

COMTE DE GABALIS

OR,

DISCOURSES ON
SECRET SCIENCES

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*Quod tanto impendio absconditur, etiam solum modo
demonstare, destruere est.* — TERTULLIAN

[“What has been hidden away with such pains,
merely to reveal, is to destroy.”]

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FIRST DISCOURSE

Appearance of the Comte de Gabalis. He begins to instruct the Author in the Mysteries of the Cabala.



AY the soul of the Comte de *Gabalis* be now in the presence of God, for they have just written me that he has died of apoplexy. The Amateurs¹ will not fail to say that this manner of death usually befalls those who deal incautiously with the secrets of the Sages, and that since the Blessed Raymond Lully so decreed in his testament, an avenging angel has never failed promptly to wring the necks of all who have indiscreetly revealed the Philosophic Mysteries.

But let them not condemn this learned man thus hastily, without having received an explanation of his conduct. He revealed all to me, it is true, but he did so only with the utmost cabalistic circumspection. It is necessary to pay his memory the tribute of stating that he was a great zealot for the Religion of his Fathers the Philosophers, and that he would rather have gone through fire than have profaned its sanctity by taking into his confidence any unworthy prince, or ambitious or immoral man, three types of persons excommunicated for all time by the Sages. Happily I am not a prince, I have but little ambition, and you will presently see that I have even a trifle more chastity than is requisite for a Philosopher.

He found me to be of a tractable, inquiring, and fearless disposition. A dash of melancholy is lacking in me, else I would make all, who are inclined to blame the Comte de *Gabalis* for having concealed nothing from me, confess that I

¹ *Messieurs les curieux.*

was a not unfit subject for the Occult Sciences. One cannot make great progress in them, it is true, without melancholy; but the little that I possess in no wise disheartened him. You have, he told me a hundred times, Saturn in an angle, in his own house, and retrograde; some day you cannot fail to be as melancholy as a Sage ought to be; for the wisest of all men, as we learn in the Cabala, had like you Jupiter in the Ascendant, nevertheless so powerful was the influence of his Saturn, though far weaker than yours, that one cannot find proof of his having laughed a single time in all his life.

The Amateurs must, therefore, find fault with my Saturn and not with the Comte de Gabalis, if I prefer to divulge their secrets rather than to practise them. If the stars do not do their duty the Comte is not to blame for it; and if I have not sufficient greatness of soul to strive to become the Master of Nature, overthrow the Elements, hold communion with Supreme Intelligences, command demons, become the father of giants, create new worlds, speak with God upon His formidable Throne, and compel the Cherubim who guards the gate of terrestrial Paradise to let me stroll now and then in its alleys, it is I, and I alone, who am to blame or to be pitied. One must not, on this account, insult the memory of that rare man by saying that he met his death because he taught me all these things. Since the fortunes of war are uncertain, is it not possible that the Comte may have been overcome in an encounter with some unruly hobgoblin? Peradventure while talking with God upon His flaming Throne, he could not keep his glance from straying to His face, now it is written that man may not behold God and live. Perhaps he merely pretended to die, as is the way of Philosophers, who feign death in one place, only to transplant themselves to another. Be that as it may, I cannot believe that the manner in which he entrusted his treasures to me merits punishment. This is what took place.

As common sense has always made me suspect the existence of much claptrap in all the so-called Occult Sciences, I have never been tempted to waste time in perusing books which treat of them; nevertheless it does not seem quite rational to condemn, without knowing why, all those who are addicted to these Sciences, persons often perfectly sane otherwise, and for the most part scholars, distinguished at the law and in society. Hence to avoid being unjust, and in order not to fatigue myself with tedious reading, I determined to pretend to all whom I could learn were interested in Occultism, that I was infatuated with it.

From the outset I had greater success than I had even dared hope. Since all these gentlemen, however mysterious and reserved they may pride themselves upon being, ask nothing better than to parade their theories and the new discoveries they pretend to have made in Nature, it was not long before I became the confidant of the most important among them, and I had always some one or another of them in my study, which I had purposely furnished forth with the works of their most fantastic authors. Without exception there was no foreign scholar upon whom I did not have an opinion, in short, as regards the Science in question, I soon found myself a personage of importance. I had as companions, princes, men of lofty rank, lawyers, beautiful ladies (and ugly ones as well), doctors, prelates, monks, nuns, in fact people from every walk in life. Some were seeking Angels, others the Devil, some their guardian spirit, others evil spirits, some a panacea for every ill, others knowledge of the stars, some the secrets of Divinity, and almost all the Philosopher's Stone.

They were to a man agreed that these mighty secrets, and especially the Philosopher's Stone, are hard to find and that few people possess them, but all entertained a sufficiently good opinion of themselves to fancy that they were of the number of the Elect.

Happily, the most advanced were at that time expecting with impatience the arrival of a German, a nobleman of high rank and a great Cabalist, whose lands lie toward the frontiers of Poland. He had written to the Children of the Philosophers at Paris, promising to pay them a visit when passing through France on his way to England. I was commissioned to answer this great man's letter. I sent him the map of my horoscope that he might judge whether I should aspire to the Supreme Wisdom. Fortunately my map and letter caused him to do me the honour of replying that I should be one of the first persons whom he would see in Paris, and that Heaven willing, it would not be his fault if I did not enter the Society of the Sages.

To my joy, I kept up a regular correspondence with the illustrious German. From time to time, I propounded to him weighty, and so far as in me lay, well reasoned problems concerning the Harmony of the World, the Numbers of Pythagoras, the Visions of St. John and the first Chapter of Genesis. The profundity of these subjects enraptured him, he wrote me unheard of wonders, and I soon recognised that I was dealing with a man of very vigorous and very vast imagination. I have three or four score of his letters written in so extraordinary a style that I could never bring myself to read anything else the moment I was alone in my study.

One day as I was marvelling at one of the most sublime of these letters, a very good looking man came in and bowing gravely to me, said in French but with a foreign accent, "Adore, oh my Son, adore the very good and the very great God of the Sages, and never allow yourself to become puffed up with pride because He sends one of the Children of Wisdom to initiate you into their Order,¹ and to make you a sharer in the wonders of His Omnipotence."

¹ *pour vous associer à leur compagnie.*

The novelty of the salutation startled me, and for the first time in my life, I began to question whether people may not sometimes see apparitions; nevertheless, collecting myself as best I could, and looking at him as politely as my slight fear permitted, I said, "Who ever you may be whose greeting is not of this world, your visit does me great honour; but, before I adore the God of the Sages, may it please you to let me know to what Sages and to what God you refer, and if agreeable to you pray take this armchair and have the kindness to enlighten me as to this God, these Sages, this Order, and, before or after all this, as to the manner of being to whom I have the honour of speaking."

"You receive me very sagely sir," he replied with a smile, taking the proffered armchair; "You ask me to explain to you in the beginning certain things, which with your permission, I shall not touch upon to-day. The words of the compliment I have paid you the Sages address, at the outset, to those to whom they have determined to open their hearts and reveal their Mysteries. From your letters I adjudged you so advanced that this salutation would not be unknown to you, and that you would esteem it the most gratifying compliment the Comte de Gabalis could pay you."

"Ah Sir," I exclaimed, recollecting that I had a great rôle to play, "How shall I render myself worthy of such kindness? Is it possible that the greatest of all men is in my study, and that the renowned *Gabalis* honours me with a visit?"

"I am the least of the Sages," he answered gravely, "and God, who dispenses the Light of his Wisdom together with its responsibilities in that measure which His Sovereignty deems best, has bestowed upon me but a very small portion of the Light, in comparison to that at which I marvel in my fellow Initiates.¹ I expect you to equal them some day, if I dare judge from the map of your horoscope with which you

¹ *mes compagnons*

“ have honoured me. But why, Sir,” he added mirthfully, “ Are you doing your utmost to get into my bad graces by mistaking me at first sight for a phantom?”

