

The words of Father Aristeus to his son.

This Latin poem 'Verba Aristei Patris ad filium' was first published in Alexandre Toussaint de Limojon, *Lettre d'un philosophe, sur le secret du grand oeuvre. Ecrite au sujet des instructions qu'Aristée à laissées à son fils, touchant le magistere philosophique*, Paris, 1688. A.E. Waite provides a translation of this work in his supplement to the *Ruland Lexicon of alchemy*, issued in 1893.

My son, after having imparted to thee a knowledge of all things, and after having taught thee how to live, after what manner to regulate thy conduct by the maxims of a most excellent wisdom, and after having also enlightened thee in that which concerns the order and the nature of the monarchy of the universe, it only remains for me to communicate those Keys of Nature which hitherto I have so carefully held back.

Among all these Keys, that which is most closely allied to the highest spirits of the universe deserves to take the first rank, and there is no one who questions that it is very specially endowed with an altogether divine property. When one is in possession of this Key, the rich become miserable in our eyes, inasmuch as there is no treasure which can possibly be compared to it. In effect, what is the use of wealth, when one is liable to be afflicted with human infirmities? Where is the advantage of treasures, when death is about to destroy us? There is no earthly abundance which we are not bound to abandon upon the threshold of the tomb. But it is no longer thus when I am possessed of this Key, for then I behold death from afar, and I am convinced that I have within my hands a secret which extinguishes all fear of misfortunes in this life. Wealth is ever at my command, and I no longer want for treasures; weakness flees away from me; and I can ward off the approach of the destroyer while I own this Golden Key of the Grand Work.

My son, it is of this Key that I propose to make thee the inheritor; but I conjure thee, by the name of God, and by the Holy Place wherein He dwelleth, to lock it up in the cabinet of thy heart, under the seal of silence. If thou knowest how to make use of it, it will overwhelm thee with good things, and when thou shalt be old or ill, it will rejuvenate, console, and cure thee; for it has the special virtue of curing all diseases, of transfiguring metals, and of making happy those who possess it. It is that Key to which our fathers have often exhorted us under the bond of an inviolable oath. Learn, then, to know it, cease not to do good to the poor, to the widow, to the orphan, and learn its seal of me, and its true character.

Know that all beings which are under heaven, each after its own kind, derives origin from the same principle, and it is, as a fact, unto Air that all owe their birth as to a common principle. The nourishment of each existence makes evident the nature of its principle, for that which sustains the life is that which gives the being. The fish joys in the water; the child sucks from its mother. The tree no longer bears fruit when its trunk is deprived of humidity. It is by the life that we discern the principle of things; the life of things is the Air, and by consequence Air is their principle. It is for this reason that Air corrupts all things, and even as it gives life, so also it takes it away. Wood, iron, stones, are consumed by fire, and fire cannot subsist but by Air. Now, that which is the cause of corruption is also the cause of generation. When, by reason of divers corruptions, it comes to pass that creatures fall sick and do suffer, either through length of days or by mischance, the Air coming to their succour cures them, whether they be imperfect or languishing. The earth, the tree, the herb languish under the heat of excessive drought; but all things are recuperated by the dew of the Air. But, nevertheless, as no creature can be restored and re-established except by its own nature, Air being the fountain and original source of all things, it is in like manner the universal source. It is manifestly certain that the seed, the death, the sickness, and the remedy of all things are all alike in the Air. There has Nature stored up all her treasures, establishing therein the principles of the generation and corruption of all things, and concealing them as behind special and secret doors. To know how to open these doors with sufficient facility so as to draw upon the radical Air of the Air, is to possess in truth the golden Keys, and to be in ignorance thereof precludes all possibility of acquiring that which cures all maladies and recreates or preserves the life of men.

