

The Only True Way

**The Only True Way;
Or,
An Useful, Good, And Helpful Tract,
Pointing Out The Path Of Truth.
1677.**

The Only True Way

Beloved friend and brother, under the name of this glorious Art there is to be found much false teaching which is put forward by pseudo-chemists, whose writings are nothing but imposture and deceit, and are yet highly esteemed by people of the simpler sort. These charlatans induce their dupes to waste much money and time on that which can profit them nothing; for unless a thing be well begun, it can never be brought to a good end. Yet most men, who, nowadays, have devoted themselves to this exalted art of chemistry, are pursuing a wrong course, and are deceivers or deceived. The deceivers are conscious of their own ignorance, and try to veil it under an obscure and allegorical style. The less they really know, the more pompous and the more unintelligible do their speculations become. But the reader, who is puzzled by their perplexing style, may at least comfort himself with the assurance that he knows as much about the matter as the authors. That assurance must serve for a kind of clue to the endless labyrinth of their false sublimations, calcinations, distillations, solutions, coagulations, putrefactions, and corruptions. Nevertheless, we may almost every (lay see foolish persons spend their whole substance on those absurd experiments, being induced to do so by the aforesaid pseudo-chemists, who impose on them with a false process, and fanciful perversions of Nature.

With these useless and unnecessary experiments the true Alchemists will have nothing to do. They follow the method pursued by Nature in the veins of the earth, which is very simple, and includes no solutions, putrefactions, coagulations, or anything of the kind. Can Nature, in the heart of the earth, where the metals do grow and receive increase, have anything corresponding to all those pseudo-chemical instruments alembics, retorts, circulatory and sublimatory phials, fires, and other materials, such as cobbler's wax, salt, arsenic mercury, sulphur, and so forth? Can all these things really be necessary for the growth and increase of the metals? It is surprising that any one not entirely bereft of his senses can spend many years in the study of alchemy, and yet never get beyond those foolish and frivolous solutions, coagulations, putrefactions, distillations, while Nature is so simple and unsophisticated in her methods. Surely every true Artist must look upon this elaborate tissue of baseless operations as the merest folly, and can only wonder that the eyes of those silly dupes are not at last opened, that they may see something besides such absurd sophisms, and read something besides those stupid and deceitful books. It seems that they are so entangled in their sophisms that they can never attain to the freedom of true philosophy.

But let me tell you that so long as you love lies, and turn away from rational philosophy, you will never find the right way. I can speak from bitter experience. For I, too, toiled for many years in accordance with those sophistic methods, and endeavoured to reach the coveted goal by sublimation, distillation, calcination, circulation, and so forth, and to fashion the Stone out of substances such as urine, salt, atrament, alum, etc. I have tried hard to evolve it out of hairs, wine, eggs, bones, and all manner of herbs; out of arsenic, mercury, and sulphur, and all the minerals and metals. I have striven to elicit it by means of aqua fortis and alkali. I have spent nights and days in dissolving, coagulating, amalgamating, and precipitating. Yet from all these things I derived neither profit nor joy. I had hoped much from the quintessence, but it disappointed me like the rest.

Therefore, beloved brother, let me warn you to have nothing to do with sublimations of sulphur and mercury, or the solution of bodies, or the coagulation of spirits, or with all the innumerable alembics, which bear little profit unto veritable art. So long as you do not seek the true essence of Nature, your labours will be doomed to failure—therefore, if you desire success, you must once for all renounce your allegiance to all those old methods, and enlist under the standards of that method which proceeds in strict obedience to the teaching of Nature - in short, the method which Nature herself pursues in the bowels of the earth. For you see that Nature uses only one substance in her work of developing and perfecting the metals, and that this substance includes everything that is required. Now, this substance appears to call for no special treatment, except that of digestion by gentle heat, which must be continued until it has reached its highest possible degree of development. For this simple heating process the