“ Ah, not for a phantom,” I said. “ But I confess, Sir, that “ I suddenly recalled that story of Cardan’s. He says his father “ was one day visited in his study by seven unknown beings, “ clothed in different colours, who made rather strange “ statements to, him as to their nature and occupation——”

“ I am familiar with the incident to which you refer,” interrupted the Comte, “ They were Sylphs; I will tell you “ about them some day. They are a kind of ethereal being, “ and now and then they come to consult the Sages about “ the books of Averroës which they do not understand very “ well. Cardan is a rattlepate to have published that in his “ ‘Subtilties.’ He found the reminiscence among his father’s “ papers. His father was one of Us. Realising that his son “ was a born babbler, he did not wish to teach him anything “ of moment, and let him amuse himself with ordinary astro- “ logy whereof he knew only enough to forecast that his son “ would be hanged. So that rascal is to blame for your having “ insulted me by taking me for a Sylph?”

“ Insulted you!” I exclaimed, “What have I done that I “ should be so unfortunate——?”

“ I am not angry with you,” he interposed, “You are under “ no obligation to know that all these Elementary Spirits are “ our disciples; that they are only too happy when we con- “ descend to instruct them; and that the least of our Sages is “ more learned and more powerful than all those little “ fellows. We will speak of these matters, however, at another “ time; it is enough to-day that I have had the satisfaction of “ seeing you. Strive to render yourself worthy to receive the “ Cabalistic Light, my Son, the hour of your regeneration is at “ hand; it rests solely with you to become a new being. Pray “ ardently to Him, who alone has the power to create new

“ hearts, that He may give you one capable of the great things which I am to teach you, and that He may inspire me to withhold from you none of our Mysteries.”

Then he arose, kissed me solemnly, and without giving me a chance to reply said, “ Adieu, my Son, I must see the members of our Order¹ who are in Paris, afterward I shall give you my news. Meanwhile, *watch, pray, hope and be silent.*”

With these words he left my study. On the way to the door I expressed my regret at the shortness of his visit, and at his cruelty in forsaking me so soon after he had shown me a Spark of his Light. But assuring me, with very great kindness, that I would lose nothing by waiting, he entered his coach and left me in a state of amazement which beggars description.

I could believe neither my eyes nor my ears. “I am sure,” I kept saying to myself “that this is a man of exalted rank, that he has inherited a yearly income of fifty thousand pounds; moreover he appears to be a person of great accomplishment; can it be that he has lost his head over these occult follies? He talked to me about those Sylphs in an exceedingly cavalier fashion. Is it not possible that he may be a sorcerer, and may I not have been altogether mistaken in believing, as I hitherto have, that sorcerers no longer exist? On the other hand, if he is a sorcerer, are they an as devout as he seems to be?”

I could not solve this riddle, nevertheless, I determined to see the matter through to the end, although I fully realised that I should have to put up with not a few sermons, and that the demon tormenting him was of a highly moral and pious character.

¹ *nos compagnons*

SECOND DISCOURSE

Concerning the four species of Elementaries: the Sylphs, the Undines or Nymphs, the Gnomes & the Salamanders.



HE Comte wished me to pass the entire night in prayer, and the next morning at daybreak sent a note to say that he would be at my house at eight o'clock, and that, if agreeable to me, we would make an excursion together. I awaited him, he came, and after we had exchanged greetings he said, "Let us go to some place where we may be alone, and where our interview cannot be interrupted."

I told him I thought Ruel a pleasant place and rather unfrequented. "Let us go there then," he replied. We got into the coach, and during the drive I kept studying my new Master. I have never in my life remarked in anyone so great a depth of contentment as was apparent in all that he said and did. His mind was more open and tranquil than it seemed possible for that of a sorcerer to be. His entire air was in no wise that of a man whose conscience reproaches him with black deeds; and I felt a marvellous impatience to have him enter upon the subject of our interview, for I could not comprehend how a man, seemingly so judicious and so perfect in every other way, could have let his mind become unbalanced by the visions to which I had perceived him to be subject on the preceding day. He discoursed divinely on political economy, and was enchanted to hear that I had read what Plato has written on this subject. "Someday you will have greater need of all that than you imagine," he said, "And if we come to an agreement to-day, it is not impossible that you may in time put these sage maxims into practice."

We were just entering Ruel and went to the garden; but the Comte disdained to admire its beauties and made straight for the labyrinth.

Perceiving that we were as much alone as he could desire, he raised his hands and eyes to Heaven and cried aloud, “ I “ praise the Eternal Wisdom for inspiring me to conceal from “ you none of her Ineffable Truths. How happy you will be, “ my Son, if she is gracious enough to put into your soul the “ resolutions which these High Mysteries require of you. “ Soon you will learn to command all Nature, God alone will “ be your Master, and only the Sages your equals. The “ Supreme Intelligences will glory in obeying your desires, the “ demons will not dare to be found where you are, your voice “ will make them tremble in the depths of the abyss, and all “ the Invisible Peoples who dwell in the four Elements will “ deem themselves happy to be the ministers of your pleasure. “ I worship Thee, oh mighty God, because Thou hast crowned “ man with such great glory, and hast created him Sovereign “ Monarch of all the works of Thine hands. My Son,” he added turning towards me, “ do you feel within yourself that “ heroic ambition which is the infallible characteristic of the “ Children of Wisdom? Do you dare seek to serve God alone, “ and to master all that is not of God? Do you understand “ what it means to be a Man? And are you not weary of “ being a slave when you were born to be a Sovereign? And “ if you have these noble thoughts, which the map of your “ horoscope does not permit me to doubt, consider seriously “ whether you will have the courage and strength to “ renounce everything which might prove an obstacle to your “ attaining that eminence for which you were born.”

He paused and looked at me fixedly as if either awaiting my reply or seeking to read my heart.

From the beginning of his discourse I had greatly hoped that we should soon enter upon the subject of our interview,

but at these last words I gave up all anticipation of doing so. The word *renounce* frightened me, and I no longer doubted he was about to propose that I should renounce either Baptism or Paradise. So not knowing how to get out of the difficult situation in which I found myself I said, "Renounce, Sir, is it necessary to renounce anything?"

"It is absolutely necessary," he answered, "and truly, so vitally essential that it is the first thing required of one. I do not know whether you can make up your mind to it, but I know only too well that wisdom never dwells in a body subject to sin, even as she never enters a soul prepossessed by error or malice. The Sages will never admit you to their Order if you do not from this moment renounce one thing which can never go hand in hand with Wisdom. *It is necessary,*" he added in a whisper bending close to my ear, "*It is necessary to renounce all sensual relationships with women.*"

I burst out laughing at this absurd proposal. "Sir," I exclaimed, "You have let me off easily. I was expecting you to propose some extraordinary renunciation, but since you merely desire me to renounce women, that was done long ago. I am chaste enough, thank God! Nevertheless Sir, since Solomon was more of a Sage than I may ever be, and since all his Wisdom could not prevent his becoming corrupted, pray tell me how you gentlemen manage to do without the other sex? And why would it be inconvenient if in the Philosopher's Paradise, every Adam should have his Eve?"

"You are asking me something very important," he replied, as if reflecting whether or not he should answer my question. "Since I see, however, that you disengage yourself without difficulty from the society of the fair sex, I will tell you one of the reasons which have compelled the Sages to exact this condition from their disciples. Forthwith you will perceive in what ignorance all men live who are not of our number.

“When you have been enrolled among the Children of the Philosophers, and when your eyes have been strengthened by the use of the very Holy Medicine, you will straightway discover that the Elements are inhabited by most perfect beings. Unhappy Adam’s sin has deprived his unfortunate posterity of all knowledge of these beings and of all intercourse with them. The immense space which lies between Earth and Heaven has Inhabitants far nobler than the birds and insects. These vast seas have far other hosts than those of the dolphins and whales; the depths of the earth are not for the moles alone; and the Element of Fire, nobler than the other three, was not created to remain useless and empty.