If thou desirest then, O my Son, to chase away all thine infirmities, thou must seek the means in the primal and universal source. Nature produces like from like alone, and that only which is in correspondence or conformity with Nature can effect good to her. Learn then, my Son, to make use of Air, learn to conserve the Key of Nature. It is truly a secret which transcends the possibilities of the vulgar man, but not those of the sage, this knowledge of the Extraction of Air, the Celestial Aerial Substance, from Air; for Air may be familiar to all beings, but he who would truly avail himself thereof must possess the secret Key of Nature.

It is a great secret to understand the virtue which Nature has imprinted in substances. For natures are attracted by their like; a fish is attracted by a fish - a bird by a bird - and air by another air, as with a gentle allurement. Snow and ice are an air that has been congealed by cold; Nature has endowed them with the qualities which are requisite to attract air.

Place thou, therefore, one of these two things in an earthen or metallic vessel, well closed, well sealed, and take thou the Air which congeals round this vessel when it is warm. Receive that which is distilled in a deep vessel with a narrow neck, neat and strong, so that thou canst use it at thy pleasure, and adapt to the rays of the Sun and Moon - that is, Silver and Gold. When thou hast filled a vessel cork it well, so that the heavenly scintillation concentrated therein shall not escape into the air. Fill as many vases as thou wilt with liquid; then hearken to thy next task, and keep silent. Build a furnace, place a small vessel therein, half full of the Liquid Air which thou hast collected ; seal and lute the said vessel effectually. Light thy fire in such a manner that the thinner portion of the smoke may rise frequently above. Thus shall Nature perform that which is continually accomplished by the central fire in the bowels of the earth, where it agitates the vapours of the air by an unceasing circulation. The fire must be light, mild, and moist, like that of a hen brooding over her eggs, and it must be sustained in such a manner that it will cook without burning the aerial fruits, which, having been for a long time agitated by a movement, shall rest at the bottom of the vessel in a state of perfect coction. Add next unto this Cocted Air a fresh air, not in great quantity, but as much as may be necessary; that is to say, a little less than on the first occasion. Continue this process until there shall be no more than half a bowl of Liquid Air uncooked. Proceed in such wise that the cooked portion shall gently liquefy by fermentation in a warm dunghill, and shall in like manner blacken, harden, amalgamate, become fixed, and grow red. Finally, the pure part being separated from the impure by means of a legitimate fire, and by a wholly divine artifice, thou shalt take one part of pure crude Air and one part of pure hardened Air, taking care that the whole is dissolved and united together till it becomes moderately black, more white, and finally perfectly red. Here is the end of the work, and then hast thou composed that elixir which produces all the wonders that our Sages aforetime have with reason held so precious; and thou dost possess in this wise the Golden Key of the most inestimable secret of Nature - the true Potable Gold and the Universal Medicine. I bequeathe unto thee a small sample, the quality and virtues of which are attested by the perfect health which I enjoy, being aged over one hundred and eight years.

Do thou work, and thou shalt achieve as I have done. So be it in the name and by the power of the great Architect of the Aniverse. Such skilful artists of the Great Work as have pondered deeply on the principles confided to the son of Aristeus, have concluded that it would be no vain operation to make an Amalgam with the veritable Balm of Mercury, and this is the way in which they claim to produce this Balm :-

Take one pound of the best Mercury that can be obtained; purge it three times through a skin, and once by calcined Montpellier Tartar. Place it in a glass horn, which shall be strong enough to resist a fierce heat. With it combine Vitriol, Salt of Nitre, Rock Alum, and eight ounces of good Spirit of Wine. Having hermetically sealed the horn, so that nothing can evaporate, place it for digestion in a warm dung-hill during a space of fifteen days. At the end of this time the composition will be transformed into a phlegmatic grease; it must then be exposed to a sand fire, and the fire must be raised gradually to an extreme point, till a white, milky humour exudes from the substance and falls into the recipient. Let it then be replaced in the horn to be rectified, and for the consumption of the phlegm. This second distillation will cause a sweet, white oil to exude; this oil will be devoid of corrosive qualities; it will surpass all other metallic oils in excellence; and there is no doubt that, combined with the Elixir of Aristeus, it will be possible to perform such marvels as might be expected from so admirable an experiment.