cunning sophists have substituted solutions, coagulations, calcinations, putrefactions, sublimations, and other fantastical operations - which are only different names for the same thing; and thereby they have multiplied a thousand-fold the difficulties of this undertaking, and given rise to the popular notion that it is a most arduous, hazardous, and ruinously expensive enterprise. This they have simply done out of jealousy and malice, to put others off the right track, and to involve them in poverty and ruin. But they will find it difficult to justify their conduct before God, who has commanded us to love our neighbours as ourselves. For out of sheer malice they have rendered the road of truth impassable, and perplexed a simple natural process with such an elaborate tissue of circumstantial nomenclature, as to make the amelioration of the metals appear a hopelessly difficult task. For while you heat, you also putrefy, or decompose, as you may see by the changes which a grain of wheat undergoes in the ground under the influence of the rain and of the sun; you know that it must first decay before new life can spring forth. It is this process which they have denominated putrefaction and solution. Again when you heat, you also sublime, and to this coction they have applied the terms sublimation and multiplication, that the simple man might err more easily. In like manner coagulation takes place in heating; for they say that coagulation takes place when humidity is changed into the nature of fire, so as to be able to resist the action of fire, without evaporating, or being consumed. And heating also includes that which they call "circulation," or conjunction, or the union of fire with water to prevent complete combustion. Thus you see that that which they have called by so many names is really but one simple process. The substance, which is *one*, they have described under a similar variety of appellations, to prevent men from finding that which, by the grace of God, can provide for them so many precious blessings. In the first place they call it "our mercury," by which they mean nothing but moisture, which begins to unite itself with the fire, and therefore may be compared to mercury. Again, they use the expression, "our sulphur," whereby they mean nothing but the fire itself, which lies hid beneath the water, or humidity, and is heated by the water to its highest degree. Then, again, they call it Hyle, or the First Substance, because all things are first generated out of water and fire. Other names, such as Arsenic, Orpiment, Bismuth, are not used by the Sages at all, but only by certain ignorant charlatans, of whom we need not take any further notice. Let us follow the guidance of Nature: she will not lead us astray.

If you let this be your motto, you will surely be able to call to mind the first substance, out of which all metallic substances are generated. But before we consider this question, it will much behove you to understand why the Sun, Moon, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, are metals, and what is their origin. Besides finding an answer to this question, you must also bear in mind that all created things are divided into three kingdoms, viz., the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral. To the first belong all living things that have flesh and blood; to the second all herbs, plants, and trees; to the third all metals, stones, and everything that cannot be burned.

But, though divided into three classes, yet all things, O my brother, may be traced back to one common Principle, from which they derive their generation, or birth. By different varieties of heat this first substance is transmuted in various ways, and assumes different specific forms. Since, then, Nature is so simple, I advise you once more to have done with all those foolish sublimations, coagulations, and putrefactions, and the ridiculous old wives' fables which are even now believed by many, and simply to follow Nature, and her unsophisticated methods: then she will take you by the hand, and guide you to the true substance. For the only method of correcting or ameliorating Nature, consists in the natural heating of essences. Now, this Essence, my friend, is the principal thing, on which depends the whole matter. This simple truth, the vulgar herd of alchemists seem quite unable to understand, and thus go on toiling day by day with substances which have nothing to do with the matter. They might as well sow horn, or wood, or stones, and expect a golden harvest of corn. The *sun* and *moon* cannot be made out of all substances, but only out of the natural Essence out of which all things are formed, being afterwards differentiated into divers substances by different varieties of heat. Thus the special quality of every individual thing is to be referred to the degree of its coction. If, therefore, we wish to exercise the true Art of Alchemy, we must imitate the method by which Nature does her work in the bowels of the earth.

The ancients have named many colours in connexion with this process, such as black, white, citrine, red, green, and so forth. All this is simply intended to lead you astray from the right road, and to keep you in ignorance. Those ancient writers were constantly at the greatest pains to obscure their style with such a perplexing variety of allegorical expressions as to render it impossible for the ordinary reader to understand their meaning.

