nature of that clairvoyant vision, and the reasons for which Dee sought to obtain it.

CHAPTER III

DEE had been now some twelve years in the riverside house at Mortlake. They had not been obscure or isolated years, including, as they did, a journey abroad on some unnamed business of the Queen's, continual marks of court favour, and the frequent visits of important people. Nor had they been mentally idle ones. Apart from his public services, the scholar had been indefatigable in his researches, striving always to increase his store of "good learning," experimenting with his scientific instruments, and adding to his library of other men's wisdom manuscript works of his own.

He had arrived at an age when the student and thinker looks for some definite result of his study and thought ; when he is, as a rule, sufficiently wearied with the path to desire a sight of the goal.

There are not sufficient grounds to infer, with some of his critics, that Dee was obsessed by the old alchemical ambitions of finding the "Philosopher's Stone" and the "Elixir of Life."¹ But the discovery of these and

¹ *Philosopher's Stone*.—The so-called "stone" was really a powder or mixture which "drove off the impurities of baser metals." The "elixir" was gold in a liquid or drinkable form = *Aurum potabile*.

kindred secrets may well have appeared to him as a possible solution of his financial embarrassments, and as an opening to a way of freedom for still greater quests.

A good deal of the work done at Mortlake must have had a practical purpose in view. But Dee did not feel that the alchemical experiments made by him and the young assistants he hired to work with him were carrying him fast enough towards the wished-for heights. The idea of access to certain stores of wisdom which God had withheld from man, but had, presumably, given to spiritual creatures of a higher order, had long attracted him, and had gained, with advancing years, increasing power over his mind. As he himself pathetically phrased it to Edward Kelley, in the first days of that notorious fellowship, he had "long been desirous to have help in his philosophical studies through the company and information of the angels of God!" Here we see the influence of his astrological studies—studies which, when intelligently pursued, must needs widen the spiritual outlook.

Magic, vulgarly so called, he utterly repudiated. He was, he declared, "neither studied nor exercised" in it. And in so far as magic professes to accomplish or discover anything independently of the will and help of God, he spoke the truth. In the strict sense of the word he never practised *magic*. He merely practised certain means by which, as he believed, the spiritual part of him might be

aroused and put into communication with the spiritual world and those who inhabited it.

Crystallomancy—the time-honoured practice “of inducing visions by gazing into a clear depth”—may well have commended itself to him as one of the most venerable of such means, hallowed, as it were, by generations of devout seekers after hidden truths. He had always, besides, taken a keen interest in the science of Optics, then making such bold strides in unexpected directions, and he already possessed some curious mirrors of whose strange possibilities he must have been aware and over which he must have often mused. Had he himself any faculty of seership? A fleeting glimpse of it is suggested by the entry in the *Diary*! But from the first it is evident that he knew his limitations; knew that this was a path to knowledge he would not be able to tread alone.

It is in accord with occult tradition that the gift of vision belongs but to a few; and those few not necessarily of the highest intelligence or profoundest learning. The seer, with his purely intuitive faculty, might well be the mere instrument of lofty purposes which he did not really understand or share. Experience also tended to show that seership was a power more often displayed in the young and immature than in the old and experienced.

So Dee sought for a scryer among his youthful disciples and assistants; and was soon convinced that he had found what he wanted in

one, Barnabas Saul, who, with the pious pomp and circumstance always so dear to him, he proceeded to consecrate as his scryer.

He is a shadowy figure enough, this forerunner of a greater medium ; this young lay-preacher turned occultist, who, later, under terror of the law, was to repudiate the powers he had claimed, and to slip back into the obscurity from which Dee had drawn him !

Saul served the doctor in the capacity of seer for little more than two months. His scrying was done with a globular crystal, described by Dee as " my stone in a frame which was given me of a friend," and placed, according to a reported supernatural injunction, where the rays of the sun could fall upon it. When, in later days, Dee showed this stone to Kelley, he told him of his belief that certain good angels were " answerable " to it ; in other words, in the habit of manifesting either in or near it. " I was once willed by a scryer to call for the good angel Anael to appear in that stone to my own sight." This curious reminiscence suggests Saul's power of conveying to Dee his own sense of vision. But it also suggests the part played in the invocations by Dee's own will and knowledge.

It was certainly he and not Saul who identified the apparition with Anael—the " answering angel " who, in Talmudic tradition, often made God's secrets known to men ; and it was quite as certainly Dee's subliminal mind that transmitted the strange, significant message of

Anael that many things should, later, be revealed to Dee, not through Saul, but through a seer who should succeed him and be "assigned to the stone."

This prophecy was not long in fulfilment. Early in the spring of 1582, Saul was brought before the judges at Westminster on some charge, which, whether one of sorcery or not, involved perilous enquiries into his occult practices. The young man thought it safer to disown his psychic gifts, and also, it seems, to slander the sage in whose service he had been using them! He and Dee parted on ill terms; but the unpleasant episode had not quenched Dee's devout desires. Only two days after Saul's departure, the scholar's *Diary* records the coming of another guest, who was introduced as the friend of a certain Mr. Clerkson, and who gave the name of Edward Talbot.

