

The letter of a philosopher concerning the secret of the great work.

Transcribed from British Library MS. Sloane 3640, by John O'Brien

This is a translation of Alexandre Toussaint de Limojon, Sieur de Saint-Didier [1630-]. *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. Le nom de l'auteur est en latin dans cet anagramme. Dives sicut ardens*, S. Paris: chez Laurent d'Houry, 1688.

The letter of a philosopher concerning the secret of the great work. Written on the subject of the instructions which Aristeus left to his son concerning the Philosophic Magistery. The name of the author is in Latin in this anagram. Dives sicut Ardens, S. Paris 1688

Sir, I received the letter, which you did me the honour to write me, since your return from Poland. I am very sensibly obliged to you for it is an undoubted testimony of your friendship. I shall not fail to read very speedily, the writing of Aristeus translated from Scythian language into Latin prose in rhyme, and as you sent it me to know my opinion about the matter whereof he treats; I will tell you withall the ingenuity which is practiced among philosophers, that I was charmed with the extraordinary style and reasoning of Aristeus; but I found him no less zealous of the secret of the great Work, than all the rest have been who have written of it. I make no difficulty of believing the great things which they say of him, but particularly by the sincerity of his writing, that he possessed this inestimable treasure, yet he still discovers less concerning the first agents and concerning the practice than Artephius, the Abbot Sinesius, Arnold de Villanova, Pontanus, Flamell, Paracelsus, and many other ancient and modern authors have done.

As you gave me to understand, as you passed by this place, persuaded that the dew or spirit of the Air being as [or like] this liquor which accordingly to the philosophic language, comes out of the rays of the Sun and the Moon which contains the principle which makes all Nature vegetate [or grow], and without which none can live; one might and also ought to believe, that this universal matter is the true principle, the first being of beings, and this subtle Air which gives them Life and nourishment, according to what Aristeus says, for as much as we see no matter in Nature Nature which better agrees with all the expressions of the philosophers. Every Nature makes use of it, says Cosmopolita, and consequently you pass your Judgement, that having these great advantages, this matter, excluding every other, is this celestial water, and this Mercury of the Philosophers.

Considering nakedly the writings of the wisemen, and [reading] them according to the letter, there seems to be a solid foundation in this opinion; yet it will be no hard thing for me to show an equivocation therein, and to convince you of the contrary, if your opinion be really so; I should read a great number of authors to cite you on this subject, but this would be to enter into a large dispute without necessity, since you have read them all. I will then content myself to make you reflect on that which some of the greatest philosophers have to say most possessively concerning the principles of this secret science.

Remember, Sir, that the philosophers agree concerning the first principles that you must let alone all which flies from the Fire, and which is thus consumed; all which is not of one nature, or at least of the metallic original. Consider that you must have a permanent Water, which congeals in the Fire, as well by itself as joined with the perfect bodies, after having radically dissolved. After this, give to the pure dew, or to the only liquor made from the Air by itself, such a preparation and such a [...] as you please by all sorts of artifices, you will be obliged to own at the end of your account, that there is more curiosity than solidity in all these processes; and that it is not in the power of man to change the nature of a body nor to make an universal principle: but though one could have such a particular being, there is none but Nature which could make it herself.

The authors I have cited, and an infinity of others easily evince this truth to a man of good sense but I must not pass Basil Valentine in silence; I vow I am indebted to him for a great part of the most solid lights which I have attained in this divine science. See how he speaks in his 'Twelve Keys', and above all in the second: But particularly what he says in the little treatise which he wrote of 'Natural and Supernatural Things' in the chapters of the spirits of metals.

He shows in plain terms which bodies one must join and destroy, to obtain this spiritual liquor so sought by all the philosophers.

It may be, nevertheless, that after this you will still believe that you can make your pretended only and general principle agree with the opinion of some of the most solid philosophers, and I well perceive that Aristeus pleases you more than any other because you judge that he absolutely establishes your matter, for the only and true philosophic matter: but I will make use of none but this authors own words to show you the quite contrary to what you form to yourself; I hope likewise that after this you will agree that Aristeus is very far from intending to speak simply of the Air, under what form soever one can give it by any artifice, if it be not in that admirable manner whereof Cosmopolita speaks that the Philosophic Water is extracted from the rays of the Sun and of the Moon.