Therefore, I would again and again exhort you not to believe them when they tell you that you must have or take a black substance, or that the substance turns black, white, and red in the course of the chemical process. The black colour was suggested to them by the fact that the substance or essence at first mingles with a brilliant material fire, by which a liquid is separated from the essence in the form of a certain black fume. This black fume the ancients called the Black Raven, and the essence they denominated the Raven's Head. This separation you should carefully observe. From it the ancients learned that the separation of natural substances is nothing but a natural defect of the heating process. This, again, suggested to them the consideration that those essences that had been imperfectly

heated by Nature, might be aided in a natural manner by ordinary fire, and that thus the essences which are still combustible, and their liquids (which the ancients invidiously called mercury) being black when they are separated from the essence, might be perfected by art, and the essences guarded against combustion by their liquid, and the liquid rendered incapable of being separated from the essence. This the ancients called "our sulphur." For after this preparation the essence is no longer vegetable or animal, but by the perfection of its heating it has become a mineral essence, and is therefore called sulphur; the essence is nothing but an *elementary* fire, and its liquid, which is guarded against combustion, is true *elementary* air, and, because air is naturally warm and moist, it is called mercury by those jealous ancients. Air contains in itself the nature of fire, and elementary fire, again, contains within itself the nature of air: thus, by the union of their common elements, a true amalgamation of the two can take place. Such are the material fire and water which we see. These material elements are nothing but an aid to the essences of the elements by which they can be naturally reduced to the highest degree (of perfection?). This gradation is the only true Alchemy, and there is none beside. The pseudo-alchemy of our modern charlatans is mere waste of money and time.

It would be a great mistake for you to suppose that you can derive any real knowledge from the writings of the Sages. They show you only the outside, and conceal the internal Essence. To you they offer the husks, but the finest of the wheat they keep for themselves. They show you a way which they do not dream of treading. I advise you, therefore, in future, to give them a wide berth; or you will only enrich the apothecaries while you plunge yourself and your family into the deepest poverty; nay, instead of gaining the universal panacea, you will contract the most dangerous diseases from constantly moving in an atmosphere black with sulphurous and mercurial smoke, and fetid with the stench of bismuth and all manner of salts.

It is truly amazing that none of the seekers after this great treasure, though willing to submit to any amount of labour and hardship for its sake, seem capable of perceiving the lesson which constant failure is striving to impress upon them. What, I pray you, have those thousands of persons, who have tried the solutions, coagulations, putrefactions, amalgamations, and circulations, gained by their agonising toil? What good result have they produced with their waters, solutions of metals, blood, hair, eggs, milk, sugar, and all manner of herbs? Let me beseech you to profit by their heart-breaking experience, and to have done with everything but true Alchemy, which teaches that the substance is brought to perfection, and attains the exaltation of elementary fire, by its own light and liquid- by which also imperfect metals are ameliorated, because their elementary fire was not properly digested by its liquid. And for the same reason the elementary fire cannot remain, for the liquid is separated from that elementary fire by the heat of the ordinary fire, and evaporates in the form of white smoke. The elementary fire, on the other hand, does not evaporate, but abides with its earth, and must be burned with it, because its protecting liquid has vanished in white smoke. This is that whiteness of which the Ancients have said that it comes after the black colour. For this reason, they are in the habit of saying that you must make it black before you make it white. We begin our process with blackness, and transmute the black smoke, but do not take it for our substance, and make it white. The latter would be a foolish supposition and imposture. If you would avoid such misapprehensions, you must not attempt the study of this subject until you have a sound knowledge of the operations of Nature, and more especially of the essential properties of the metals.