The stranger—who was about twenty-seven years of age—at once began to speak of occult matters; and when he declared himself "willing and desirous to see or show something in spiritual practice," the scholar eagerly produced the showstone, and told, as aforesaid, the tale of its powers as an instrument of vision.

In a short time the young man, kneeling devoutly before it, was praying with apparent sincerity that sight might be given to him therein; while the elder, kneeling or sitting a little apart, earnestly invoked the help of God

and His good creatures “for the furtherance of the Action.”

Of this séance—the first of many with the same seer—Dee records with joyful triumph that, before it had lasted fifteen minutes, an angel (Uriel, the spirit of light) appeared in the stone.

So began the long association of our scholar with one who was so deeply to influence his life. It is an association which irresistibly recalls Hans Andersen's story of the learned man and his ambitious shadow, which, by dint of trading on its owner's kindness, contrived to make itself appear the more substantial and important personality of the two!

Edward Kelley, alias Talbot (there is considerable doubt as to which was his true name), was a born adventurer, with, as it would seem, the ingenious brain and personal charm which many of his kind possess.

Miss Charlotte Fell-Smith, in her *Life of Dee*, rightly says that sober fact and wild romance are so inextricably mixed in Kelley's story that it is difficult to know what to believe. But, at any rate, the traditions of his career are hardly those that would have grown up round an upright or high-principled man.

He had been an apothecary's apprentice; then (according to the commonly received story) a forger and coiner, who, in the barbarous fashion of the times, had been condemned to lose his ears and to stand in the pillory. For

some time before his coming to Dee he had led a wandering life, in the course of which his necromantic practices had included the digging up of a corpse in a Lancashire churchyard, and the summoning of the spirit of the dead man to reply to certain questions. Later, either in the wilds of Wales or at Glastonbury in Somerset, the mystic Avalon, he was said to have found an alchemical manuscript of priceless value, as well as some of the famous "powder of projection" which the adepts used in their attempted manufacture of gold.

It would have been strange indeed if one in possession of such treasures, and with so glib a tongue in talking of them and of his own psychic powers, had failed of a welcome in the house at Mortlake.

Even if Dee guessed at the unedifying episodes in his new friend's past, the elder man's natural charity and kindness led him to discount them, or even to regard them as an additional reason for showing benevolence to one who had already paid so dearly for his errors, and who was young and gifted enough to amend his life.

It was Mistress Dee who was troubled with premonitions of disaster.

Until now, despite the slanders of the ignorant and the many annoyances from lack of money, the family life of the Dees had a certain tranquillity and decent order. In the course of it an aged and honoured mother had

“made a godly end”; children had been brought to the font of baptism; faithful servants had been duly and justly paid; and the master of the house, for all the shadow of the black art that lay upon his studies, had been known as a pious and upright gentleman, whom Barnabas Saul had not, after all, been able to involve in his recent disgrace.

Now, the faithful wife dimly felt that this comparative peace and safety was about to be withdrawn; that her learned, unworldly husband was about to enter on a darker and more dangerous phase of study, under the leadership of this penniless but ingenious stranger, with his strange air of authority and supernormal knowledge, and his violent, moody temper, which he took so little pains to conceal.

She showed from the first a great dislike and distrust of Kelley—the name by which he soon came to be known in the household. But his wife’s resentment, though there is evidence that Dee was much grieved and disturbed by it, was powerless against the growing influence of so wonderful and satisfactory a seer.

Angelic visions in the showstone came thick and fast now. Angelic voices sounded often in the little inner room, once a bedchamber, where the philosopher, withdrawn from the household’s comings and goings, and denied even to important guests, gave himself over more and more to the life of dreams. There were not wanting all the “magical” accessories of ceremonial scrying.

By the end of the spring Kelley had obtained, with Dee's aid and approval, the so-called "table of practice" on which the stone was to be set, with a red silk cloth of peculiar make spread under it, and an inscribed tablet of wax to serve as a pedestal.

The legs of the table itself were also to be supported by similar, but smaller, tablets of wax.

Then, in late autumn, came the acquisition of another crystal, called, from the circumstances of its giving, "the angelical stone."

Towards sunset, in the November of 1582, in the western window of the laboratory, there came to Dee's tranced eyes a vision of a child-angel, bearing in his hand "a bright object, clear and glorious, of the bigness of an egg."

Later, Dee spoke to the Emperor Rudolph of this crystal as the gift of Uriel, the spirit of light, and said that it was of greater value than any earthly kingdom.

It is almost certain that this showstone, however obtained, is the one still to be seen in the British Museum, together with three of the inscribed tablets of wax.