“The air is full of an innumerable multitude of Peoples, whose faces are human, seemingly rather haughty, yet in reality tractable, great lovers of the sciences, cunning, obliging to the Sages, and enemies of fools and the ignorant. Their wives and daughters have a masculine beauty like that of the Amazons.”

“Why, Sir,” I ejaculated, “Do you mean to tell me that these hobgoblins are married?”

“Don’t be upset by such a trifle, my Son,” he rejoined, “Believe me, everything that I am telling you is sound and true. These are but the Elements of the ancient Cabala, and it only rests with you to verify my statements with your own eyes. Receive with a submissive spirit the Light which God sends you through my mediation. Forget all you may have heard on this subject in the schools of the ignorant, or later, when convinced by experience, you will have the sorrow of being compelled to own that you persisted stubbornly in the wrong.

“Hear me to the end and know that the seas and rivers are inhabited as well as the air. The ancient Sages called this race of people Undines or Nymphs. There are very few

“males among them but a great number of females; their beauty is extreme, and the daughters of men are not to be compared to them.

“The earth is filled well-nigh to its centre with Gnomes, people of slight stature, who are the guardians of treasures, minerals and precious stones. They are ingenious, friends of man and easy to govern. They furnish the Children of the Sages with all the money they require, and as the price of their service ask naught save the glory of being commanded. The Gnomides, their wives, are small but very amiable, and their dress is exceedingly curious. As for the Salamanders, flaming dwellers of the Region of Fire, they serve the Philosophers, but do not seek their company eagerly, and their daughters and wives rarely show themselves.”

“They do right,” I interrupted, “And I had rather have their room than their company,”

“Why so?” inquired the Comte.

“Why so, Sir?” I replied, “Who would care to converse with such an ugly beast as a Salamander, male or female?”

“You are mistaken,” he rejoined, “that is merely the idea which ignorant painters and sculptors have of them. The Salamander women are beautiful, more beautiful even than any of the others, since they are of a purer Element. I had not intended to speak about them, and was passing briefly over the description of these Peoples since you will see them yourself at your leisure, and with ease if you have the curiosity to do so. You will see their dresses, their food, their manners, their customs and their admirable laws. The beauty of their intellects will charm you even more than that of their bodies, yet one cannot help pitying these unfortunates when they tell one that their souls are mortal, and that they have no hope whatever of eternal enjoyment of the Supreme Being, of Whom they have knowledge and

“ Whom they worship reverently. They will tell you that they are composed of the purest portions of the Element in which they dwell, and that they have in them no impurities whatever, since they are made of but one Element. Therefore they die only after several centuries; but what is time in comparison with eternity? They must return for ever into nothingness. This thought grieves them deeply, and we have utmost difficulty in consoling them.

“ Our Fathers the Philosophers, when speaking with God face to face, complained to Him of the unhappiness of these Peoples, and God, whose mercy is boundless, revealed to them that it was not impossible to find a remedy for this evil. He inspired them to the realization that just as man, by the alliance which he has contracted with God, has been made a participant in Divinity, so the Sylphs, Gnomes, Nymphs, and Salamanders, by the alliance which they have in their power to contract with man, can become participants in immortality. Thus a Nymph or a Sylphid becomes immortal and capable of the Beatitude to which we aspire when she is so happy as to marry a Sage; and a Gnome or a Sylph ceases to be mortal the moment he espouses one of our daughters.”

“ Thence sprang the error of the first centuries, of Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Lactantius, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Athenagoras the Christian Philosopher, and of most writers of that period. They had learned that these Elementary Half-men sought the love of mortal maidens, and therefore imagined that the fall of the Angels had come about solely through their suffering themselves to be smitten with love for mortal women. Some Gnomes, desirous of becoming immortal, had sought to win the favour of our daughters by bringing them precious stones of which they are the natural guardians, and these authors believed, basing their conclusions upon the Book of Enoch

“ which they did not understand, that these precious stones
 “ were snares laid by the enamoured Angels for the chastity
 “ of our women. In the beginning these Sons of Heaven,
 “ being beloved by the daughters of men, engendered famous
 “ giants; and those bad Cabalists, Josephus and Philo, (almost
 “ all Jews are ignorant) and subsequently all the authors I
 “ have just mentioned, as well as Origen and Macrobius, said
 “ that they were Angels, not knowing that they were Sylphs
 “ and other Elementary Peoples, who under the name of the
 “ Children of Elohim are distinguished from the Children of
 “ Men. Likewise that point which the Sage Augustine mod-
 “ estly refrained from deciding as to the pursuit of the African
 “ women of his time by so called Fauns or Satyrs; that also is
 “ cleared up by what I have just said concerning the desire
 “ to ally themselves with man which all Inhabitants of the
 “ Elements have, since such an alliance offers the only means
 “ whereby they may achieve the immortality to which they
 “ are not heirs.

“ Ah! Our Sages take care not to ascribe the fall of the
 “ first Angels to their love for women, nor do they accord the
 “ Devil such power over man as would enable them to
 “ attribute to him all the amorous intrigues of the Nymphs
 “ and Sylphs wherewith the writings of historians abound.
 “ There was never anything criminal in it at all. They were
 “ Sylphs who were striving to become immortal. Far from
 “ scandalizing the Philosophers, their innocent pursuits
 “ appeared so justifiable to us that we have, with one accord,
 “ resolved altogether to renounce women and to apply our-
 “ selves solely to the immortalisation of the Nymphs and
 “ Sylphids.”

“ Oh God !” I protested, “ What do I hear ? To what
 “ extent does the f——”

“ Yes, my Son,” the Comte interrupted, “ Marvel at the
 “ extent of the philosophical felicity. Instead of women,

“ whose feeble allurements fade in a few days and are
“ succeeded by horrible wrinkles, the Sages possess beauties
“ who never grow old and whom they have the glory of ren-
“ dering immortal. Imagine the love and gratitude of these
“ invisible mistresses and the ardour wherewith they strive to
“ please the charitable Philosopher who applies himself to
“ their immortalisation.”

“ Ah ! Sir,” I once more exclaimed, “ I renounce—”

“ Yes, my Son,” he continued as before without giving me
an opportunity to finish, “ renounce all futile and insipid
“ pleasures such as one finds in the society of women; the
“ fairest of them all is horrible beside the most insignificant
“ Sylphid. No revulsion ever follows our wise lovemaking.
“ Wretched ignoramuses! How greatly you are to be pitied
“ for your inability to taste the pleasures of the Philosophers!”

“ Wretched Comte de Gabalis!” I exclaimed with mingled
wrath and compassion, “ Will you let me tell you, once for
“ all, that I renounce this insane Wisdom, that I find this
“ visionary Philosophy absurd, that I abhor these abominable
“ embracings of phantoms, and that I tremble for you lest one
“ of your pretended Sylphids should suddenly carry you off to
“ Hell in the midst of your transports, fearing that so good a
“ man as you might at length perceive the madness of this
“ chimerical ardour, and repent so great a crime.”

“ Oh! ho!” he answered, recoiling three steps and
“ looking at me with wrathful eyes, “ Woe to you intractable
“ spirit that you are!”

His behaviour frightened me I confess, but what was
infinitely worse, as he went away from me, I saw him take a
paper from his pocket. I caught a glimpse of it from a dis-
tance and perceived it to be covered with characters which I
could not quite make out. He read it attentively, seemed
vexed, and kept muttering to himself. I believed that he was
evoking spirits to compass my ruin, and I somewhat repented

my rash zeal. "If I escape from this adventure," I kept saying to myself, "No more Cabalists for me!" I was keeping my eyes fixed upon him as on a judge about to condemn me to death, when I saw his countenance regain its serenity.

"It is hard for you to kick against the pricks," he said, smiling and rejoicing me. "You are a chosen vessel, Heaven has destined you to be the greatest Cabalist of your time. Here is the map of your horoscope which cannot be at fault. If it does not come to pass now and through my mediation, it will at the good pleasure of your retrograde Saturn."

"Ah! If I am to become a Sage," said I, "It will never be save through the mediation of the great *Gabalis*; but to be plain with you, I sadly fear that you will find it hard to bend me to this philosophic love-making."