I am afraid, my Brother, that my book will cause you heaviness of heart, instead of joy, because I sweep away at one fell stroke all those false sophisticated notions which had become so dear to you. Nevertheless, you must once for all relinquish that idea of yours that you are profoundly versed in the mysteries of this Art, and leave these childish absurdities to those who derive wealth and profit from them. Among these persons, Adam de Bodenstein held a very distinguished place; for he wrote all manner of so-called theosophical books, and boasted of his attainments in the alchemistic Art, of which he was really quite ignorant. Yet to the present day many people believe that he (whose expressions are those of a mere charlatan) had a real knowledge of true alchemy. It is true that his nonsense cannot for a moment impose on the initiated; but among the blind (as the proverb says) it is easy to win golden opinions as a good fencer. On this account, and as Bodenstein is no more among the living, I will dismiss the subject, for nothing but what is favourable should be spoken of the dead and of the absent. This I will say, however, that he was a good Sophist and a good physician; but of Alchemy he knew little or nothing. I should not have said this much if I were not really anxious to warn the unwary against being dazzled by the splendour of his name, and to prevent them from being lured on by it to their own ruin.

If, then, you are a lover of the truth, you will bid farewell to these specious absurdities, and henceforth entrust yourself to the guidance of Nature alone; be sure that she will lead you onward without faltering to the desired goal, even that method by which she works towards the essence. Moreover, she will demand of you neither much labour nor any considerable outlay. The whole thing is done by a simple process of heating, which includes the solution and coagulation of the bodies, and also the sublimation and putrefaction. But some writers have substituted for the simple and true essence a certain other essence, with which they have deceived the whole world, and involved many

persons in considerable losses. Whether their conduct was upright and loving will one day be decided by the Great Judge. It would be better not to publish such writings, since the false statements and groundless assertions with which they swarm, plunge so many credulous persons into grievous losses. For if there were not so many books put forward by ignorant writers, many thousands of persons who at the present moment are hopelessly floundering about in a sea of specious book-learning would have been led by the light of their own unaided intellects to the knowledge of this precious secret; they are prevented, these many years, from seeing the plain truth by a vast mass of printed nonsense which commands their reverence, because they do not understand it. The Ancients did indeed know something about the Art; but at the present day we can very well dispense with the cumbrous phraseology under which they (most successfully) attempted to veil their meaning. It can only tend to the bewilderment of honest enquirers, who are thereby thrown off the true scent, unless indeed they should come to be instructed by living Masters.

I myself may not speak out as plainly as I would, for I am silenced by the vow which binds all the masters of the Art, the curse that lights on those who violate the sacred seal of Nature's secrets, and the malediction of all the philosophers. Therefore, I must exhort you again and again to trust your own observations rather than the writings of others, and to let the Book of Nature be the most favoured volume of your library. Observe her methods, not only in the production of metals, but in the procreation of the fruits of the earth, and their constant growth and development, in the winter and summer, in the spring and autumn, by rain and sunshine. If you had a sound knowledge of Nature's methods in producing the bud and the flower, and in ripening the green fruit, you would be able to set your hand to the germs which Nature provides in the bowels of the earth, and to educe from them (or their substance) that which you so much desire. Forgive me then, my Brother, for so unceremoniously overthrowing all your old settled and dearly cherished convictions. My excuse must be that I have done it for your own good, as you would otherwise never learn the true secret of transmuting metals. You may believe and trust me, for I can have no conceivable motive for filling the world with fresh lies of which, God knows, it is already full enough, through the agency of the aforesaid deceivers and their willing dupes, who after being lured on by those false books to the loss of all their worldly goods, have not suffered their eyes to be opened by their losses, and seem unable to find their way out of that gigantic labyrinth of falsehood. Nay, they have even taken upon themselves to write books, and to speak as if they were perfect masters of the Art, and had derived great advantage from it, though in reality they have been brought so low as to be able to afford nothing but miserable decoctions. They dissolved until their whole fortune had undergone a process of dissolution; they sublimed until all their gold and silver had evaporated; they putrefied until their clothes decayed upon their bodies; and they calcined until all their wood and coal were consumed to ashes, and they themselves were reduced to wallet and staff.