Of these mystic seals it should here be mentioned that they bore, on their upper sides, the familiar cabalistic figure of interlaced triangles—the so-called pentacle or seal of Solomon—together with the seven "hidden names" of God and the names of certain angels and spirits. The "table of practice,"

which was made of "sweet wood," and was two cubits, or about 3 feet, in height, was also inscribed with sacred characters and with a mystic cruciform sign.

In the accounts of the sittings, we sometimes hear, moreover, of "the curtain of the stone." But this was seen *in* the crystal, and belonged, not to the material, but to the psychic, accessories. The peculiar clouding of the stone which precedes the vision, and follows after its departure, is familiar to all crystal-gazers.

Stress has often been laid on the fact that Dee himself saw little or nothing. We have his own regretful statement: "You know I cannot see or scry." But although both the character of his gift and the imperiousness of his temper made Kelley seem the leading spirit in this strange partnership, Dee, the careful recorder, eager questioner, and learned interpreter, was still, in a sense, the dominant force.

The complaint of Kelley that the spirits address him in learned tongues which are incomprehensible to him is, to say the least of it, significant. And the angelic visitants were certainly more likely to have used Dee than Kelley for such a message, addressed to the younger man, as this: "Thou, O youngling, but old sinner, why dost thou suffer thy blindness to increase? Why not yield thy limbs to the service and fulfilling of an eternal verity? Pluck up thy heart and follow the

way that leadeth to the knowledge of the end."

Again, on an occasion of Dee's absence, we hear of Kelley's unsuccessful attempt to summon a spirit known as Medicina, who had, in Dee's presence, previously appeared in the crystal.

We have to bear in mind that the phenomena of these séances cannot be explained as mere crystallomancy. The crystal purports to give no more than a fleeting vision of some future or far-off event. It utters no voice ; and the figures that move in its dream-like scenes are silent as puppets. Here the part played by the crystal irresistibly reminds us of "the cabinet" of modern spiritualistic séances. It is, generally speaking, a place from which materialised spirits emerge, and to which, having made themselves known and conversed for awhile, they again return.

The language of Dee's *Liber Mysteriorum*, or *Book of Mysteries*, otherwise known as the *Spiritual Diary*, in which the record of the transactions is set down, is often vague and ambiguous ; but at least it leaves us in no doubt that the spiritual creatures were heard as well as seen, and that many of them manifested themselves outside the limits of the crystal. Dee, if he never actually saw them, was conscious of their presence ; and, as we have already said, there were many occasions when he, and not Kelley, seems to have been the mouthpiece of their messages.

There is no doubt that he also had mediumistic gifts, though not of the showier order. Equally there is no doubt that he did not knowingly employ those gifts in mere *necromancy*. The spirits he wished to converse with were not spirits of the dead, but "the living angels of God," the higher ranks of creatures.

But although the scrying now took up so much time and thought, and was rewarded by such frequent visions, it could not be said to be of much practical assistance in Dee's involved personal affairs.

We know that he had expected that it would be, and that he repeatedly put questions to the apparitions upon matters that troubled him ; for instance, the refusal of the Queen's advisers to reform the Calendar according to the calculations he (Dee) had made, and the baffling characters of some manuscripts of Kelley's which were supposed to relate to hidden treasure or the means of manufacturing gold.

Worldly anxieties were natural, since his debts at this time amounted to £300. But the spiritual voices answered him but vaguely. Even Michael, the spirit of wisdom, who frequently appeared in, and sometimes outside, the limits of the crystal, said little that could be used for practical guidance. He gave but mystic encouragements, and counselled faith and patience.

Nor did the scryer invariably have sight of

such heavenly apparitions. "Merry" spirits of fantastic dress and foolish speech came and went, and vexed the grave scholar with occasional ribaldries. Yet withal Dee's confidence remained unbroken.

His profound piety probably made him blame himself that knowledge was withheld. When the spirit known as *Medicina* finely said that there were no secrets save those that were "buried in the shadow of men's souls," he voiced Dee's own belief that God desired to hide nothing from the faithful seeker.

And to Kelley's frequent outbursts of angry impatience, and threats to leave the unprofitable scrying and "follow some study whereby he may live," the scholar answered with firm serenity that he, for his part, was content to wait God's time.

The séances, interrupted by occasional journeys of Kelley's (ostensibly with the object of seeking hidden treasure), had continued for about a year, when there came a new development. A distinguished foreign guest of the Queen—the Polish nobleman Adalbert Laski—sent word to Mortlake that he desired to visit Dee, to see his books, and to talk with him of magic—a subject of which he (Laski) professed to be a student.