You know I should have foundation enough to take the words of Aristeus in a mysterious sense, though I had no other reason for it, than because it is as received truth with all those who have some knowledge of the authors of the great Work, namely that the philosophers themselves protest that they will never name by their true name, the first agents or the principles; if any have nevertheless done it, it has been after a certain manner more fit to make simple folks believe everything else rather than what they have told us. It is certain then that the philosophers ought not to be understood according to the literal sense, and that they are all generally subject to an interpretation, even when they seem to speak most clearly; but make use of none but your Aristeus, see by some arguments drawn out of himself, which are the more exact and which will make you be of my opinion.

16 All nourishments bear witness of their Fountain.

Since things live by that whence they are nourished.

17 The Fish enjoys the Water, the Infant sucks the Mother

18 By the Life the Beginnings of things is known.

Air is the Life of things, therefore the Beginning of things

According to this philosopher, every being lives by the nourishment which is proper and specified for its essence and its nature that species of nourishment lets us see what is its original then the nourishment of an animal is quite different from that of a plant, and that that of a plant is no less different from that of minerals and metals; it is by consequence not to be doubted, but that the original of all these different beings has quite different principles; and that one self-same and simple Air is not the life and the nourishment of all the diverse species of beings which are in Nature; this permits of no reply; unless you would go back even to the first Chaos, from which God formed all things. But you are not ignorant, that it is from that Chaos, that the philosopher ought to draw his principles.

Whence comes it then, Sir, that from the same principles of Aristeus, I draw a consequence quite contrary to what he himself seems to draw? This comes not, as you shall see, from the equivocation of the term Air, which he made use of to hide the mystery from the profane; for you will observe that every species of being has a species of Air, which is its life, its principle and its nourishment; it is in this sense Aristeus speaks with a great deal of foundation solidly in effect the nourishment as well as the principle of each being, be it of what species soever, is it not an essence of a nature altogether aerial? Must not the stomach of the animal by digestion, change the gross nourishment which it takes, into a subtle vapour, which condenses itself into a viscous and nutritive juice in all the parts which are sustained by it, conformable to the same juice all spiritual, which is the principle of its generation. The moisture of the Earth, is it not in the same manner changed in the plant by virtue of the bud which is in the seed? Is it not certain also that the life and the nourishment of minerals and metals in the entrails of the Earth, is an Air and a fat vapour imprinted [or stamped] with a metallic Sulphur? It is that Air and that fat and mercurial vapour which is the subject of the search of all the philosophers, because therein resides the life, the principle, the efficacy of their Mercury, which their Stone produces and which produces their Stone.

As this would be to desire to blind ones self willingly; to say that this aerial substance which is the life of plants, animals and metals is truly and without any difference this same Air which surrounds the Earth, or likewise some other substance which one may draw and prepare from it, by any very extraordinary artifice [or trick]; we must come to an agreement that the true philosophers always speak truth, when one knows how to interpret them with a grain of salt. The meaning which I am going to give to Aristeus is so natural, that he gives himself this interpretation, when at the same time he gives occasion to simple folks to understand quite another thing.

17 The fish enjoys the Water, the Infant sucks the Mother.

To let us know thereby (as I am going to say) that the same difference which there is between the nourishment of each species of being is also found in their life and in their principle unto which he only gives this general and equivocal name of Air, because of the analogy which there is between the Air which we breath, and the aerial substance which is the different Soul Life, and nourishment of each Species of being. It is there, Sir, that the opinion of Aristeus is, and for fear we should doubt of it, he still explains it more clearly in express terms.

24 Yet since a creature cannot be repaired
but in its own [or proper] nature.

There is no truth in all philosophy better established than that then should it be possible to meliorate a metal other than by a metallic substance very pure and exalted to the utmost degree of perfect tincture and of fixity by a long decoction in a mercurial liquor, which the philosophers describe? One should then understand with Aristeus and all such authors, that this is this aerial essence, in which all the power of every being does consist, must in the first place be sought after for the work, in the metallic bodies; and this is it wherein one sees the philosophers agree when one gives oneself the trouble to muse profoundly on what they had a mind to let us know; Further that it pleases heaven to disperse the darkness of our understandings; openly to behold the mysteries of Nature. I know, sir, that one must never desire to be too wise: for [she] is all simple, her operations consist not in the subtilities that the mind continually goes about to imagine.