"Can it be," he replied, "that you are such a poor Natural Philosopher as not to be persuaded of the existence of these Peoples?"

"I hardly know," I answered, "But I think that I should always fancy them to be merely hobgoblins in disguise."

"And will you ever believe more implicitly in the nurse of your childhood than in your native reason, than in Plato, Pythagoras, Celsus, Psellus, Proclus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Plotinus, Trismegistus, Nollius, Dornée, Fludd; than in Great Philip Aureolus, Theophrastus Bombast, Paracelsus of Hohenheim, and all the members of our Order!"¹

"I would believe you Sir," I responded, "As much and more than all of them; but, my dear Sir, could you not arrange with your fellow Initiates² that I should not be compelled to devote myself to these young ladies of the Elements?"

"Alas!" he answered, "You are undoubtedly a free agent, and one does not love unless one wishes to do so. Few Sages, however, have been able to resist their charms.

¹ *tous nos compagnons*

² *vos compagnons*

“ Nevertheless, there have been some who have reserved themselves wholly for greater things (as you will in time know), and who have not been willing to do the Nymphs this honour.”

“ Then I will be of their number,” I replied, “ As I should never be wining to waste time in the ceremonies which, I have heard a certain prelate say, one must practise in order to hold communion with such spirits.”

“ That prelate did not know what he was talking about,” said the Comte, “ For you will one day see that these are not spirits, and furthermore no Sage ever makes use either of ceremonies or of superstitious rites to get into touch with spirits, any more than he does in order to commune with the Peoples of whom we are speaking.

“ The Cabalist acts solely according to the principles of Nature; and if strange words, symbols and circumlocutions are sometimes found in our books, they are only used to conceal the principles of Natural Philosophy from the ignorant. Admire the simplicity of Nature in all her marvellous works! And in this simplicity a harmony and concert so great, so exact, and so essential that it will compel you, in spite of yourself, to relinquish your idle fancies. What I am about to tell you, we teach those of our disciples whom we are not willing unreservedly to admit into the Sanctuary of Nature; yet whom we in no wise wish to deprive of the society of the Elementary Peoples because of the compassion which we have for these same Peoples.

“ As you may perhaps already have grasped, the Salamanders are composed of the most subtile portions of the Sphere of Fire, fused together and organised by the action of the Universal Fire, of which I will discourse to you some day. It is called the Universal Fire because it is the inherent cause of every movement in Nature.

“ Likewise the Sylphs are composed of the purest atoms of

“ the Air, the Nymphs of the most subtile essences of the
 “ Water, and the Gnomes of the finest particles of the Earth.
 “ Adam was closely related to these perfect creatures, for
 “ being created out of all that was purest in the four Ele-
 “ ments, he combined in himself the perfections of these four
 “ races of Peoples and was their natural King. As you will
 “ learn later, however, the moment his sin had precipitated
 “ him into the dregs of the Elements, the harmony was
 “ disturbed, and there could no longer be any relation
 “ between him, gross and impure as he had become, and
 “ these pure and subtile beings. How remedy this evil? How
 “ restrig the lute and recover that lost sovereignty? Oh
 “ Nature! Wby art thou so little studied? Do you not
 “ understand, my Son, how easy Nature finds it to restore to
 “ man the estate which he has lost?”

“ Alas! Sir,” I answered, “I am very ignorant concerning
 “ all these facilities of Nature to which you refer.”

“ Nevertheless it is exceedingly easy to become well
 “ informed about them,” he rejoined. “ If we wish to recover
 “ empire over the Salamanders, we must purify and exalt the
 “ Element of Fire which is in us, and raise the pitch of that
 “ relaxed string. We have only to concentrate the Fire of the
 “ World in a globe of crystal, by means of concave mirrors;
 “ and this is the art which all the ancients religiously con-
 “ cealed, and which the divine Theophrastus discovered. A
 “ Solar Powder is formed in this globe, which being purified
 “ in itself and freed from any admixture of the other Ele-
 “ ments, and being prepared according to the Art, becomes
 “ in a very short time supremely fitted to exalt the Fire
 “ which is in us, and to make us become, as it were, of an
 “ igneous nature. Thereafter the Inhabitants of the Sphere of
 “ Fire are our inferiors, and enraptured to see our mutual
 “ harmony re-established, and that we are again drawing near
 “ to them, they have as much friendship for us as for their

“ own kindred, and all the respect which they owe to the
“ image and lieutenant of their Creator. They pay us every
“ attention they can bethink themselves of, through their
“ desire to obtain from us the immortality which they do not
“ possess.

“ It is true that they live a very long time, since they are
“ more subtle than the people of the other Elements; hence
“ they are in no hurry to exact immortality from the Sages. If
“ the aversion you have evinced should prove lasting, my
“ Son, you might be able to adapt yourself to a Salamander,
“ perhaps it would never speak to you of that which you so
“ greatly fear. It would not be thus with the Sylphs, Gnomes,
“ and Nymphs. As they live for less time, they have more to
“ do with us, so their familiarity is easier to obtain.

“ One has only to seal a goblet full of compressed Air,
“ Water, or Earth and to leave it exposed to the Sun for
“ month. Then separate the Elements scientifically, which is
“ particularly easy to do with Water and Earth. It is mar-
“ vellous what a magnet for attracting Nymphs, Sylphs, and
“ Gnomes, each one of these purified Elements is. After
“ taking the smallest possible quantity every day for some
“ months, one sees in the air the flying Commonwealth of
“ the Sylphs, the Nymphs come in crowds to the shores, the
“ Guardians of the Treasures parade their riches. Thus,
“ without symbols, without ceremonies, without barbaric
“ words, one becomes ruler over these Peoples. They exact
“ no worship whatever from the Sage, whose superiority to
“ themselves they fully recognise. Thus venerable Nature
“ teaches her children to repair the elements by means of the
“ Elements. Thus harmony is re-established. Thus man
“ recovers his natural empire, and can do all things in the
“ Elements without the Devil and without Black Art. Thus
“ you see my Son, the Sages are more innocent than you
“ imagine. Have you no answer to make me?”

“ I marvel at you, Sir,” said I, “ And I am beginning to fear lest you, should make me into a distiller.”¹

“ Ah! God forbid, my child,” he exclaimed, “ Your horoscope does not destine you for such nonsense as that. On the contrary, I forbid you to trifle away your time over it. I have told you that the Sages only teach such things to those whom they have no wish to admit to their company. You will have all these, and infinitely more glorious and more desirable advantages, through Philosophic Procedures which are quite different in character. I have only described these methods to make you see the innocence of this Philosophy and to allay your panic terrors.”

“ Thanks be to God, Sir,” I answered, “ I no longer have so much fear as I had this afternoon. And although I have not yet made up my mind to this arrangement with the Salamanders which you propose, I cannot help being curious to learn how you have discovered that the Nymphs and Sylphs die.”

“ Verily,” he replied, “ They tell us so, and moreover we actually see them die.”

“ How is it possible you can see them die,” I questioned, “ when your alliance renders them immortal?”

“ That would. be a point well made,” said he, “ if the number of Sages equalled the number of these Peoples; besides, there are many among them who prefer to die rather than run the risk of becoming immortal, and of being as unhappy as they see the demons to be. It is the Devil who inspires these sentiments in them, for he leaves no stone unturned to prevent these poor creatures from becoming immortal through alliance with us. So that I regard this aversion of yours, my Son, as a very pernicious temptation and a most uncharitable impulse, and you ought so to regard it. Furthermore, as to the death of the Nymphs

¹ [The context suggests a reference to physical Alchemy.]

“ and Sylphs, of which you speak; who compelled the Oracle
“ of Apollo to say, as Porphyry reports, that all those who
“ used to speak through the Oracles were mortal like himself?
“ And what, think you, was the significance of that cry,
“ which was heard throughout the coasts of Italy, and which
“ struck such terror in to the hearts of all who chanced to be
“ upon the sea? *Great Pan is dead?* It was the People of the
“ Air who were announcing to the People of the Waters that
“ the chief and oldest of the Sylphs had just died.”