The Pole was by all accounts an intriguing and not particularly honest politician, who had taken French bribes in the matter of the election of Henry III of France to the crown of Poland, and who now aspired to that crown

himself. His chief concern was to obtain money to further his ambitious schemes ; and if money could be got by " magical " means, he was willing to patronise " magicians " ! But he was a handsome and gracious-mannered man, and seems to have made a good impression at the house by the river, where, after having been introduced to Dee by Leicester, in the Earl's own apartments, he presented himself with only two attendants, and graciously " tarried supper." Again, a month later, he came more ceremoniously, by water, in a barge rowed by the Queen's men, and other visits followed.

Dee had to apply to the Queen for funds to entertain this new patron ! But the Polish prince professed to desire help from the spiritual creatures, and made flattering promises that he would reward their agents.

A spirit known as Madimi, who appeared about this time in the shape of a pretty female child, and another feminine spirit called Galvah, were questioned about the prince's political prospects. In Laski's presence also, Kelley professed to summon Laski's own guardian angel, and to learn of him concerning his charge.

A good deal of practical information here mixes with the mystical.

Laski was told of Burleigh's dislike of him, and of possible danger if he remained in England.

Dee also received mysterious warnings

through Madimi of his own danger from spies, who suspected the Pole of treason, and hated Dee as well.

Burleigh and Walsingham were said to be joined together against Dee. His house might be entered and searched.

In addition to these causes for anxiety, Dee was getting seriously distressed by the behaviour of Kelley, who was again threatening to depart, calling himself unfairly treated, and throwing himself into such mad fits of rage that Dee sincerely believed him possessed by evil spirits.

To get rid of these, a form of exorcism was gone through by Madimi—an interesting “spiritual creature,” who in this and other matters shows Dee’s mental influence on the séances, and who on one occasion described Dee’s “faith and imagination” as a kind of “sight perfecter than Kelley’s.”

Kelley professed himself much benefited by the exorcism; but his deliverance was short-lived, for a little later Dee’s *Diary* records another wild fit of rage.

Dee’s habitual gentleness doubtless emboldened the younger man to put no curb on his outbursts. Kelley had another easy victim, too, in the young wife whom he had married, shortly after his arrival at Mortlake; professedly at the command of the spirits, and without even the pretence of affection.

Mistress Kelley also became an inmate of the philosopher’s hospitable house, where

Mistress Dee pitied and befriended her, but must have felt her presence an additional burden on Dee's already heavily taxed resources.

Indeed, those resources were becoming more and more insufficient for what was required of them. In his devotion to the crystal, Dee seems to have largely neglected his astrological work, and did not, as in earlier years, add to his income by drawing the horoscopes of all and sundry. Kelley put him to continual expense. The Queen was still friendly: but the light of a royal countenance is not enough to live by.

Altogether, the hour seemed ripe for some new venture, such as had been of late foreshadowed by the spirit-voices. Laski was returning to Poland, and was eager to take his new friends with him, to employ the supernatural wisdom to which they seemed to have access, in the furtherance of his fortunes and the manufacture of the much-needed gold.

It was a wild project, and there is some suggestion that Dee recognised its wildness. But Kelley urged him on; and, after all, he was himself an incurable optimist and lover of noble patrons.

In 1583, on the afternoon of September 21 (which he does not forget to note was the Calendar feast of St. Matthew), he left Mortlake, neglecting, in characteristic fashion, to arrange his financial affairs, and apparently

believing that his absence would not extend over more than a few months. He was accompanied by his wife and three children, by the Kelleys, and some servants.

The party was joined by Laski and his own attendants; and together they set out for Holland, *en route* for Poland.

CHAPTER IV

THE long journey, which began ominously enough with a narrow escape from shipwreck, was continued overland with many hardships and delays.

Travel, in those days of cumbrous travelling coaches, was not, at the best, easy ; and these travellers were further encumbered with women, children, and heavy baggage.

No wonder that, in a strange vision of Kelley's, at Lübeck, which they reached early in November, an apparition in kingly raiment exhorted Dee to "pluck up his heart and pine not away with inward groaning." This apparition, one of a company of eleven, seems rather to have been a phantasm of the living than a messenger from the Other World ; and to have represented some royal patron who was waiting to receive and reward the travellers. But Dee obviously distrusted the dazzling promises of riches and fame, and asked in pathetic words for guidance.

Winter was setting in, and travelling was increasingly toilsome.

There was a suggestion that Laski should go on before, leaving the others to follow,

when spring came ; but Dee thought this would be unfair to the Prince, and so they made shift to push forward.

In the vision at Lübeck, Dee had also received dark warnings about the house at Mortlake, left in the ineffective charge of Mistress Dee's brother. " It may be that thy house may be burnt ! "

As a matter of fact, though the house was still standing, it was, at or about this time, broken into by a hostile mob, which destroyed all it could lay hands on of " the magician's " precious books and instruments. Still, no thought of returning seems to have entered into Dee's mind. Early in February they reached Lask, the Prince's estate, near Cracow ; and here again came visions in the crystal, and presently news, through the voice of " Madimi," that all was well at Mortlake and that the Queen was still Dee's friend.