Though some philosophers assure us that it is harder to find the matter, than to prepare it; I tell you in truth, sir, that it is a great deal more difficult for the Sons of Art, to prepare the matter, than to find it; for it is in these operations that the magistry of the science consists. You may learn from the same author, who nevertheless, in other places affirms the contrary to that truth which I propose to you inasmuch as he afterwards affirms that Sulphur being discovered, the stone will be ready at hand. But what is the process of that solution, if I leave you to guess at it, you will assuredly ponder about it a long while without being able to discover it, for all the philosophers in general have professed that they conceal it. And your Aristeus hides it no less diligently than others.

37 It is the golden Key to know how to open
the Doors and draw Air from Air.
38 For it being not known how Air is fished
It is impossible it should be gotten.
That which cures particular and universal diseases etc.

He takes great care not to discover the way of opening these gates, and to make the Air of the philosophers, and to draw Air from Air, without which nevertheless it is impossible to succeed in alchemy. He contents himself only to recommend a second time to learn this great Art well.

31 Learn therefore, my son, to catch Air
Learn to keep the golden Key of Nature.

I do not think, Sir, that you believed that Aristeus had sincerely revealed the secret of the wisemen in the process which he has described afterwards. You have too great a light not to perceive that he only speaks allegorically when he advises to get the Air condensed round a vessel by means of snow or ice; to fill with it as many vessels as one would, to put it into a Philosophical Egg; to seal it hermetically, and to make it pass all the regimens.

You very well know that from all this no good can be made; but I also do not know whether you penetrate into the mystery contained in this allegory; and whether you would understand what this snow, this ice, this condensed Air, this bird which catches the bird, do signify; I can at least assure you that these terms do signify a quite different thing from what they seem to signify. Aristeus himself lets you know that these terms contain a great mystery; for he says

32 Creatures may know the Air,
But to catch Air, is the Key of Nature.

It would in effect be a very easy thing, if there were nothing else, but to condense the Air by the means of snow or

ice, even in the rays of the Sun at full noonday, during the greatest heats, it is because of that, that the philosopher at the same time adds with a great deal of reason.

33 This is a secret and more than humane
To take the heavenly Secret from the Air.

It is a secret truly which exceeds the ordinary capacity of the mind of man: yet Aristeus makes one make a reflection upon it; on which the whole secret of the great Work does depend if he does not discover himself better than the other philosophers yet he says enough to put the sons of Art off from all imaginations, and to let the adepts know that he, as they do who possesses this great treasure.

35 A fish is caught by a Fish, and a Bird by a Bird.
The Air is also caught by a sweet Air.

Mind these words well, they contain all the secrets of the philosophers, which Cosmopolita discovers to us under the name of the philosophic magnet, forasmuch as he says, the air generates the magnet, but the magnet generates or makes the Air appear; there, says he, is the Water of our dew, wherefrom the saltpetre of the philosophers is drawn, which nourishes and makes all things grow; we must come then concerning this [thing] to the principle which I am going to establish to seek this admirable magnet, this Air which catches Air, and not to far that the matter of the philosophers mounts first from the earth to heaven, afterwards it re-descends from heaven to earth and so receives the force of the superior and inferior things, that which is below is as that which is on high, and that which is on high is as that which is below. This is the infallible oracle of the truth telling Hermes.

You see thereby, Sir, how far they are off from the principles of the great Work; when they apply themselves to seek only one simple essence universal and generally common to all beings, in hopes to be able of itself to specify and identify it to the metallic nature. Such a [sort] of essence cannot be found in Nature. It is not also less impossible to frame [the likeness of] it to oneself than it is to understand the first matter of Aristotle, or a substance without form, proper to receive all forms; for even from the time that you shall have been able to apprehend this universal matter; and that you consequently have given it a form; it will cease to be universal, and so it will become unprofitable to your design. One must then follow the advice of the philosophers, to let alone the matter which is afar off and to take in the first place the matter which is nigh, to purify it by corruption, to draw thence the soul and the essence by fire, afterwards the soul of the soul, and by this means the Air of the Air and the Quintessence, in which the virtue and the energy of the Stone resides. Note that well.