“ It seems to me,” I remarked, “ that at the time that cry
“ was heard the world was worshipping Pan and the Nymphs.
“ Were then these gentlemen, whose fellowship you extol to
“ me, the false gods of the Pagans?”

“ That is true, my Son,” he answered. “ The Sages are far
“ from believing that the Devil ever had power to make
“ himself worshipped. He is too wretched and too weak ever
“ to have had such pleasure and authority. But he has had
“ power to persuade these Hosts of the Elements to show
“ themselves to men, and to cause temples to be erected in
“ their honour; and by virtue of the natural dominion which
“ each one of these Peoples has over the Element in which it
“ dwells, they kept troubling the air and the sea, shaking the
“ earth and scattering the fire of beaven at their own good
“ pleasure. Thus they had little difficulty in causing them-
“ selves to be mistaken for divinities so long as the Sovereign
“ Being neglected the salvation of the nations. Yet the Devil
“ did not derive from his mischief all the advantage he had
“ hoped. For from that time it chanced that as Pan, the
“ Nymphs, and other Elementary Peoples had found a means
“ of exchanging this traffic in worship for a traffic in love, you
“ must needs remember that among the ancients, Pan was
“ held to be the king of the so-called incubus gods who
“ ardently courted maidens, many of the Pagans escaped from
“ the Devil, and will not burn in Hell.”

“ I do not understand you, Sir,” I replied.

“ You take pains not to understand me,” he continued mirthfully and in a mocking tone. “ This is beyond your comprehension and would likewise be beyond that of all your doctors, for they have no idea as to what glorious Natural Philosophy is. Here is the great mystery of all that part of Philosophy which has to do with the Elements, and which, if you have any self esteem, will surely remove the very unphilosophic repugnance which you have been evincing all day long.

“ Know then, my Son, and be in no hurry to divulge this great Arcanum¹ to any unworthy ignoramus—know, that even as the Sylphs acquire an immortal soul through the alliance which they contract with men who are predestined: so men who have no right whatever to eternal glory, those unfortunates for whom immortality is but a fatal advantage, for whom the Messiah was not sent——”

“ You gentlemen of the Cabala are Jansenists then?” I interposed.

“ We do not know what Jansenism is my child,” he answered brusquely, “ and we scorn to inform ourselves as to wherein consist the differences in the various sects and religions wherewith the ignorant are infatuated. We ourselves hold to the ancient religion of our Fathers the Philosophers, concerning which I must one day instruct you. But to resume the thread of our discourse, those men whose melancholy immortality would be but an eternal misfortune, those unhappy children whom the Sovereign Father has neglected, have still the resource of becoming mortal by allying themselves with the Elementary Peoples. Thus you see the Sages run no hazard as to Eternity; if predestined they have the pleasure on quitting the prison of this body, of leading to Heaven the Sylphid or Nymph

¹ [*arcane*, as opposed to the more usual *secret*.]

“whom they have immortalised. On the other hand, if not predestined, marriage with the Sylphid renders their soul mortal and delivers them from the horror of the second death.¹ Thus the Devil beheld all those Pagans who had allied themselves with Nymphs escaping his clutches. Thus the Sages, or the friends of the Sages, to whom God inspires us to communicate anyone of the four Elementary Secrets, which I have well nigh taught you, may be set free from the peril of damnation.”

“Truth to tell,” I exclaimed, not daring to put him into a bad humour again, and deeming it expedient to postpone fully telling him my sentiments until he should have revealed to me all the secrets of his Cabala which, from this sample, I judged to be exceedingly odd and recreative; “truth to tell, you carry wisdom to very great lengths, and you were right in saying that this would be beyond the comprehension of all our doctors. I even believe that it would be beyond the comprehension of all our magistrates as well, and that if they could discover who these people are who escape the Devil by this method, as ignorance is ever unjust, they would take sides with the Devil against these fugitives and would use them ill.”

“For that reason,” said the Comte, “I have enjoined secrecy upon you, and I solemnly adjure you to maintain it. Your Judges are strange folk! They condemn a most innocent action as being the basest of crimes. What barbarism it was to condemn those two priests, whom the Prince de la Mirande knew, to be burned, each of whom

¹ [Observe that the position implied—that such permanent death is to be preferred to damnation—is flatly contradicted by the Comte in the fifth discourse. This, though, was likely deliberate on the part of the author. For the book to have worked as satire, the doctrines put into the mouth of the Comte needed to bear at least some relation to opinions current among Parisian occultists of the time; but it was not necessary that they be consistent.]

“ had had his Sylphid for the space of forty years. What inhumanity it was to condemn to death Jeanne Hervinier, who had laboured to immortalise a Gnome for thirty-six years. And what ignorance on the part of Bodin to call her a sorceress, and to make her amorous intrigues a justification of the popular misconception regarding the so called sorcerers, in a book as extravagant as his *Republic* is rational.

“ But it is late, and I am unmindful of the fact that you have not yet dined.”

“ You are speaking for yourself, Sir,” said I, “ for my part I could listen to you until to tomorrow without inconvenience.”

“ Ah! as for myself,” he rejoined, smiling and walking towards the gate, “ evidently you do not in the least know what Philosophy is. The Sages only eat for pleasure and never from necessity.”

“ I had quite the opposite idea of Sageness,” I replied, “ I supposed that the Sage should only eat to satisfy necessity.”

“ You are mistaken,” said the Comte, “ How long do you think we Sages can go without eating?”

“ How should I know?” said I, “ Moses and Elias fasted forty days, no doubt you Sages fast for some days less.”

“ What a mighty endeavour that would be!” he answered, “ The most learned man who ever lived, the divine, the almost to be worshipped Paracelsus affirms that he has seen many Sages who have fasted for twenty years without eating anything whatsoever. He himself, before being acknowledged Monarch of the Empire of Wisdom, whose sceptre we have justly accorded him, was pleased to essay living for several years by taking only one half scrupule of Solar Quintessence. And if you wish to have the pleasure of making anyone live without eating, you have only to prepare the earth as I have indicated that it may be prepared for the purpose of securing the partnership of the

“Gnomes. This Earth applied to the navel. and renewed
“when it is too dry, makes it possible for one to dispense with
“eating and drinking without the slightest inconvenience
“whatever, even as the veracious Paracelsus relates that he
“himself demonstrated during six months.

“But the use of the Catholic Cabalistic Medicine liberates
“us in the very best way from the importunate necessities to
“which Nature subjects the ignorant. We eat only when it
“pleases us to do so, and every superfluity of food vanishes by
“unconscious transpiration, we are never ashamed of being
“men.”

Then he fell silent, perceiving that we were within hearing
of our servants, and we went to the village to take a slender
repast, as is the custom of the Heroes of Philosophy.

THIRD DISCOURSE

Concerning Oracles



AFTER dinner we returned to the labyrinth. I was pensive and my pity for the Comte's madness, which I fully realised would be hard to cure, prevented my being as much amused at all that he had told me as I should have been, could I have had any hope of restoring him to reason. I kept searching antiquity for some counter arguments which he would be unable to refute for, on my adducing the opinions of the church, he had declared that he cared for naught save the ancient religion of his Fathers the Philosophers; and to seek to convince a Cabalist by reason would be a long winded undertaking, besides I was not anxious to get into a dispute with a man whose motives I did not as yet altogether understand.

It crossed my mind that what he had said concerning the false gods, for whom he had substituted the Sylphs and other Elementary Peoples, might be refuted by the Pagan Oracles whom Scripture everywhere calls devils, and not Sylphs. But not knowing whether the Comte might not in the tenets of his Cabala attribute the answer of the Oracles to some natural cause, I believed that it would be to the point to make him explain what he thought about them.

He gave me an opportunity to broach the subject when, before entering the labyrinth, he turned towards the garden, "This is very fine," he said, "and these statues are rather effective."

