

The War of the Knights (Johann Sternhals, *Ritter-Krieg...*

From Johann Sternhals, *Ritter-Krieg...* Hamburg 1595 (reprinted Hamburg 1680). This English translation of some sections of this book made by Sigismund Bacstrom is contained in Ms. Wellcome 1027. Bacstrom's notes are shown in square brackets in italic. This transcription was made by Fred Hatt.

The War of the Knights

**written above 200 years ago by
Johan Sternhals, Priest and Bishop of Bamberg
Hamburg 1680**

**with
The Explanation of his Hieroglyphics
painted on the glass windows
of the Cathedral Church at Bamberg**

**Translated from the German
by S. B.
1798**

[This is not the War of the Knights published in Hermetical Triumph]

The Lord Chief Justice pronounced sentence to the quarreling and disputing metals, introduced in this Allegory by Sternhals as so many Knights. The Judge's name was Mercury.

Mercury says to Gold:

"Whilst Thou, O Gold, as plaintiff against Iron, appeal to me concerning thy nobility and nature, and as I am well acquainted with thy origin but am likewise no stranger to the nature, property, and operation of the defendant Iron, I can, for the sake of truth and justice, not omit to declare that you have both boasted of great things, which none of you separately can verify. Thou, Gold, knowest well if I Mercury do not deal kindly with thee and unite with thee in perpetual love and harmony, that thy power over the diseased Knights (the inferior metals) is nothing! Thou hast mentioned my perfect knowledge of thy exalted state amongst the Knights. Thou hast spoken rightly, because thy nature and power proceed from mine (from the Sophic or animated Mercury). Thy nature must be retrograded and converted into mine, if thou meanest ever to be of any service to the diseased poor knights."

"Thou, Defendant, O Iron, knowest well that I do perfectly understand thy nature and complexion

[This appears by the operation of Mercury in the Salt alembrot in one of Modest Fachsen's experiments, where the Judge Mercury shews his power in converting Iron into running Mercury]. Thou canst much less than Gold effect anything useful without my assistance; and I, Mercury, am a declared enemy to thy external dirty appearance and thy dirty works. Therefore, I complain justly against you both!"

"Yet, from a motive of special goodness and friendship towards my fellow-creatures, I will never refuse to grant to thee, O Iron, a power to procure riches, and I have often given thee that power, as thou well knowest when thou and I did sweat in our hot bath and dried ourselves afterwards *[see Fachsen's experiment of Mercury and Iron]*.

Recollect then what friendship and services we rendered to Lady Luna, which we are able to do again, if we please.

Which, however, thou canst not do without my assistance. I must further tell you both (Iron and Gold) that you stand both in need of my counsel and help, whilst I can do with very little of your assistance."

"Thou, Gold, hast said that thou art the true Stone, about which the Philosophers contest. Dost thou not know that there are greater, nobler, and more powerful subjects than thee? and all other metals containing the four elements as well as they do. Dost thou not know that there is a mother of all metals and their greatest substance? [*Antimony Solar/Bismuth Lunar*]. All things have been subdued unto man! and thou haughty Gold do not elevate thyself too much, as there are creatures of God far above thee in power and virtue!" [*so says de la Brie to Rennefort*].

"I then," continued the supreme Lord, Mercury, "unite you both, Iron and Gold, with a perpetual union."

"Thou, Gold, shalt henceforth not vex nor despise Iron, but I order thee to make good use of its noble beautiful red flowers (when a crocus Mars is sublimated with Sal Ammoniac, it ascends in beautiful red flowers - this must be repeated three or four times) which Iron has got in his garden for the sake of multiplying thy active power. Thou shalt unite with Iron in friendship."

"And thou, Iron! I order thee to accept and make use of the sweet heaven or ferment of Gold for thy good and nourishment."

And thus they departed, united in friendship to be of use to all that knew them.