So that, Sir, it is not astonishing, that after ten, twenty or thirty years experience [or trial] one is oftentimes as little advanced as the first day, in the knowledge of the true principles, or at least (in that) of their true preparation; that is to say of the way to extract this Air and this blessed Water so much esteemed by all the philosophers: but not to leave you without a conclusion, or at least without giving you some more particular lights of this great secret, see here some important remarks concerning the two principal points; you may have already made them as well as I, but it also may be that you may not have made the same reflections there on.

The first principles of the Philosophers Stone are by some represented in diverse figures of animals and by others they are described in equivocal and allegorical terms; yet these figures, these equivocations and these allegories, are always made clear, either by the same philosophers, or by others who have been less reserved on this point or less scrupulous. The moderns, as Cosmopolita, d'Espagnet, Philaletha, and others, have made one clearly enough understand the first agents, but as concerning the true preparation of them, they have thrown us into labyrinths, which one cannot luckily get out of. Basil Valentine is he of all [others] who names, as I have said, most clearly and without equivocation the first principles of the Work, he calls them by the true [or proper] name, and only hides the way how to corrupt and to unite their soul and their spirit, which produces together [...] the philosophers; you will see this in those places which I cited without its being necessary to repeat them.

Flamell says that the first agents which the philosophers have are the two serpents which cleaving together to one another stifle themselves in their own poison which changes them after death into a living and permanent water. Arnold de Villanova in his letter to the King of Naples calls the next matter Air and of the Fire of the philosophers, the compound, or the Stone, contains an humidity which flows in the Fire. Mark this, for the sons of art and wisdom ought to find it very negligeable, it is there that this Stone is, which is not a Stone but a resemblance and not by

Nature, but neither Arnold nor any philosopher would describe the simples which make this admirable compound. Some say it is made of two, others assure us it is a joining of three different natures, but of one original, and others write that there are four agents, which [make] all the compound: yet it is certain that they have all of the truth in different respects; but I find that Paracelsus, is he of all, who comprehends in fewest words the whole magistry of the art.

The matter of the tincture, says he, of Physicians [the natural philosophers] is a certain thing, which truly from three passes by the art of Vulcan into one thing. And immediately after he says that this matter of this compound may, by the assistance of Nature, and the direction of the artist, be transmuted into the White Eagle: see there the great point. He has hitherto said very much, and if he had a mind, he might have been able to finish in two words; but this is it in which all the philosophers are condemned to silence; so that Paracelsus contents himself to advise you to take only the blood of the Lion and the glue of the Eagle.

It would be easy for me to write an entire volume concerning the agreement of the philosophers in respect of the first agents, but I believe you will not take it ill, that at present I say no more thereof. I will only add the words of the Abbot Sinesius. The matter of the philosophers is of such a kind, that it holds the middle between a metal and a mercury; it is in part fixed, and in part not fixed; it would not otherwise hold the middle between metals and Mercury. See here a very good description of the compound of the philosophers, which holds in its heart the Philosophic Water and Mercury; but to say something more particular to you, I will make you take notice, that as the compound, which is the first Water, or first humidity of the philosophers, is made by the destruction of the bodies; so the Water which is the soul, the spirit and the essence of the compound, cannot be extracted, but after the destruction of the same compound. Mind this well; for this is it which is the second key of the work, the mystery of mysteries and the essential point of this sacred science. It is it which opens the doors of justice and the prisons of Hell, says Cosmopolita. In fine, it is by the means of this operation that we see this precious fountain flow from the foot of this flourishing rose tree [or rose-garden for the original signifies either] from which only the philosophers have the good fortune to drain this celestial liquor.

As then the point which concerns the second preparation of the matter, and which contains the secret of the Philosophic Mercury is the most important of all, it is also this whereof the philosophers have been most jealous. Paracelsus says nothing else on this subject, but that the artist composes certain simples, and that after having corrupted them according as they require, he hence prepares another thing which afterwards becomes a being, which has more power than Nature herself has. There there are the two preparations well described; they are the two first turns of the wheel, which do each of them contain three: there only with the third turn, which according to the saying of the philosophers is only play of women, it is for this reason that I will tell you none of it, the books treat of it sufficiently; it is better for me still to stay upon this second turn of the wheel, and on this notion of the Air of the Air, according to Aristeus. This Air of the Philosophers, the Fire, the Water and Earth of the Philosophers and all this is but one only thing drawn from the compound as well as from [out] of the Sun and of the Moon, it is this which gives it the four elementary natures, among which only the two active qualities excel is the hot and the moist, which make all fruitfulness.

