

ON THE ANTIQUITY OF ALCHEMY.

HOUGH I am no alchemist, yet as a relaxation from severer studies, I have read with considerable attention the works of the most celebrated writers on alchemy; and, as the result of this reading, am induced to think, that there is as much historical evidence for the truth of this art, as for any past transaction, which is believed on the testimony of those that record it. I was much gratified, therefore, to find, in the preceding number of the Classical Journal, the arguments of those who contend that the Egyptians possessed this art, displayed with so much ability by Sir William Drummond.

Certain very respectable authorities, however, for the great antiquity of this art, appear not only to have escaped the notice of that gentleman, but of all the modern writers with whom I am acquainted. The authorities are these: Manetho, in the 4th book, p. 66. of his astrological poem, entitled Apotelesmatica, has the following lines:

*Και μουνη Κυβερεια συνη καλω Φαιθοντι
Ρακτηρας χρυσοιο, και Ινδογενους ελεφαντος
Εργοπονοους δεικνυσι*

i. e. "Venus alone, in conjunction with the beautiful Phaethon (the sun), indicates MAKERS OF GOLD, and workers of Indian ivory." This Manetho lived in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, to whom also he dedicated his work.

In the second place, the Empress Eudocia, in her Greek Dictionary, p. 108, published by Villoison, observes as follows, concerning the so much celebrated Golden Fleece: *Διονυσος ο Μιτυληναιος, ανθρωπον φησι γεγενησθαι παιδαγωγον του Φρυξου, ονοματι Κριον και δερμας χρυσομαλλον, ουχ ως ποιητικως φερεται, αλλα βιβλιον ην εν δερμασι γυγραμμενον, περιεχον οπως δει γενεσθαι δια χυμειας χρυσιου. ειποτως ουν οι τοτε λεγει, χρυσοι ανωμαζον αυτο δερμας, δια την εξ αυτου ενεργειαν.* i. e. "Dionysius the Mitylenean says, that a man whose name was *Crius*,¹ was the pedagogue of Phryxus, and that the sheep-skin had a golden fleece, not conformably to poetic assertion, but that it was a book written on skins, containing the manner in which gold ought to be made, according to the chymic art. Justly therefore, did those of that period denominate the skin golden, through the energy proceeding from it." This Diony-

¹ This word, as the learned reader well knows, signifies a ram.

sius, as Fabricius shows (in Biblioth. Græc.), lived somewhat prior to Cicero.

In the third place, Plotinus, in his treatise On Matter, speaks of the analysis of other metals into gold, as a thing possible to be effected. For he says, "Analysis also shows the existence of matter [i. e. of the formless and ultimate subject of bodies]. Just as if a pot should be analysed into gold, but gold into water; and water when corrupted, requires an analogous process." *Και η αναλυσις δε οιον ει η φιαλη εις τον χρυσον· ο δε χρυσος εις υδωρ, και το υδωρ δε φθειρομενον το αναλογον απαιτει.* What Plotinus here says of the analysis into gold, is perfectly conformable to the assertion of Albertus Magnus, as cited by Becher in his *Physica Subterranea*, p. 319. For his words are, "Non dari rem elementatam; in cujus ultima substantiatione non reperitur aurum." That all metals likewise may be analysed into water is the doctrine of Plato, who in his *Timæus* says, "that water is twofold; one kind of which is humid, but the other fusile." And he adds, "that among all those which we denominate fusile waters, that which becoming most dense from attenuated and equable parts, is of a uniform kind, and participates of a splendid and yellow color, is that most honored and valuable possession gold, which is usually impelled through a rock."

In the last place, in the selections from Chemical Greek Manuscripts, in the *Bibliotheca Græca* of Fabricius, Tom. 12. p. 765, there is an extract from a treatise of one Olympiodorus to Petasius, king of Armenia, in which among other things it is said, "that the art of making gold was most diligently concealed by the Egyptians; that those who were skilled in the art, alone exercised it for the use of the king; and that these men accompanied him in his wars, in order to supply his treasury." For the sake of the learned reader, however, and as the extract does not appear to be much known, I will transcribe the whole, as given by Fabricius. *Ολυμπιοδωρου φιλοσοφου Αλεξανδρου προς Πετασιον τον βασιλεα Αρμενιαις εις το κατ' ενεργειαν Ζωσιμου οσα απο Ερμου και των φιλοσοφων ησαν ειρημενα.* Incipit: *Γινεται η ταριχεια απο μηνος Μεχρις κε και εως Μεσαρις κε, &c.* In hoc apospasmatio multa non indigna relatu, quæ excerpere juvat. *Εθος γαρ τοις αρχαιοις συνη καλυπτειν την αληθειαν, και τα παντα τοις ανθρωποις ευδηλα δια αλληγορικων τιτων και τεχνης ενφιλοσοφου αποκρυπτειν, ου μονον δε οτι τας τεμιας ταυτας τεχνας τη αφεγγει αυτων και σκοτεινοτατη εκδοσει συνεσκεψαν, αλλα και αυτα τα κοινα ρηματα δι αλλων τιτων ρηματων μετεφρασαν, εις τουτο αυτο Πλατωνα και Αριστοτελην αλληγορησαντες.—Αυτην δηλαδη την ψαμμον ανωθεν ουσιουσαν, ηγτινα οι αρχαιοι δια τα κυριον ονομα επηθησαν λιθαργυρον. και εις αυτην εστιν ευρειν και το τετρασυλλαβον, και το επαναγραμμον—γνωους οτι τα σκαριδια εστι*