At Cracow, whither the travellers soon removed, Kelley, in his anxiety about money, tried to scry alone, but was reprov'd and baffled by a spirit known as Nalvage. The description of this spirit, by the way, recalls the young King, Edward VI. So possibly we have here an invocation of the dead !

Then followed some weeks of investigations after Dee's own heart. Nalvage and Gabriel spoke in some mystical language, and gave mystical information which Kelley did not understand and which filled him with angry impatience. Again he declared that he would

screy no more ; and again Dee persuaded and calmed him.

The old Polish town of Cracow must have held much that was congenial and inspiring to Dee. The travellers lodged near a church, and the angelic voices counselled to acts of ceremonial piety, such as church-going and the observance of holy-days—things always dear to the pious scholar.

At Cracow also came the curious vision of the Four Castles, which a spirit, known as Ave, interpreted as “watch towers provided against the devil.” There was a castle for each point of the compass, and each was in the care of a mighty angel, so that the whole world appeared in the vision as under the protection of these invisible citadels and their garrisons.

Much time and trouble were spent in drawing an elaborate diagram representing all this ; and Dee would have been content to hear much more of the good angels, their names and functions. But Laski was already restless at the lack of practical results ; and, with a view to hastening these, insisted that Dee and Kelley should proceed to Prague and see the Emperor Rudolph, son of that Maximilian to whom Dee had dedicated his *Monas*.

To Prague they went accordingly in the late summer, leaving the women and children in Cracow.

But Rudolph, an eccentric and moody man, heard with thinly veiled impatience Dee's long

and rambling story of angelic visions ; and Uriel's reported message to himself to "for-sake his sins and turn to God" could have done little to increase his cordiality. He was civil, but committed himself to nothing ; and, in spite of the friendship formed with Dee by Dr. Curtius, a learned member of the Council, and much kindness from the Spanish Ambassador, the stay in Prague was not profitable.

It was, however, a prolonged stay. The women and children came on from Cracow ; and in the spring of 1584 another son was born to Dee, to be named Michael, after the great Archangel, and to receive baptism in Prague Cathedral.

Dee urged on Rudolph the great opportunity the Emperor was neglecting. He and Kelley, if Rudolph would but be their patron, would use the powder of projection to enrich him beyond the dreams of avarice.

But Rudolph remained cold, and, as Curtius said to Dee, regarded such things as impossible of belief without proof.

In April 1585 return was made for a short time to Poland ; and at Cracow Laski presented his protégés to King Stephan Bathori, generally known as Stephan the Great.

Stephan received them courteously, and some experiments with the crystal were attempted in his presence. But these were, apparently, not successful. At any rate, Stephan was even more unresponsive than

Rudolph, and the wanderers had no choice but to return once more to Prague.

And here they were not to be suffered to rest !

The Pope's Nuncio at Rudolph's court was thundering now against the scandal of their presence ; and the " magicians " were bidden to quit the city and the Emperor's dominions within six days.

At this crisis of indignity, however, they found a new patron and a new refuge. Count Wilhelm Rosenberg, Viceroy of Bohemia, interested himself with Rudolph in their behalf, and invited them to his castle at Tribau, or Trebona, in South Bohemia.

This was a pleasant place, surrounded by pleasant country ; and Dee records with satisfaction the " goodly Chapel next my chamber," where the scrying was resumed.

A few months later Dee received an invitation from the Emperor of Russia to enter his service and to come and live at his court at Moscow. But the scholar, though highly gratified, refused. He desired no engagement that would bind him to a foreign prince, and under Rosenberg's protection he was enjoying comparative peace and comfort.

At Trebona, progress of a kind seems at last to have been made. Kelley's much-talked-of powder of projection is said to have produced gold ; and Dee rejoiced in his companion's triumph, and wrote of it exultantly to Walsingham,

But now Kelley was finally resolved to have done with the crystal-gazing, the full record of which, both at Mortlake and abroad, had been kept by Dee in the aforementioned *Book of Mysteries*, or *Spiritual Diary*.

We may here say of this remarkable book that it is strange that anyone who carefully read it could have subscribed to the theory (once popular) that Dee made use of a mystical method of writing to conceal political secrets, and that he accompanied Laski to Poland as Elizabeth's agent and political spy. For the records could only have been kept by a true enthusiast, a spiritualist of deepest sincerity and faith.

While Kelley gazed into the showstone, Dee would be often wrapt in prayer, suspending his duties of noting what was seen and heard to murmur fervent intercessions for himself and others, now in English, now in Latin, and always in dignified and reverent words.

He could idealise the crudest details of "the Actions," as when a certain spirit who appeared wearing jewellery asked if they thought her a jeweller's wife, and Dee answered calmly that they thought her "the messenger of Him Who had purchased the jewel of eternal bliss by the jewel of His precious blood."