I have still a great secret to tell you, which is that this Mercury of the Philosophers, is not a true real Mercury in all things, that is to say neither in its exterior qualities considering that a mercurial essence, nor in its interior being, it is a devouring Fire, and the most active of all [but] it is a compacted Air, from which not only all the metals (note this well) but also all the mercuries of the metals are engendered. See here, Sir, a great mystery, which you will not find so plainly unveiled in any philosopher: so it would also be to expose me to their anathema, to say any more of it. See then that the greatest mystery of all the philosophic mysteries is to know how to draw out this Air, or this aerial substance whose virtues are unspeakable; it is this also which makes Aristeus say:

28 For it being not known how Air is fished,
It is impossible it should be gotten etc.

Cosmopolita in other terms says the same thing, that you must know how to bake Air, until it be made Water and afterwards not Water; this is found evidently true in the operation of this mystery, which the variety of philosophical expressions has rendered impenetrable; It is drawn diverse ways, says Cosmopolita, and yet I tell you in truth that it is a process purely natural, in which an artist can less fail than in any other operation. I will yet unfold you, Sir, another mystery with that philosophical sincerity which is used between brother and brother. You will find without

doubt that it is to say much, and also more than all the philosophers have said thereof. On this point then I will tell you, that besides the reasons which you know the wisemen have had not to reveal the secrets of wisdom to sots and wicked men, they have had for it one quite particular and very secret, that is, that the greatest of their mysteries, is not in effect a mystery, but because they have had a mind to make it mysterious; for the sons of the Art, who shall reflect upon the possibility of Nature, and who shall not permit themselves to be carried away to vain subtleties, shall see this mystery openly every where, except in the books of the philosophers. They will find in a thousand places this natural way of vivifying the principles in one only essence, which afterwards of itself makes and which accomplishes the great Work by the assistance of a graduated fire, which is the nourishment of it.

I am sure, Sir, that you will be satisfied of those important verities which I am going to tell you and I am sure also that you will protest to me that they are very solid, if after having discovered the principles of this sacred science, and after having made this admirable compound, which holds the middle between a metal and Mercury, you will fairly stay in the simplicity of Nature, and consider its possibility, as I have said, without desiring to be too wise. I hope that by these means you will have the accomplishment of the magistry, or at least approach so near it that a turn of your hand may bring the work to perfection.

But for fear, Sir, you should believe me as envious as the most reserved of the philosophers, I will cause you to make another remark on this subject, which alone may contribute a(s) much (as) all I am going to say to dissipate the clouds which cover this mysterious process: which is that vulgar authors, who do make any operations upon the same matter of the philosophers, are not mysterious in this point, because they know not what they have in their hands, to be that which it is in effect; so that they show enough thereby to the philosophers, who of themselves penetrate into the depth of the secrets of Nature, and if there want any degree of perfection in that which those men do show, the man knows how to supply it of himself. The vulgar authors make not this important reflection, that is, that philosophers do say, that their Mercury is a very great poison, which nevertheless by decoction becomes a excellent medicine.

You ought, Sir, after this to be satisfied with me, since one cannot speak more, nor more sincerely, nor more intelligibly; I will nevertheless endeavour to make myself be better understood by these essential words of the Abbot Sinesius, who says that the Mercury of the Philosophers is not the Mercury of the vulgar, nor of the Mercury of the vulgar wholly; and I to speak much more clearly than he, I tell you, that it is no more the Mercury of any metal, [than it is common Mercury] but the Mercury of philosophers, the Mercury of Metalls; the pontic water, the most sharp vinegar the fire, and the viscous humidity of the philosophers.