"The Cardinal who had them brought here," I replied, "had a fancy little worthy of his great genius. He believed the

“majority of these figures to have given forth Oracles in
“bygone days, and paid exceedingly dear for them on that
“account.”

“That is a failing of many people,” the Comte rejoined.
“Everyday ignorance causes a very criminal kind of idolatry
“to be committed, since people preserve with such great care
“and consider so precious those very idols which they believe
“the Devil formerly employed to make himself worshipped.
“O God, will people never in this world know that Thou
“hast precipitated Thine enemies beneath Thy footstool from
“the birth of time, and that Thou dost hold the demons pris-
“oners under the earth in the vortex of darkness? This un-
“praiseworthy desire to collect these counterfeit instruments
“of the demons might become innocent, my Son, if people
“would let themselves be persuaded that the angels of dark-
“ness have never been allowed to speak through the Oracles.”

“I do not believe,” I interrupted, “that it would be easy to
“establish that hypothesis amongst the antiquarians, but
“possibly it might be amongst the free thinkers. For not long
“ago it was decided by the leading minds of the day, in a
“conference called for the purpose, that all these pretended
“Oracles were either a fraud due to the avarice of the
“Gentile priests, or but a political trick of the Sovereigns.”

“Was this conference held and this question thus decided
“by the members of the Muhammedan Embassy sent to your
“King?”

“No Sir,” I answered.

“Then of what religion are these gentlemen,” he retorted,
“since they set at naught the Holy Scriptures which make
“mention in so many instances of so many different Oracles,
“especially of the Pythian Oracles who made their abode and
“gave forth their replies in places destined for the multipli-
“cation of the image of God?”

“I mentioned all those ventriloquists,” I answered, “and I

“reminded the company that King Saul had banished them from his kingdom where, notwithstanding, he found one of them on the evening of the day before his death, whose voice had the wondrous power of raising Samuel from the dead in answer to his prayer, and to his ruin. But these learned men did not alter their decision that there never had been any Oracles.”

“If the Scripture made no impression upon them,” said the Comte, “you should have convinced them by all antiquity, wherein it would have been easy to point out a thousand marvellous proofs. There were so many virgins pregnant with the destiny of mortals, who brought forth the good and bad fortunes of those who consulted them. What do you allege as to Chrysostom, Origen and Oecumenius, who make mention of those divine men whom the Greeks called ‘Engastrimyths,’ whose prophetic abdomens articulated such famous Oracles? And if your gentlemen did not care for the Scriptures and the Fathers, you should have reminded them of those miraculous maidens of whom the Greek Pausanias speaks, who changed themselves into doves and in that form delivered the celebrated Oracles of the Doves of Dodona. Or else you might have said, to the glory of your nation, that there were of old in Gaul illustrious maidens who transformed their entire appearance at the will of those who consulted them and who, in addition to the famous Oracles which they delivered, had a wonderful power over the waters and a salutary authority over the most incurable diseases.”

“They would have treated all these fine proofs as apocryphal,” said I.

“Does their antiquity render them suspect?” he rejoined. “If so, you had only to adduce the Oracles which are still delivered every day.”

“And in what part of the world?” said I.

“ In Paris,” he replied.

“ In Paris!” I exclaimed.

“ In Paris,” he repeated, “ Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things? Do not people daily consult Aquatic Oracles in glasses of water or in basins, and Aerial Oracles in mirrors and on the hands of virgins? Do they not recover lost beads and pilfered watches? Do they not learn news from distant countries in this way, and see the absent?”

“ Eh, Sir, what are you saying?” said I.

“ I am recounting that which I am positive happens every day,” he answered, “ and it would not be difficult to find a thousand eyewitnesses of it.”

“ I cannot believe that Sir,” I returned “ The magistrates would make an example of such culprits and people would not permit idolatry——”

“ Ah! how hasty you are!” interrupted the Comte. “ There is not so much evil in all this as you might suppose, and Providence will not permit the total destruction of that remnant of Philosophy which has escaped the lamentable shipwreck Truth has sustained. If there yet remains among the people any vestige of the dread power of the Divine Names, are you of the opinion that it should be blotted out and that they should lose the respect and recognition due to the great name AGLA, which works all these wonders, even when invoked by the ignorant and sinful and which, spoken by a Cabalist, would perform many other miracles. If you had wished to convince your gentlemen of the truth of the Oracles, you had only to exalt your imagination and your faith, and turning towards the East cry aloud, ‘AG’——”

“ Sir,” I interposed, “I was careful not to advance that kind of argument to such proper folk as those with whom I was debating. They would have taken me for a fanatic for, depend upon it, they have no faith whatever in that sort of

“ thing, and even if I had known the Cabalistic Procedure to which you refer, it would not have succeeded when pronounced by me; I have even less faith than they.”

“ Well, well,” said the Comte, “ If you lack faith we shall supply it. If you had reason to believe, however, that your gentlemen would not credit that which they can see any day in Paris, you might have cited a story of rather recent date. That Oracle, which Celius Rhodoginius says he himself witnessed delivered towards the end of the last century by that extraordinary woman who spoke and predicted the future by means of the same organ as did the Eurycles of Plutarch.”

“ I should not have cared to cite Rhodoginius,” I answered, “ it would have seemed pedantic to do so, moreover they would certainly have told me that the woman was beyond question a demoniac.”

“ They would have said that very monachally,” he replied.

“ Sir,” I ventured to say, “ notwithstanding the Cabalistic aversion to monks which I perceive you to entertain, I cannot help siding with them on this occasion. I believe that there would not be so much harm in absolutely denying that Oracles ever existed as there is in saying it was not the Devil who spoke through them because, in short, the Fathers and the theologians——”

“ Because, in short,” he interrupted, “ do not the theologians agree that the learned Sambethe, the most ancient of the Sibyls, was the daughter of Noah?”

“ Eh! what has that to do with it?” I retorted.

“ Does not Plutarch say,” he rejoined, “ that the most ancient of the Sibyls was the first to deliver Oracles at Delphi? Therefore the Spirit which Sambethe harboured in her breast was not a devil nor was her Apollo a false god, for idolatry did not begin until long after the division of languages, and it would be far from the truth to attribute to

“ the Father of Lies the sacred books of the Sibyls, and all the proofs of the true religion which the Fathers have drawn from them. And then, too, my Son,” he laughingly continued, “it is not for you to annul the marriage of David and the Sibyl which was made by a celebrated cardinal, nor to accuse that learned personage of having placed side by side a great prophet and a wretched demoniac. Since either David strengthens the testimony of the Sibyl or the Sibyl weakens the authority of David.”

“ Sir,” I exclaimed, “ I entreat you again to become serious.”

“ Willingly,” said he, “ provided you will not accuse me of being too much so. Is it your opinion that the Devil is sometimes divided against himself and against his own interests?”

“ Why not?” said I.

“ Why not!” said he, “ Because that which Tertullian has so felicitously and so grandly termed, ‘the Reason of God’ does not find it fitting. Satan is never divided against himself. It therefore follows either that the Devil has never spoken through the Oracles, or that he has never spoken through them against his own interests; and therefore if the Oracles have spoken against the interests of the Devil, it was not the Devil who was speaking through the Oracles.”

“ But,” said I, “ has not God been able to compel the Devil to bear witness to the truth and to speak against himself?”

“ But,” he answered, “ What if God has not compelled him to do so?”

“ Ah, in that case,” I replied, “ you are more in the right than the monks.”

“ Let us look into this matter then,” he continued, “ and that I may proceed invincibly and in good faith, I do not care to introduce the evidence concerning Oracles cited by the Fathers of the Church, although I am aware of the veneration you entertain for those great men. Their reli-

“gion and the interest they took in the matter might have prejudiced them, and seeing Truth to be rather poor and naked in their own time, their love of her might have caused them to borrow from Falsehood’s self some robe and ornament for Truth’s adornment. They were men and consequently capable of bearing false witness, according to the maxim of the Poet of the Synagogue. I shall therefore take a man who cannot be suspected of such a motive, a Pagan, and a Pagan of a very different kind to Lucretius, or Lucian, or the Epicureans. A Pagan thoroughly imbued with the belief that there are gods and devils without number, immeasurably superstitious, a mighty magician, or supposed so, and consequently a great partisan of devils, namely Porphyry. Here are word for word some Oracles which he reports.”