Here and in many another place Dee does not seem far from the standpoint of those mystics who allegorised the Philosopher's Stone itself into a type of Christ! But for Kelley, spiritual studies were valuable accord-

ing to their power of increasing material comforts. He had never loved visions for their own sake, and now they were an obvious waste of the time that might be profitably spent on transmutation.

In vain the angelic voices told him that his gift of clairvoyance was of more worth than earthly treasure. He remained obdurate ; and Dee reluctantly consecrated—with his habitual prayers for God's blessing on the work—young Arthur Dee in his stead.

But Arthur, who was only between seven and eight years of age, proved a very poor substitute. His bewildered child-eyes saw nothing of significance in the crystal. Then Kelley was persuaded to scry once more ; but felt, or professed to feel, reluctance to tell his vision. It was certainly a subject for shame ; as Dee calls it, a hard and impure doctrine. According to Kelley, Madimi and a spirit known to them as "Il" were persistently counselling that he and Dee must "share all things in common," not excepting their two wives. Both in and out of the crystal they had appeared to him, conveying this message by dumb show and by words. And Uriel, the spirit of light, the angel of God, had also appeared, with the same horrible counsel !

Dee was confounded. He does not seem to have accepted the explanation which most spiritualists of his piety would accept nowadays—namely, that such evil advice came from demons, disguised in the shape of angels.

of light. He preferred, after the first horrified protests, to view the idea as an allegory of closer spiritual union among the four; and he drew up a document which was a virtual consent, and which the four signed! He has been vehemently blamed for this. But, deluded as he was, we must acquit him of all evil intentions; and, so far as we know, there was no attempt on the part of anyone of the four to carry out the impudent suggestion. Kelley, indeed, was fully occupied with more ambitious projects. As Miss Fell-Smith observes, *he* had no idea of sharing anything with his master. The "great secret" of transmutation he kept jealously to himself, and cunningly increased his own prestige with Rosenberg, in whose eyes the older sage, with his slow, painstaking methods, was gradually becoming a mere shadow of the younger, bolder one.

Dee was never invited now to share the alchemical counsels of the Count and Kelley. The scrying in "the goodly chapel" was entirely at an end.

Saddened and humiliated, Dee's thoughts turned towards England, whither Elizabeth had already invited him to return.

He wrote her a stately letter congratulating her on the defeat of the Spanish Armada; then, in the spring of 1589, gathered his goods together, and set out from Trebona with his family, further now increased by the birth of another son, Theodor.

They had been at Trebona a year and a half. Another year and three-quarters was to elapse before they reached England. So that their absence extended altogether to six years.

Dee fully expected Kelley to join, and embark with, him ; and after a sojourn of several months in Bremen waited long for the younger man at Stade, the port of Bremen.

But he waited in vain. Kelley had no intention of returning to England, and, later, return was to be put out of his power.

Dee, in England, was to hear from time to time dazzling rumours of his success in the making of gold, and of honours he could never have hoped to gain in his own native country. Later came a story of swift and sudden disgrace—imprisonment; and, finally, death in prison, possibly by violence, possibly by his own hand.

Characteristically, the old scholar mourned for his treacherous friend, saw him sometimes in dreams, and in his own last days spoke regretfully of the wondrous things they had experienced together.

But they never met again. The strange fellowship was ended.

It is hardly necessary to say that of the annual sum of money promised to Dee when he left Bohemia, not a penny was ever received.

CHAPTER V

THE Christmas of 1589 saw Dee back in his own house at Mortlake. A few days previously he had been graciously received by Elizabeth in audience at Richmond; and the bitter memory of his humiliating experiences must have been somewhat softened by her kindness, and by that of friends like Adrian Gilbert, who came at once to visit him and to offer him help.

But his financial situation was sufficiently alarming. He had lost (through his own carelessness in not arranging for their payment to him when abroad) the small revenues from his lay-rectorships; many of his most valuable books and instruments had been destroyed in the mob's attack on his house; and there was, very naturally, no sign of the promised supplies from Bohemia. All his children were still young, and a few months after the return to Mortlake another daughter was born. Bestirring himself again in the quest for preferment, Dee asked, as he had asked many years before, for the mastership of the Hospital of Holy Cross, Winchester. But though influential persons interested themselves on his

behalf, the matter, like many another, came to nothing.

Full and free permission from Elizabeth to continue his alchemical experiments without hindrance from the laws in force against magic was, however, a consolation of sorts.

He still believed that Kelley, with whom he had some correspondence, might eventually return, or, failing that, that he himself might discover the great secret of transmutation by his own efforts. So he gave himself earnestly to his old studies, in which the Queen still took some gracious interest; and no doubt he also earned something by the drawing of horoscopes and other astrological work.

But it was a painful struggle. As he himself says, he was stinted in food and clothing, devoured by usurers, and daily put to shame.

At last, towards the end of 1592, the Queen, in response to his desperate petition, sent to Mortlake two commissioners—Sir John Woolley and Sir Thomas Gorges—to hear his statement of his affairs and to report to her.