Sir, I am going to finish by a reflection which is not much less important than the foregoing, that is, that the Mercury of the vulgar, how animated soever that it can be, with a Metallic Sulphur, can never be the Mercury of the Philosophers, so as it be truly a Mercury. Observe well what I say, it is not in that quality the first matter of metals and it is truly one of the seven, and all that the greatest artist can produce thence, shall never be ought but a metal, or an unprofitable precipitate and not a flowing, penetrating and fixed tincture. Mercury as it is Mercury, is always cold and moist, very far from being that devouring fire, which destroys all which resists it. Meditate if you please, upon all these considerations, and remember that according to the philosophers, their Mercury has its own [or its proper] mines, whence they draw it, and yet it is originally in one only thing, that is to say in this compound, and in this stone of Arnold of Villanova, which contains this humidity, which blackens, which whitens, which rubifies, and which perfects the work, when it has received the force of the celestial powers.

It is time I should finish, you yourself will find there quite enough, since there is there more than any philosopher in particular or many philosophers together, have ever said of it; you will also agree that beside having spoken intelligibly, I have moreover spoken of those operations in their natural order, which is not found in the books; so that, Filiis artis haec sufficiunt, "These suffice the sons of art": I wish with all my heart that you may make good use, and may have cause to be entirely persuaded, that none can be with more sincerity, and a more truly philosophical respect, than I am, Sir,

Your most humble and
Most obedient servant
the 9th of May, 1686

The Words of Father Aristeus to his Son
done out of the Scythian character and
language into Latin Rhyme.

1 The Knowledge of all things being now explained to you
And the way of living and of
Governing with the best Philosophy.
2 And the true Monarchy of the World being delivered:
3 There only remains to me the Keys of Nature,
which hitherto, my Son, I have taken care of.
4 Of these, the golden Key has the precedence
of all the rest which opens what is shut up.
It is the fountain of the Work of Universality,
Wherein is said to be the great Gift of the Divinity.
5 Riches grow vile, when this is in possession,
no treasure ever is compared with this.
6 What are Riches to me, if sickness be a companion?
What will Riches profit me, if I'm oppressed with Death?
7 Snatched away by Death, I leave my Treasures.
8 While I hold my Key, Death will be afar off.
While I possess the Key, I have the Secret.
While I have the Secret, I fear no fear [danger].
9 Riches are at hand, treasures are not wanting
Sickness flies away, Death is tardy, having got the Key.
10 Now, my Son, I'll make you the heir of it.
But I conjure you by God [and] his holy Seat,
That you keep it closed up near the Cabinet of your heart,
And concealed with the seal of Silence.
11 If you use it, it will greatly enrich you
If you shall be old or sick, it will heal, ease, renew.
12 By its own Power it cures all sicknesses,
It illuminates metals, it blesses [its] possessors.
13 This is it which our forefathers have sworn unto
And which they have recommended under the obligation of art.
14 Therefore learn it: do always good unto
The indigent Pupil; let this be for a Seal.
15 All things which are beneath the heavens distinguished into several.
Are made out of one Principle,
All things came out of one Principle,
They made all things out of the River [the emanations] of the [...]
16 All nourishments bear witness of their Fountain,
Since things live by that by which they are nourished.
17 The fish enjoys the Water, the Infant sucks the Mother
Let the tree want moisture, [and] the fruit of the wood flies away.
18 By the Life the beginning of things is known,
The Life of things is Air, therefore the beginning of things.
19 Moreover the Air corrupts all Bodies:
That which gives the gift of Life, destroys life also.
20 Wood, Iron, Stones are dissolved by Fire
And all things are reduced into their first State.
21 But the same is the cause of generation
Which (how different is it?) is of Corruption.
22 At last when it happens that Creatures suffer
Either by some [long] Time, or by the defect of Fate.
The Air relieves them, they are healed by Air,
Whether they be imperfect, or rendered infirm.