το ἄνοι μυστήριον, οὐκ ἔστιν εἰς αὐτὰ κρημαίνονται καὶ ἐπιβλαστούσι, καὶ διὰ μὲν αἰνιγματικὰ εἰς αὐτὰ ἐκτρέχει, καὶ αἱ βιβλοὶ αἰ τούτων αὐτὰ αἰνιττοῦται.—αὐτοὶ αἱ Αἰγυπτίων γραφαί, καὶ ποιήσεις καὶ δεξίαι, χρῆσται τε δαιμονῶν καὶ ἐκδετοὶ προφητῶν. Serpius citatur Zosimus, sed et Democritus, Agathodæmon, et Maria. Zosimi dictum ab aliis etiam laudatum : εἰ μὴ τὰ σώματα ἀσαρμάτωστος καὶ ποιήστος τὰ δύο ἐν, οὐδὲν τῶν προσδοκωμένων ἐστίν.

Sed quæ ex ejusdem τῆ τελευταία ἀποχὴ πρὸς Θεοσεβείαν afferuntur, adscribenda sunt, quæ et infra num. 45. repetuntur, nihilo magis integra : Ὀλον τὸ τῆς Αἰγυπτίου βασιλείου, ὡ γυναι, ἀπο τῶν δύο τούτων τεχνῶν συνεστήθη, τῶν τε κηρικῶν καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν ψαμμου. ἡ γὰρ καλουμένη θεῖα τεχνη, τούτῃσιν ἡ δογματικὴ περὶ τῆς ἀσχυολοῦται ἀκαπτοὶ οἱ ζήτουτες τὰ χειροτέμματα¹ ἀπάντα, καὶ τὰς τιμὰς τεχνῶν, τὰς τεσσαρὰς φημι, δοκοῦσιν τι ποιεῖν μονοῖς ἐξεδόθη τοῖς ἱερευσιν. ἡ γὰρ φυσικὴ ψαμμουργικὴ βασιλείων ἦν. ὥστε καὶ εἰ μὴ συμβῆ ἱερεῖα ἢ σοφῶν λεγομένων ἐρμηνεύσαντα τὰ ἐκ τῶν παλαιῶν, ἢ ἀπο προγονῶν ἐκλήρονησεν, καὶ ἔχον καὶ ἰδῶν τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτῶν τὴν ἀκαλυπτον, οὐκ ἐποιεῖ ἐτιμωρεῖτο γὰρ. ὥσπερ οἱ τεχνῖται οἱ ἐπιστάμενοι βασιλικῶν τυπτεῖν νομισμα, ὅχι αὐτοῖς τυπτοῦσιν, ἐπεὶ τιμωροῦνται. οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς βασιλευσὶ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων, οἱ τεχνῖται τῆς ἐφήσεως, οἱ ἔχοντες τὴν γνῶσιν τῆς ἀμμοπλυσίας καὶ ἀκολουθίας, οὐχ αὐτοῖς ἐποιου, ἀλλ' εἰς αὐτὸ τούτῳ ἐστρατευόντε εἰς τοὺς θησαυροὺς ἐργαζόμενοι. εἶχον δὲ καὶ ἰδίους ἀρχοντας ἐπικείμετους ἐκᾶνω τῶν θησαυρῶν, καὶ ἀρχιστρατηγούς, καὶ πολλὴν τυραννὴν τῆς ἐφήσεως. νόμος γὰρ ἦν Αἰγυπτίοις, μὴδὲ ἐγγραφῶς αὐτὰ τινα ἐκδίδονται. Τίνας οὖν μεμφοῦνται Διόσκορον καὶ τοὺς ἀρχαίους, ὡς μὴ μνημονοῦσάντας τούτων τῶν δύο τεχνῶν, ἀλλὰ μόνων τῶν λεγομένων τιμῶν. ματῆρ δὲ αὐτοὺς μεμφοῦνται. οὐ γὰρ ἠδύναντο φίλοι ὄντες τῶν βασιλείων Αἰγυπτίου, καὶ τὰ πρᾶτεια ἐν προφητικῇ ἀυχούντες, πῶς ἠδύναντο ἀναφανδῶν μᾶθηματα κατὰ τῶν βασιλείων δημοσίᾳ ἐκδεσθᾶν, καὶ δοῦναι ἀλλοῖς πλοῦτου τυραννίδα. οὐτε εἰ ἠδύναντο ἐξεδίδου, ἐφθονου γὰρ. μονοῖς δὲ Ἰουδαίοις ἔξω ἦν λαβρὰ ταῦτα ποιεῖν καὶ γραφεῖν καὶ ἐκδίδου, ἀμελεῖ γόν ἐρισκομέν Θεοφίλον τὸν Θεογενούς, γραψάντα ὅλα τὰ τῆς χειρογράφιας εὐτυχία, καὶ Μαρίας τὴν καμινογραφίαν, καὶ ἀλλοὺς Ἰουδαίους, καὶ Σύνεσιος πρὸς Διοσκόρον² γραφῶν, &c. Ad Ptolemæi Bibliothecas allegat his verbis : καλεῖται δὲ καὶ παρθένος γῆ, καὶ γῆ αἰματώδης. Ταῦτα δὲ εὐρησεῖς ἐν ταῖς Πτολεμαίου βιβλιοθήκαις.