Supplement

*[This Supplement is not of Sternhals, but has been added by the publisher, and is plainly a different work, with the * Antimony Iron stellata.]*

p.88 "Learn to know the Astra of the metals, and mind that for the preparation of both Tinctures, the White and the Red, you are not at first to take the bodies of Silver or Gold (although you may if you like expensive works) but take Astrum or Primum Ens Solis vel Lunae [*Antimony or B.W.*]"

"Iron by his valour obtains honour and glory, and places himself on the seat of kings."

"The sulphur of Iron is the best, because when this is united with the sulphur of Gold, a certain glorious Tincture can be made thereof."

p.89 (Iron) "impure, coarse, and subject to rust, yet amongst all the fittest for the art."

[Illustrations: above, an eight-pointed star and a six-pointed star, both labelled "(wrongly drawn)"; below, two six-pointed stars, and the label "(Antimony Iron stell.)"]*

"Our Iron is not attracted by the magnet and our Gold is not vulgar Gold."

p.90 "Put the red man to the white wife into a round apartment [*expression borrowed from G. Ripley*] surrounded with continual warmth, and leave them therein until they become a philosophic liquid substance."

p.90 "Mind to place your vessel in warm ashes, and in such a manner that you may look into the glass without moving it and in forty days it will appear like pitch. In the beginning, let the heat be easy and soft until there is harmony between Fire and Water."

p.92 "The matter must never be taken from the Fire so as to cool, or your work will be destroyed."

"The Philosopher's Work is perfected with easy labour and but small expenses, in every place, at all times, and by every man that knows it perfectly, if the true matter in sufficient quantity be at hand."

p.95 "Iron consists mostly of a coarse Sulphur, yet pretty fixed. This coarse external Sulphur must be removed into the scoriae."

"But if the internal subtle Fire of Iron is extracted without destroying its fixed nature, and if you know to cause it to have ingress into Luna, Iron then gives the colour of the highest Gold of ducats and its tincture cannot be washed away by Lead (on the test) because the dryness and astringency of the Sulphur of Iron attracts and perfects the fixed humidity of Silver and the pores are shut up, that Lead on the Copel cannot penetrate nor expel Iron. But if such a Sulphur of Iron was by himself or alone on the glowing test without metallic lunar humidity, he would at last be forced to leave the place [*He would stay if he had a Solar ferment*]."

Johan Sternhals His Hieroglyphics

Illustrating his foregoing Process concerning the Tincture of Iron

The first Figure

A man in iron armour is cut to pieces lengthways.

Subscription underneath:

"The power of the terrestrial king [Gold] is gone. His general, a relation of the king [Iron], a courageous hero, is subdued."

[My Explanation as far as I understand it:]

a) *Divide steel or good Iron into convenient longish yet thin lamellae.*

b) *Cut old watch springs to pieces.*

Figure II

The man in iron armour, now cut to pieces, is hung up on the gallows, surrounded with a wall.

Underneath is represented the Sea. A fiery man stands in the Sea, spitting Fire which causes the Sea to evaporate.

Subscription under it:

"I have by my fiery power prepared a saline Bath composed of two fighters (c) for the punishment of the bold hero."

"Over this bath suspended, he shall for his committed crimes be suffocated until the rust-coloured marrow is extracted out of his strong bones."

[Explanation:]

a) *Suspend your lamellae in a roomy glass body, over five or six ounces of Aqua Regia in such a manner that the lamellae are three or four inches above the Aqua Regia.*

b) *The body stands in Sand over a gentle lamp-heat, which causes the subtle acid fumes to ascend and to corrode the lamellae gradually into a Crocus or rust of Iron.*

c) *The two fighters, an expression made use of by Basil Valentine, signifies Solutions of Nitre and marine Salt rectified and united.*

Figure III

represents a man with a cup in his hand into which cup he throws an Eagle (a).

Subscription under it:

"The sweetness of the Vine is gone. Its contrary conquered in order that by the power of the Eagle, the very blood may be extracted from the rust-coloured marrow of the courageous."