23 The Earth, a Tree, an Herb languish with ardent heat.
Each are amended by the Dew of the Air.
24 Yet since no creature can be repaired
But in its own Nature
Since Air is the original fountain of all
Consequently, it is also the universal Fountain.
25 In this itself the Seed, the Life, the Death,
The languishing, the remedy, of all things are acknowledge to be plucked.
26 Nature also has included all Treasures
In this, and shut it in its proper Doors [enclosure].
27 It is the golden Key to know how to open
The Doors and to draw Air from Air.
28 For it being unknown how the Air is fished,
It is impossible it should be gotten,
That which cures particular and universal diseases,
And calls also Mortals back to Life.
29 For you must seek out the common Fountain
If you desire thoroughly to heal all diseases
30 Nature produces like from like.
Nature leads forth Nature out of Nature.
31 Learn therefore, my Son, to catch Air,
Learn to keep the golden Key of Nature.
32 The Creatures may know the Air
But how to catch Air, is the Key of Nature.
33 This is a great Secret and more than Human,
To take the heavenly Secret from the Air.
34 This is a great Secret, the inbred power of things.
Natures are captivated by their own Species.
35 A fish is caught by a Fish, and a Bird by a Bird,
The Air is also taken by a sweet Air.
36 Snow and Ice are Air which cold has congealed.
These nature has prepared to catch the Air [again].
37 Put one of these into a sealed Vessel,
And you will catch the Air congealed about [it].
Receive this distilling in another deep little Vessel.
Close shut up, thick, strong, clean,
In a hot time that you may make
The Rays of the Sun, or the Lunar.
38 When the Vessel shall be full, seal up the mouth well
least the heavenly Spark fly away into the [open] Air.
39 Fill as many Vessels as you would fill,
what you shall do afterwards, learn and be silent.
40 Build a small furnace, fit your vessel
Half full of Air [which you have] caught, seal it up.
41 Then kindle a fire, let the pure lighter part of the
Fume ascend often; as Nature does,
Which always maintains a fire in the middle of the Earth.
By which she moves the Vapours of the Air by always circular.
42 Let its fire be gentle and moist, sweet
Like [that] wherewith a sitting Bird hatches Eggs.
43 Which keeping always so made
That it burn not, but bake [or boil] the golden Fruit;
Until for a long time being agitated by motion,
It rest baked in the Bottom of the Vessel.
44 To this Air add fresh Air
Not too much but a convenient part.

45 Make it gently flow, putrefy, grow black,
Grow hard, grow together into one, and being fixed become red.
46 Then the impure part being divided from the pure
By the assistance of fire and by divine Art;
47 At length take one part of pure Air
With which join again the pure hard part.
48 Let them be dissolved, joined, slightly grow black,
Be made white, be hardened, and at last become red.
49 This is the end of the Work; you have made the Elixir
Making all the miracles which you have seen.
50 You have the golden Key, potable Gold,
The Medicine of all things and perpetual Treasure.

In the fourth Book of Herodotus intituled Melpomene.
about the beginning.

One Aristeus of Proconnesus [a city in an isle of the same name, now both called Marmora, from the abundance of marble: it is beyond the Dardanells as you sail to Constantinople] a verse-maker, the Son of Castrobius, has delivered that he inspired by Phoebius came to the [..]esedones: and that above them there inhabited the Arimaspi, one-eyed men and also above them the Grypae [or Grypians], who kept the Gold; above those were the Hyperboreans that is above the North reaching to the Sea.

But I will tell you what I heard of the same man in Proconnesus and Cyzicus. They say that Aristeus; being by birth inferiour to none of his city, entering into a fullers shop in Procannesus died [there]: and that the Fuller shutting up his shop, went away to let his friends know it. And, a rumour being spread about the city that Aristeus was dead, that there came in a certain man from Cyzicus, coming from the city of Attacia, to those who were disputing of this matter, who said that he met Aristeus at Cyzicus, and spoke to him. And that while affirmed this, the relations of the dead man came to the Fullers shop, having with them what was convenient to bury the dead: but the doors being opened, Aristeus neither appeared alive nor dead: In that the seventh year afterwards when he had appeared in Proconnesus, he wrote those verses which are by the Greeks now called Arimaspeans: which having made he again vanished. This these cities make mention of which I know to be agreeable with the Metapontins [otherwise - but I know that the things happened to the Metapontins] who are in Italy three hundred and forty years after Aristeus vanished the second time. For the Metapontins do say that Aristeus, when he appeared with them commanded an altar to be built to Apollo, and near it a statue to be erected which should have the name of Aristeus the Proconnesian: because he said they were only [people] of Italy into whose land Apollo came, and following him; and that he who was now Aristeus, was then a crow, when he followed the God. And having said these thing that he vanished. And therefore the Metapontins say, that they sent to Delphos to the God, to know the meaning of what that man had said, and that Pythia [the priest] commanded them to hearken to what the had said, for it would be better for them, if they obeyed. And there is now extant a statue with the name of Aristeus, near unto Apollo's Altar, built in the market place, with laurels on both sides. And so far of Aristeus.