The most remarkable circumstance in this extract is, that permission should be given by the Egyptian kings, to the Jews alone, latently to practise, to write about, and to publish this art. Perhaps this most singular exception in favor of the Jews, was owing to

¹ Αἱ χειροτέμματα, vel χειροτέμματα.

² This Dioscorus was a priest of Serapis in Alexandria, so that he lived prior to the destruction of the ancient temples. See the treatise of Synesius to him, in the 7th vol. of Fabricius.

their being more expert in the art of making gold, and in consequence of this supplying the royal treasuries more speedily, and more abundantly than other alchemists. For they were always a people immoderately addicted to gain.

THOMAS TAYLOR.

Manor Place, Walworth, July 9.

IN EURIPIDEM COMMENTARIÏ

Joannis SEAGER, A.B. Bicknor. Wallicæ in comitatu
Monumethiæ Rectoris.

NO. I.

Hecuba, v. 265.

'Αλλ' οὐδὲν (inquit Hecuba) αὐτὸν (Achillem) ἠδέ γ' (Polyxena, cædi destinata) εἰργασται κακόν.

'Ελένην νιν αἰτεῖν χρεὶ τάφα προσφάγματα.

Πρόσφαγμά τι sine causa conjecit Beckius. Porson.

Si 'Ελένην et προσφάγματα diversæ rei accusativi sunt, et constructio eadem quæ in *Posce deos veniam, sine causa* tantum conjecit Beckius; nam, quod ad sensum, προσφάγματα, numero plurali pro singulari posito, a πρόσφαγμά τι non discrepat: sin ejusdem rei accusativi 'Ελένην et προσφάγματα, si Helena ipsa victima, loco Polyxenæ, Achilli poscenda fuit, plus quam supervacanea conjectura Beckii; sensus enim οἴχεται, et melius fuisset dare 'Ελένην νιν αἰτεῖν χρεὶ τάφα πρόσφαγμά ΤΟΙ.—Porro, versu sequenti (266) pro Κεῖνη γὰρ ἄλυσεν νιν, εἰς Τροίαν τ' ἄγει, legendum, Κεῖνη γὰρ ἄλυσεν νιν, "Η' Σ' Τροίαν Γ' ἄγει. "Quæ quidem ad Trojam ducit." [At τοι vix unquam sententiam claudit. Ed.]

Hecuba, v. 605. (608. ed. Pors.)

Μὴ θιγγάνειν μου μηδέν, ἀλλ' εἰργειν ὄχλον

Τῆς παιδός. Sic male vulgo legebantur hæc verba Hecubæ

de Polyxena jamjam moritura. Porsonus, subdistinctione post ὄχλον posita, τὸ μου recte cum τῷ παιδός colligavit. Sed quanto elegantius fuisset Μὴ θιγγάνειν ΜΟΙ μηδέν, ἀλλ' εἰργειν ὄχλον, Τῆς παιδός!

Hecuba, v. 1000. (986. ed. Pors.)

Hecuba. Οἷσθ' οὖν ἢ λῆξαι σοὶ τε καὶ παισὶν θέλω;

Polymestor. Οὐκ οἶδα. τῷ σῶ τοῦτο σημανεῖς λόγῳ.

Hecuba. Ἔστω φιληθείς, ὡς σὺ νῦν ἔμοι φιλεῖ.

Polymestor. Τί χρεῖμ', ἢ καμὲ καὶ τέκν' εἶδέναι χρεῶν;