This is the prize which they have won with all their trouble. Let their ruin be a warning to you, my Brother. For their alchemy instead of imparting health, is followed by penury and disease; instead of transmuting copper into gold, it changes gold into copper and brass. Consider also how many ignorant persons, such as cobblers, tailors, bankrupt merchants, and tavern keepers, pretend to a knowledge of this Art, and, after a few years' unsuccessful experimenting in the laboratory, call themselves great doctors, announce in boastful and sesquipedalian language their power to cure many diseases, and promise mountains of gold. Those promises are empty wind, and their medicines rank poison, with which they fill the churchyards, and for the impudent abuse of which God will one day visit them with heavy punishment. But I will leave the magistrates and the jailers to deal with these swindling charlatans. I speak of them only to put you on your guard. If so many persons write on the subject of Alchemy, who know nothing whatever about the nature and generation of metals, it becomes all the more necessary for you to be careful what books you read, and how much you believe.

For I tell you truly that so long as you have no real and fundamental knowledge of the nature of the metals, you cannot make much progress in the true Art of Alchemy, or understand the natural transmutation of metals. You must grasp the meaning of every direction before you can put it into effect. Always mistrust that which you do not understand (i.e., in studying this art). There are many false ways, but there can be only one that is true, and indicates a process which does not require many hands, or much labour. For this reason, beloved friend and Brother, you must work hard by day and by night to obtain a thorough knowledge of the metals, and of their essential nature. Then you will be able to understand the requirements of the art. You will know without being told what is the true substance and the true method. You will see the utter uselessness of your former labour, and you will be amazed at your former blindness. Study the nature of metals and the causes of their generation, for they derive their birth from the same source as all other created things.

For as by a heating process the infant is developed in the mother's womb out of the father's seed, and as the chicken is brought forth out of the egg by the natural incubation of the hen, so the metals, too, are developed in a certain way out of a certain substance. Yet I do not say, my Brother, that mercury and sulphur are the first substance of metals. Those juggling deceivers have told you so; but in the veins of the earth, where the metals grow, are found neither

mercury nor sulphur. Therefore, when they speak of sulphur, you must understand them to allude to elementary fire, and by mercury you must understand the liquid. In a similar lying spirit they have called fire (elementary) "our Sun," and the liquid "our Moon," or the elementary fire soul, and the elementary liquid spirit, because elementary substances are invisible. The soul is invisible fire, and the spirit invisible moisture: the outward essential fire and water they have called 'bodies,' because they are visible and palpable. Nay, they try to make you believe that these are metallic bodies, and that you must dissolve them. But do not let them deceive you. Be on your guard against their dishonest tricks, and cunning devices, by which they set you to experiment with metallic bodies, when they really mean the metallic essence.

They point out to you various materials and substances, notwithstanding that there is only one true substance, and one true method. Be sure that their solutions, coagulations, sublimations, calcinations, and putrefactions, do not represent the method of Nature in the heart of the earth, where the metals grow. For pious Nature only heats the elementary fire which is thereby ameliorated and fixed through its liquid; which latter she also changes, by various degrees of heat, into all the various objects which compose the three natural kingdoms-and although now it is differentiated into bodies so different as vegetables, animals, and minerals, yet they have all originally sprung from one common substance, all have one root, which the Ancients denominated the first Matter or Hyle. But it is really nothing but hidden elementary fire, with its liquid, which the Ancients called the root liquid, radical moisture, or humid radical, because it is the root of all created things.

This liquid, with its fire, is differentiated into the various kinds of natural bodies, by the various degrees of heat, or 'coction,' which take place in them. One thing is more perfectly heated in its elementary fire through its liquid, than another. The vegetable nature is that in which the coction is least perfect. Therefore its essence is easily burned, and its liquid easily separated from its elementary fire, by common fire.