[Explanation:]

a) *The Eagle is Sal Ammoniac. Sal Ammoniac is a Solution of Urine united to sea-Salt. This is to be put into highly rectified Spirits of Wine and is to be united by several distillations and cohobations until it is become the celebrated double animal and vegetable menstruum which extracts a blood-red Tincture out of the first rust or Crocus of Iron for its subtilisation and spiritualisation.*

b) *In the room of common Sal Ammoniac take the Sublimated or so-called volatile Sal Ammoniac.*

Figure IV

represents the Eagle, quite dripping wet, flying away out of the cup, and there remains nothing in the cup but a red Earth.

Next to the Eagle is written: "O! I am sorry to be deprived of my Royal Food!"

Next to the red Earth in the cup is written: "Behold! my face is become like that of Adamah (b), and I am departed out of this life."

[Explanation:]

a) *After you have extracted all the Tinctures from the Crocus Iron, with the double menstruum, distill the solvens from the Tincture in a vapor bath until there remains either a red dry Earth behind, or leave it moist and thick in the form of a fine deep red Oil of Iron.*

b) *Adamah equals red Earth.*

Figure V

A naked human corpse is carried by and is placed into a vault under ground.

Two Women [Luna/Silver - Venus/Copper] walk with the corpse. The one on the right side looked like a queen

[Luna], having a silver crown on her head.

Next to the queen was written: "The bones of our hero are dried up! His power is vanished! His blood comes over me and my Subjects! (b)"

The woman [Venus] on the left side arrayed in purple, sadly enveloped in her garments, bears the following inscription: "O my brother! my brother! could I but die for thee! I expected you would rejoice our king and redeem or liberate our afflicted queen!" [Sol/Gold and Luna/Silver] (c).

After these two women followed a king (d) of a very sad, afflicted appearance with this subscription: "My dearest and faithful, I shall go with thee to the Grave!" (e)

[Explanation:]

a) *The red Oil is to be put into a digesting globe, and is to be putrefied in a gentle warmth over the lamp.*

b) *The Tincture of Iron is capable to transmute Silver, Mercury, Tin and Lead into Gold.*

c) *I think the Tincture of Iron wants a Solar ferment.*

d) *A king, i.e. the Solar ferment.*

e) *Is to be putrefied with the Oil of Iron as it seems.*

Figure VI

represents a thief that breaks into a house, with this subscription:

"Behold! a few days are passed since this hero rests! (a) Perhaps he has got his jewels about him. But what do I see?

It seems that his corpse has been put elsewhere! (b) Here is nothing but the red sweat. (c) This might be sold as a relic of a Saint! It is of Royal Blood (d), and yet it is despised by many. (e) But if it should be found in my possession, they will condemn and hang me. Come, I'll pour it out. As the street is covered with snow, it (the blood) will soon freeze (f) and will be swallowed up by the snow." (g)

[Explanation]

a) *Some time of digestion is past since the glass has been placed in a gentle heat.*

b) *The matter has become changed so as not to know it.*

c) *A red liquid.*

d) *Iron contains a Solar Tincture.*

e) *Many despise Iron.*

f) *It will soon be congealed.*

g) *And will become the white Tincture.*

Figure VII

represents some passengers. One amongst them gathers the tinged snow (a) with this subscription: "This should not lay in the street. It should be placed again in its former bed (b) that it might be purified and that with this blood the king's crown, by imbibing, may be made seven times more ponderous." (c)

This is our work to obtain and qualify the Sulphur of Iron, to give him ingress into Silver, in order to tinge Silver into permanent Gold. (e)

[Explanation:]

a) *Tinctura Rubea.*

b) *Multiplication.*

c) *The red Tincture is to be multiplied with the first oil of Iron and is to be imbibed and fixed seven times, I believe.*

d) *The latter end of the allegory is dark.*

e) *From this it appears that it only tinges Silver and no other metals, but in another part of the process, the reverse appears!*

f) *Perhaps we may learn more of it hereafter, if God pleases!*

Verum est Sternhals

Finis.