Dee drew up for them that lengthy autobiographical statement known to us as the *Compendious Rehearsal*; and as he read it to them in his library at Mortlake, we may well believe that his voice often faltered with emotion and the sense of what he had suffered.

He who had given his life to the pursuit of knowledge, who had ever meant “all truth, sincerity, fidelity, and piety to God, Queen, and Country,” saw himself in advancing age

without provision for to-day or prospect for to-morrow. Yet, as he said, there was a very easy remedy for his lamentable case. The Queen could bestow on him some office with due maintenance attached. The Queen did immediately send him a hundred marks, and though preferment still hung fire, there is evidence that the ecclesiastical prejudice against the spiritualistic philosopher was not quite such a barrier to it as formerly.

Archbishop Whitgift showed him respect and kindness, and at length, through his good offices, Dee was recommended to the wardenship of Christ's College, Manchester, and actually obtained it.

The Manchester of Tudor times was already one of the most thriving and populous of English provincial towns, or, as they were then commonly called, *villages*.

Thanks to the Flemish weavers who settled there in the reign of Edward III, it boasted a busy trade, a cloth-mill, and a market.

The College, a pre-Reformation foundation which had provided priests and other spiritual necessities for the growing town, had been recently granted a new charter, with a warden, four fellows, two chaplains, and choristers. It seemed likely to provide a congenial retreat for a man of learning, and Dee took the long journey northward in a mood of gratitude and hope, though it must have been somewhat of a wrench to leave Mortlake, where, since the return to England, three little daughters had

successively been born to him, and Michael, the son born at Prague, had died of some childish illness.

The old house, too, was full of memories of Kelley and the crystal-gazing. Dee may well have felt that he was leaving much of his real life behind him, in the grave of those four walls.

Which, indeed, is very much our feeling also !

As Warden of Manchester College, Dee seems little more than a shadow of his true self. That tall, slender figure in the scholar's loose-sleeved gown seems grotesquely out of place, with the busy Lancashire "village" for a background.

Soon he himself was complaining bitterly of the continual interruptions to his beloved studies by "the cares and cumbers" of "this defaced and disordered College," which had not even gained him freedom from money troubles, but, on the contrary, involved him in money troubles of its own.

The revenues had sadly shrunk, and were, through the continual disputes over tithes and lands, still shrinking. The Warden was still supposed to be in priest's orders, and Dee, as a layman, had to pay curates to fulfil such priestly duties as had survived to Anglican times.

And in the society into which he was now thrown there was little demand for the gifts which he esteemed above all others and

found his greatest happiness in using. The sleepy, post-mediæval College and the expanding township were both of them "provincial" in their own way, both had their own narrow bigotry.

The new Warden received some odd tributes to his occult learning. We hear of him as lending books on demonology, out of his library, to puzzled justices, to assist them in examining and sentencing supposed witches; and as being consulted about a case of possession, in which one Hartley, "a conjurer," had made himself notorious.

Dee's curate, the Rev. Matthew Palmer, denounced as imposture Hartley's attempts to cast the evil spirits out of a poor woman and her children, who were grievously troubled with fits; and Dee himself sent for Hartley and "sharply rebuked him"—with the result, we are given to understand, of a temporary improvement. Dee, however, did not himself attempt the act of exorcism, but left it to "a godly preacher."

Probably his medical knowledge told him that epilepsy and not Satan was at the root of the trouble. With popular superstition and ignorance he had never had more sympathy than the majority of learned men.

The struggle to live went on.

The Fellows of the College do not seem to have been on very good terms with their Warden; and there were continual disputes with them and with the tenants of the College lands.

The Warden, however, did a little farming of his own land; and visits from friends from London, as well as a lengthy stay he himself made in London to transact College business, varied the monotony of the provincial years.

The happenings of this later period are not narrated with the old fullness in his *Diary*, but we get occasional glimpses of his inner life. Still he records dreams which may possibly prove prophetic! Still he meditates on occult works which he yet means to write, and on the triumph that may yet crown his alchemical researches!

We know also that he had occasional resort to the crystal; sometimes with the aid of a Mr. Francis Nicholls, who had been one of his astrological pupils at Mortlake; sometimes with Bartholomew Hickman, the son of an old acquaintance, whose mediumistic powers Dee had apparently detected years ago, when Bartholomew was a lad in his father's house.

So the years drifted on. Theodor, the boy born at Trebona, followed Michael to an early grave; but the other young Dees were growing up.

Sometime in 1602 Arthur (the child once consecrated as scryer, who in later life studied and practised medicine, and became the close friend at Norwich of Sir Thomas Browne) married the daughter of a Manchester Justice of the Peace; and Dee had the horoscopes of

young grandchildren to draw. Arthur seems to have been an affectionate and dutiful son, and of great comfort to the old scholar in the still darker time that was to follow on this interval of peace.