The coction of the *animal* is almost as imperfect as that of the vegetable substance: for its essence is easily burned. The coction of the *mineral* substances is the most perfect of all, because in them the metallic liquid is more closely united (by coction) to its elementary fire. Hence metals are better able to resist common fire than the vegetable and animal substances. When a metal is placed in the fire, it does not burn with a bright flame like wood; for the liquid of wood is not so completely joined (by coction) to its essence, as the liquid of metals is to its essence. The union of the liquid with the essence is not metallic, but vegetable, for which reason the latter is consumed with a black smoke, when, by a higher degree of coction, the vegetable has been transmuted into a metallic essence, it no longer gives out a black smoke in common fire, but a white smoke, as you may see when imperfect metals are melted in the fire. That is why the Ancients said that you must first make the substance black before you make it white, i.e., it must first give out a black smoke before it gives out a white. Again they say: You must first make it white before you make it red. To make red is to make perfect, because gold and silver have been rendered perfect by coction, their essence being fully united to their liquid, and changed into pure fire.

Do not then suffer yourself to be thrown off your guard by the obscure phraseology of the Ancients. If you thoroughly study the simple fundamental nature of the metals, you will know what their enigmatic expressions mean, and will not, like some moderns, conclude from their writings that you must take a certain substance and dissolve it until it turns black., then again purify and calcine it till the blackness disappears and it begins to turn white; and after that, once more increase the fire and calcine and toil until the substance turns red. Such an interpretation of the language of the Ancients can only suggest itself to persons entirely ignorant of the nature of metallic substances; indeed, the Ancients wrote as they did solely in order to hide their real meaning from all but the close students of Nature. To this end they were in the constant habit of employing the terms "mercury " and "sulphur." And although the metallic essence is the true substance which, by natural coction, must be raised from the lowest to the highest stage of development, and although the meaning of the Ancients is intelligible enough to the initiated, yet the ignorant can gather from their language no more than the fact that the substance must be taken from the metals. But where are they to obtain it, and how are they to bring it to perfection?

The metallic essence can not be separated from the imperfect metals without being injured; for if it be separated with fire the liquid must evaporate, and the essence (with its earth) be consumed. Nor will you be able to separate the essence of the imperfect metals by means of aqua fortis, arsenic, aqua vita-, or alkali, without injuring the essence and its liquid by the foreign moisture: for the metallic nature can bear no foreign substance, and if any foreign moisture combines with the metallic liquid, it loses its proper quality and is entirely corrupted. The metallic essence of the perfect metals you cannot obtain in a separate form; for their liquid and elementary fire are welded together by so perfect a process of coction, and so closely united with their earth, that neither fire nor water can avail to separate them, seeing that the fire has no power over them, and no foreign moisture can combine with, or corrupt, the liquid of perfect metals. All your labour will be in vain: the coction has done its work so well that you will never be able to undo it.

Hence, the Ancients said that there was no sulphur in anything but in the metals, and hence also they called the metallic liquid quicksilver. But names do not alter facts: the fact is that the elementary fire must be so united to its elementary liquid by natural coction that they become indivisible. For the liquid protects the fire against combustion, so that both remain fixed and unchanged in common fire. This perfected substance the Ancients have well called Elixir, or fire which has undergone a process of perfect coction: for that which before was crude and raw is "cooked," or digested by the process of coction. That element which, by its imperfection, causes base metals to be broken up and disintegrated by fire, has been digested and perfected by natural heat.

For this reason you must not grudge the labour which the proper performance of this heating process demands, seeing that it includes purification, sublimation, dissolution, and all the other chemical processes enumerated by the ancient alchemists. All these you may safely dismiss from your mind, as they can cause you nothing but trouble, loss, and waste of time. My purpose in writing this faithful admonition is to caution you again and again to beware of those pitfalls with which the contemptuous obscurity of the Ancients has so plentifully beset the path of the ingenuous enquirer. I also desired to suggest to you the true *substance*, and the one true *method* and have throughout endeavoured to express myself in a style as free from allegorical obscurity as possible. I have recalled you from your wanderings in the pathless wilderness, and put you in the right way. Now you must beseech Almighty God to give you the real philosophical temper, and to open your eyes to the facts of nature. Thus alone you will be able to reach the coveted goal.