

Glory of the World or the Tablet from Heaven

by the alchemist Hortalanus, Frankfort, 1620

(This is a medieval version of the Emerald Tablet rewritten in alchemical terms.)

THE EMERALD TABLET

It is true, without any error, and it is the sum of truth; that which is Above is also that which is Below, for the performance of the wonders of a certain One Thing, and as all things arise from One Stone, so also they were generated from one common Substance, which includes the Four Elements created by God. And among other miracles, the said Stone is born of the First Matter. The Sun is its Father, the Moon its Mother, the Wind bears it in its womb, and it is nursed by the Earth. Itself is the Father of the whole earth, and the whole potency thereof. If it be transmuted into Earth, then the Earth separates from the Fire that which is most subtle from that which is hard (gross), operating gently and with great artifice. Then the Stone ascends from earth to heaven, and again descends from heaven to earth, and receives the choicest influences of both heaven and earth. If you can perform this you have the Glory of the World, and are able to put to flight all diseases, and to transmute all metals. It overcomes the Mercury, which is subtle, and penetrates all hard and solid bodies. Hence it is compared with the world itself. Hence I am called Hermes, having the three parts of the whole world of philosophy.

EXPLANATION OF THE EMERALD TABLET OF HERMES

Hermes is right in saying that our Art is true, and has been rightly handed down by the Sages; all doubts concerning it have arisen through false interpretation of the mystic language of the philosophers. But, since they are loth to confess their own ignorance, their readers prefer to say that the words of the Sages are imposture and falsehood. The fault really lies with the ignorant reader, who does not understand the style of the Philosophers. If, in the interpretation of our books, they would suffer themselves to be guided by the teaching of Nature, rather than by their own foolish notions, they would not miss the mark so hopelessly.

By the words which follow: "That which is above is also that which is below," he describes the Matter of our Art, which, though *One*, is divided into two things, the volatile Water which rises upward, and the Earth which lies at the bottom, and becomes fixed. But when the reunion takes place, the body becomes spirit, and the spirit becomes body, the Earth is changed into Water and becomes volatile, the Water is transmuted into body, and becomes fixed. When bodies become spirits, and spirits bodies, your work is finished, for then that which rises upward and that which descends downward become one body. Therefore the Sage says that that which is Above is that which is Below, meaning that, after having been separated into two substances (from being one substance), they are again joined together into one substance, i.e., an union which can never be dissolved, and possesses such virtue and efficacy that it can do in one moment what the Sun cannot accomplish in a thousand years. And this miracle is wrought by a thing which is despised and rejected by the multitude!

Again, the Sage tells us that all things were created, and are still generated, from one first substance and consist of the same elementary material; and in this first substance God has appointed the Four Elements, which represent a common material into which it might perhaps be possible to resolve all things. Its development is brought about by the distillation of the Sun and Moon. For it is operated upon by the natural heat of the Sun Moon, which stirs up its internal action, and multiplies each thing after its kind, imparting to the substance a specific form. The soul, or nutritive principle, is the Earth which receives the rays of the Sun and Moon, and therewith feeds her children as with mother's milk. Thus the Sun is the father, the Moon is the mother, the Earth the nurse – and in this substance is that which we require. He who can take it

and prepare it is truly to be envied. It is separated by the Sun and Moon in the form of a vapour, and collected in the place where it is found.

When Hermes adds that "the Air (Wind) bears it in its womb, the Earth is its nurse, the whole world its Father," he means that when the substance of our Stone is dissolved, then the wind bears it in its womb, i.e., the air bears up the substance in the form of Water, in which is hid Fire, the soul of the Stone, and Fire is the Father of the whole world. Thus, the volatile substance rises upward, while that which remains at the bottom, is the "whole world" (seeing that our Art is compared to a "small world"). Hence Hermes calls Fire the father of the whole world, because it is the Sun of our Art, and Air, Moon and Water ascend from it; the Earth is the nurse of the Stone, i.e., when the Earth receives the rays of the Sun and Moon, a new body is born, like a new fetus in the mother's womb.

The earth receives and digests the light of Sun and Moon, and imparts food to its fetus day by day, till it becomes great and strong, and puts off its blackness and defilement, and is changed to a different colour. This "child," which is called "our daughter," represents our Stone, which is born anew of the Sun and Moon, as you may easily see, when the spirit, or the Water that ascended, is gradually transmuted into the body, and the body is born anew, and grows and increases in size like the fetus in the mother's womb. Thus the Stone is generated from the first substance, which contains the Four Elements; it is brought forth by two things, the body and the spirit; the wind bears it in its womb, for it carries the Stone upward from earth to heaven, and down again from heaven to earth. Thus the Stone receives increase from Above and from Below, and is born a second time, just as every other fetus is generated in the maternal womb; as all created things bring forth their young, even so does the Air, or wind, bring forth our Stone.

When Hermes adds, "Its power, or virtue, is entire, when it is transmuted into Earth," he means that when the spirit is transmuted into the body, it receives its full strength and virtue. For as yet the spirit is volatile and not fixed or permanent. If it is to be fixed, we must proceed as the baker does in baking bread. We must impart only a little of the spirit to the body at a time, just as the baker only puts a little leaven to his meal, and with it leavens the whole lump. The spirit, which is our leaven, in like fashion transmutes the whole body into its own substance. Therefore the body must be leavened again and again, until the whole lump is thoroughly pervaded with the power of the leaven. In our Art the body leavens the spirit, and transmutes it into one body, and the spirit leavens the body, and transmutes it into one spirit. And the two, when they have become one, receive power to leaven all things, into which they are injected, with their own virtue.

The Sage continues: "If you gently separate the Earth from the Fire, the subtle from the hard (gross), the Stone ascends from earth to heaven, and again descends from heaven to earth, and receives its virtue from Above and from Below. By this process you obtain the glory and brightness of the whole world. With it you can put to flight poverty, disease, and weariness; for it overcomes the subtle mercury, and penetrates all hard and firm bodies." He means that all who would accomplish this task must separate the moist from the dry, the water from the earth. The water, carrying the seed of fire, being subtle, ascends, while the body is hard, and remains where it is. The separation must be accomplished by gentle heat, i.e., in the temperate bath of the Sages, which acts slowly, and is neither too hot nor too cold. Then the Stone ascends to heaven, and again descends from heaven to earth.

The spirit and body are first separated, then again joined together by gentle coction, of a temperature resembling that with which a hen hatches her eggs. Such is the preparation of the substance, which is worth the whole world, whence it is also called a "little world." The possession of the Stone will yield you the greatest delight, and unspeakably precious comfort. It will also set forth to you in a typical form the creation of the world. It will enable you to cast out all disease from the human body, to drive away poverty, and to have a good understanding of the secrets of Nature. The Stone has virtue to transmute mercury into gold and silver, and to penetrate all hard and firm bodies, such as precious stones and metals. You cannot ask a better gift of God than this gift, which is greater than all other gifts. Hence Hermes may justly call himself by the proud title of "Hermes Trismegistus, who holds the three parts of the whole world of wisdom."