ORACLE.

Above the Celestial Fire there is an Incorruptible Flame, ever sparkling, Source of Life, Fountain of all Beings, and Principle of all Things. This Flame produces all, and nothing perishes save that which it consumes. It reveals itself by virtue of itself. This Fire cannot be contained in any place; it is without form and without substance, it girdles the Heavens and from it there proceeds a tiny spark which makes the whole fire of the Sun, Moon and Stars. This is what I know of God. Seek not to know more, for this passes thy comprehension howsoever wise thou mayest be. Nevertheless, know that the unjust and wicked man cannot hide himself from God, nor can craft nor excuse disguise aught from His piercing eyes. All is full of God, God is everywhere.

“You will admit, my Son, that this Oracle is not too greatly influenced by his devil.”

“At least,” I answered “the Devil in this instance rather departs from his character.”

“ Here is another,” said he, “ that preaches still better.”

ORACLE.

There is in God an immense depth of Flame. The heart must not, however, fear to touch this adorable Fire nor to be touched by it. It will in no wise be consumed by this gentle Flame, whose tranquil and peaceful warmth causes the union, harmony and duration of the world. Nothing exists save by this Fire, which is God himself. It is uncreate, it is without mother, it is omniscient and unteachable: it is unchanging in purposes, and its Name is Ineffable. This is God; as for us who are His messengers, we are but a little part of God.

“ Well! What say you to that?”

“ I should say of both,” I replied, “ that God can force the Father of Lies to bear witness to the truth.”

“ Here is another,” rejoined the Comte, “ which will remove that scruple.”

ORACLE.

Alas Tripods! Weep and make funeral oration for your Apollo. He is mortal, he is about to die, he expires; because the Light of the Celestial Flame extinguishes him.

“ You see, my child, that whoever this may be who speaks through these Oracles, and who so admirably explains to the Pagans the Essence, Unity, Immensity and Eternity of God, he owns that he is mortal and but a spark of God. Therefore it cannot be the Devil who is speaking, since he is immortal, and God would not compel him to say that he is not. It is therefore proven that Satan is not divided against himself. Is it a way to make himself worshipped to say that there is but one God? The Oracle says that he is mortal, since when is the Devil become so humble as to deprive himself of even his natural qualities? Therefore you see, my Son, that if the principle of Him who is called *par*

“excellence the God of the Sciences exists, it cannot have been the Devil who spoke through the Oracles.”

“But if it was not the Devil,” said I, “either lying from gaiety of heart when he speaks of himself as mortal, or telling the truth under compulsion when he speaks of God, then to what will your Cabala ascribe all the Oracles which you maintain to have been actually delivered? Is it to an exhalation of the earth, as Aristotle, Cicero and Plutarch say?”

“Ah! not to that my child,” said the Comte. “Thanks to the Sacred Cabala, my imagination has not led me astray to that extent.”

“What do you mean?” I inquired, “Do you consider that opinion so exceedingly visionary? Nevertheless its partisans are men of good sense.”

“Not in this instance,” he replied, “and it is impossible to attribute to an exhalation all that happened in the Oracles. For example, that man in Tacitus, who appeared in a dream to the priests of a temple of Hercules in Armenia, and commanded them to make ready for him hunters equipped for the chase. Up to this point exhalation might account for it: but when those horses returned in the evening jaded, and their quivers emptied of shafts; and when the next day exactly the same number of dead beasts were found as there had been arrows in the quivers, you will perceive that exhalation could not have produced this effect, much less the Devil. For to believe that the Devil has been permitted to divert himself by chasing the hind and hare, is to have an irrational and uncabalistic idea of the misery of the enemy “of God.”

“Then,” said I, “to what cause does the Sacred Cabala ascribe all this?”

“Wait,” he answered “before I reveal this mystery to you I must overcome any prejudice you might have because of

“ this hypothetical exhalation. For, if I remember aright, you
“ cited Aristotle, Plutarch and Cicero with emphasis. You
“ might likewise have cited Iamblichus, who very great genius
“ though he was, laboured for a time under this delusion, but
“ speedily relinquished it when he had examined the matter
“ at close range in the Book of the Mysteries.

“ Peter of Aponus, Pomponatius, Levinus, Sirenus and
“ Lucilius Vanina were also overjoyed to find this subterfuge
“ in some of the ancient writers. All these pseudo-geniuces
“ who, when they treat of divine things, say rather what
“ pleases them than what they know to be true, are unwilling
“ to admit that there is anything superhuman in the Oracles,
“ lest they should acknowledge the existence of something
“ superior to man. They fear lest men should make of the
“ Oracles a ladder wherewith to mount to God, Whom they
“ dread to acknowledge as manifesting through gradations of
“ His spiritual creatures, and they prefer to manufacture a
“ ladder to descend into nothingness. Instead of mounting
“ towards heaven they delve into the earth, and instead of
“ seeking in Beings superior to man the cause of those
“ transports which lift him above himself and restore to him a
“ kind of divinity they weakly ascribe to impotent exhalations
“ this power to penetrate the future, discover hidden things,
“ and attain to the supreme secrets of the Divine Essence.

“ Such is the misery of man when possessed by the spirit of
“ contradiction and the disposition to think differently to
“ others. Instead of achieving his ends he becomes involved
“ and fettered. These intellectual libertines do not wish to
“ make man subject to substances less material than himself,
“ and yet they make him subject to an exhalation and
“ disregarding the absence of any connection whatever be-
“ tween this chimerical vapour and the soul of man, between
“ this emanation and future events, between this frivolous
“ cause and these miraculous effects, the mere singularity of

“ their theories is to them sufficient evidence of their reason-
 “ ableness. They are content to deny the existence of spirits
 “ and to assume the role of free thinkers.”

“ Then, Sir, is singularity exceeding displeasing to you?” I asked.

“ Ah! my Son,” said he, “ ’tis the bane of common-sense
 “ and the stumbling block of the greatest minds. Aristotle,
 “ great logician though he was, could not avoid the snare into
 “ which the passion for singularity leads those whom it
 “ unbalances, as violently as it did him. He could not, I say,
 “ avoid becoming entangled and contradicting himself. In his
 “ book on *The Generation of Animals*, and in his *Ethics*, he
 “ says that the spirit and understanding of man come to him
 “ from without, and cannot be transmitted from father to
 “ son. And from the spirituality of the operations of man’s
 “ soul he concludes it to be of a different nature to that
 “ composite material which it animates, the grossness of
 “ which only serves to becloud speculation and is far from
 “ contributing to its production. Blind Aristotle! Since you
 “ maintain that the matter of which we are composed cannot
 “ be the source of our spiritual thoughts, how can you expect
 “ a weak exhalation to be the source of sublime thought and
 “ of those soaring flights of spirit achieved by those who gave
 “ forth the Pythian Oracles? See, my child, how forcibly this
 “ genius contradicts himself, and how his craving for
 “ singularity leads him astray.”

“ You reason very logically, Sir,” said I, enchanted to perceive that he was talking excellent sense, and hoping that his madness would not prove incurable, “ God willing—”

“ Plutarch, so sound in other respects,” he said, interrupting me, “ moves me to pity in his dialogue concerning
 “ ‘ Cessation of the Oracles.’ Convincing objections are
 “ raised which he in no wise refutes. Why does he not answer
 “ what is said to him, namely, that if it is the exhalation

“ which causes these transports, all those who approach the
 “ prophetic Tripod would be seized with enthusiasm and not
 “ merely a single maiden who moreover must be virgin. But
 “ how can this vapour articulate cries through the abdomen?
 “ Besides this exhalation is a natural cause which must neces-
 “ sarily produce its effect regularly and at all times. Why is this
 “ maiden agitated only when consulted? And, what is more
 “ important, why has the earth ceased to breathe forth these
 “ divine vapours? Is it less earth now than then? Is it subject
 “ to other influences? Has it other seas and other rivers?
 “ Who then has stopped earth’s pores or changed its nature?