The spring of 1603 saw the death of Elizabeth, and with her died all hope of further preferment. Indeed, Dee seems to have believed his life in actual danger from the new Act against witchcraft, and the horrible zeal with which James and his advisers administered it. He drew up impassioned petitions to the King, to be cleared of the "infamous slanders" that represented him as "a conjurer and caller of devils." They went unregarded, but there was no definite attempt to molest him.

It may even be that James felt a certain respect for him, or feared his mysterious powers. There is a story (though not a very well authenticated one) that Dee or Kelley had foreseen in the crystal the Gunpowder Plot—the faces of the traitors, and the intended fate of the King and Parliament. At any rate, the new Government seemed content to leave the old man to die in peace.

One sharp and crowning sorrow was to follow. In the spring following Elizabeth's death the plague came to Manchester, and Jane Dee died of it. Perhaps, as Miss Fell-Smith conjectures, some of her children were also victims. At least, we do not again hear anything of the three younger girls. Katherine,

the eldest, survived to minister tenderly to the stricken man, round whom the mortal shadows were thickening, whose long life, vulgarly supposed to be one of the results of alchemical skill, was fast drawing to its close.

But there was to be light at eventide !

With every possible door of worldly advantage closed, and with even the Manchester wardenship perforce resigned through broken health and increasing infirmities, the old hope of intercourse with the Invisible was rekindled. About a year after Elizabeth's death, while Dee lay ill in London, there came to his scribe, Bartholomew Hickman, a sight of "God's blessed Creature," Raphael, the angel of healing, and Dee received comfort and reassurance about his physical state.

In the summer of the same year, when the old man, with his daughter, was lodging in an inn at Westminster, the vision came again, bringing this time a more definite message of health and vigour restored, and of "a long journey to friends beyond the sea" where all that Dee had so long desired to know should be made plain to him ! . . . the secret of transmutation, and greater secrets still !

True to his old careful habit, Dee has many questions to ask about the manner and companions of that journey. His weakening mind is occupied with many trifling details. Yet, at the last, all doubts and troubles seem of a sudden to be resolved.

At Raphael's bidding, he renounces his

anxiety about the moneys that he should have received from the Emperor Rudolph—"The Emperor of all emperors will be thy comfort. Thou hast no more need of Rudolph," says the angelic voice.

It has been well observed¹ that in these last séances it is the voice, not the appearance, of the messenger of which we hear most. In earlier years Dee, who could "neither see nor scry," was troubled at his limitations, and resorted eagerly to clairvoyants to transcend them. He had never really quite believed that the vision of faith and imagination was "perfecter" than Kelley's gift of seership.

Now it is his own psychic powers that seem summoned and aroused. The subjective has become of more importance than the objective. "He sees with the soul."

The words of Raphael were not long in fulfilment. Dee had truly no more need of Rudolph or of any earthly thing, and in December 1608 the long journey—beyond the seas of time—was indeed taken.

It is pleasant to think that the love and care of a faithful little circle—of his son and daughter, of Bartholomew Hickman and another disciple, John Pontoys—surrounded him to the last; and that death came to him at quiet Mortlake, where, in spite of all the slanders, his memory was not unhonoured by the village folk, one of whom spoke of him to his kinsman Aubrey as "a great peacemaker"

¹ *Life of Dee*, by Charlotte Fell-Smith.

among quarrelsome neighbours, and as "a mighty good man."

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We have spoken of the injury inflicted on Dee's posthumous reputation by popular prejudice and ignorance.

Perhaps also, occultists and mystics themselves are inclined to give him less than his due. He so often fell short of his lofty aims that it is easy to forget how lofty those aims in truth were, and how his very failures were, in part, the failures of one whose vision was beyond that of his age. His varied knowledge and eager, speculative mind often proved a hindrance to practical attainments.

It has been said that Dee was a spiritualist rather than an occultist; but, even so, he brought to his spiritualism some high, far-reaching thoughts from his occult studies.

He investigated spiritualism as an astrologer who had not forgotten the nobler lessons of his art; and his belief in "the might of stars and angels" saved him from too blind a belief in the wisdom of the spirits of the "earthbound" dead. His own words to Kelley, aforequoted, are his own best *Apologia*. It was, in truth, "the company and information of the angels of God" that he sought; and if he did not always take the best means to attain it, his *desire*—that "infinite desire" which a great mystic¹ has described as more pleasing to God

¹ "A great mystic"—Catherine of Siena.

than any finished work—burned high and true to the last.

In an age at once superstitiously credulous and superstitiously sceptical, he upheld the great tradition that human nature itself contains the germs of supernormal faculties which, rightly understood and developed, may establish a real communication with the Spiritual World.

We may say with some justice that he himself did not use those faculties to any great profit.

But he passed on the Torch! Modern Psychical Research owes something to his memory.

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