“ I wonder that Pomponarius, Lucilius and the other
 “ Libertines should borrow this idea from Plutarch and cast
 “ aside his explanation. He spoke more judiciously than
 “ Cicero and Aristotle, for he was a man of great good sense
 “ and, not knowing what conclusion to draw from all these
 “ Oracles, after tedious irresolution, he decided that this
 “ exhalation, which he believed issued from the earth, was a
 “ most divine spirit. Thus he ascribed to divinity the extra-
 “ ordinary agitations and illuminations of the Priestesses of
 “ Apollo. ‘ *This divinatory vapour is a breath and a most divine*
 “ ‘ *and most holy spirit,*’ said he.

“ Pomponatius, Lucilius and modern atheists do not adapt
 “ themselves readily to fashions of speech which imply
 “ divinity. ‘These exhalations,’ say they, ‘were of the nature
 “ ‘ of those vapours which infect splenetics who speak lan-
 “ ‘ guages they do not understand.’ Fernelius refutes these
 “ impieties rather well, by proving that bile which is a pec-
 “ cant humour cannot cause that diversity of tongues which
 “ is one of the most marvellous effects under consideration
 “ and an artificial expression of thought. Nevertheless, he
 “ decided erroneously in subscribing to Psellus, and to all
 “ those who have not penetrated far enough into our Holy
 “ Philosophy for, like them, not knowing where to locate

“the causes of these surprising effects, he imitated the women and monks and attributed them to the Devil.”

“Then to whom should one attribute them?” said I, “I have long awaited this Cabalistic secret.”

“Plutarch has very well indicated it,” he said, “and he would have been wise had he let matters rest there. Since this irregular method of expressing one’s opinion by means of an unseemly organ was neither solemn enough nor sufficiently worthy of the majesty of the gods, says that Pagan, and since the sayings of the Oracles surpassed the powers of the soul of man, they have rendered great service to Philosophy, for they have established the existence of mortal beings between the gods and man to whom one can ascribe all that surpasses human weakness yet falls short of divine greatness.

“This is the opinion held in every ancient philosophy. The Platonists and the Pythagoreans took it from the Egyptians, and the latter from Joseph the Saviour, and from the Hebrews who dwelt in Egypt before the crossing of the Red Sea. The Hebrews used to call these beings who are between the Angels and man *Sadaim*,¹ and the Greeks, transposing the letters and adding but one syllable, called them *Daimonas*. Among the ancient Philosophers these demons were held to be an Aerial Race, ruling over the Elements, mortal, engendering, and unknown in this century to those who rarely seek Truth in her ancient dwelling place, which is to say, in the Cabala and in the theology of the Hebrews, who possessed the special art of holding communion with that Aerial People and of conversing with all these Inhabitants of the Air.”

“Now, Sir, I think you have returned again to your Sylphs.”

“Yes, my Son,” he went on, “the Teraphim of the Jews was but the ceremony which had to be observed for that

¹ [שַׂדַּיִם, a class of storm-demons in Jewish lore.]

“ communion: and that Jew Micah, who complains in the “ Book of Judges¹ that his gods have been taken from him, “ only laments the loss of the little image through which the “ Sylphs used to converse with him. The gods which Rachel “ stole from her father² were also Teraphim. Neither Micah “ nor Laban are reprov'd for idolatry, and Jacob would have “ taken care not to live for fourteen years with an idolater, “ nor to marry his daughter. It was only a commerce with “ Sylphs; and tradition tells us that the Synagogue considered “ such commerce permissible, and that the image belonging “ to David’s wife was but the Teraphim by virtue of which “ she conversed with the Elementary Peoples: for you can “ well imagine that the Prophet after God’s own heart would “ not have tolerat'd idolatry in his household.

“ These Elementary Nations, so long as God neglected the “ salvation of the world in punishment for the first sin, used “ to take pleasure in explaining to men through the Oracles “ what they knew of God, in teaching them how to live “ morally, and in giving them most wise and most profitable “ counsels, such as are seen in great number in Plutarch and “ in all historians. As soon as God took pity on mankind and “ was willing Himself to become their Teacher, these little “ Masters withdrew. Hence the silence of the Oracles.”

“ Then the upshot of your entire discourse, Sir.” I remarked, “ is that there certainly were Oracles, and that the “ Sylphs deliver'd them, and even to-day deliver them in “ goblets or in mirrors.”

“ The Sylphs or Salamanders, the Gnomes or Undines,” corrected the Comte.

“ If that be so,” I replied, “ all your Elementary Peoples are “ very dishonest folk.”

“ Why do you say that?” said he.

“ Why? Could anything be more knavish,” I pursued,

¹ [xviii. 22.]

² [Gen. xxxi. 19.]

“than all these responses with double meanings which they always give?”

“Always?” he replied. “Ah! not always. Did the Sylphid speak very obscurely who appeared to that Roman in Asia and predicted to him that he would one day return to Rome with the dignity of Pro-consul? And does not Tacitus say that the event occurred exactly as predicted? That inscription and those statues famous in the history of Spain which warned unfortunate King Rodriguez that his indiscretion and incontinence would be punished by men dressed and armed exactly as they were, and that those black men would take possession of Spain and rule there for many a year. Could anything have been more explicit, and was not the prophecy verified by the event in that self-same year? For did not the Moors come to dethrone that effeminate king? You know the story, and you must admit that the Devil, who since the reign of the Messiah does not dispose of empires, could not have been the author of this Oracle; and that it was undoubtedly some great Cabalist who had it from one of the most learned Salamanders. Since the Salamanders love chastity exceedingly, they willingly make known to us the misfortunes which must befall mankind for lack of that virtue.”

“But, Sir,” said I to him, “do you consider that heteroclitic organ which they made use of for the preaching of their ethics very chaste and altogether in keeping with Cabalistic modesty?”

“Ah!” said the Comte, smiling, “Your imagination is shocked, and you fail to perceive the physical reason which causes the flaming Salamander naturally to delight in the most igneous places and to be attracted by—”

“I understand, I understand,” I interrupted, “Do not take the trouble to explain further.”

“As for the obscurity of some Oracles which you dub

“ knavery,” he went on seriously, “are not shadows the usual
“ cloak of Truth? Is not God pleased to hide Himself in their
“ sombre veil? And is not Holy Writ, that perpetual Oracle
“ which He has left to His children, enveloped in an adorable
“ obscurity which confounds and bewilders the proud even as
“ its Light guides the humble?

“If this be your only difficulty, my Son, I advise you not to
“ postpone entering into communion with the Elementary
“ Peoples. You will find them very sincere folk, learned,
“ benevolent and God-fearing. I am of opinion that you
“ should begin with the Salamanders, for you have Mars in
“ mid-heaven in your horoscope, which signifies that there is
“ a great deal of fire in all your actions. And as for marriage,
“ I rather think that you should choose a Sylphid. You would
“ be happier with her than with any of the others, for you
“ have Jupiter in the ascendant with Venus in sextile. Now
“ Jupiter presides over the Air and the Peoples of the Air.
“ You must, however, consult your own heart in this matter
“ for, as you will one day see, a Sage governs himself by the
“ interior stars, and the stars of the exterior heaven but serve
“ to give him a more certain knowledge of the aspects of the
“ stars of that interior heaven which is in every creature.
“ Thus it rests with you to tell me what your inclination is,
“ that we may proceed to your alliance with those Elementary
“ Peoples which are most pleasing to you.”

“Sir,” I replied, “in my opinion this affair demands a little
“ consultation.”

“ I esteem you for that answer,” said he, laying his hand
on my shoulder. “ Consult maturely as to this affair, and
“ above all, with him who is called in an eminent degree the
“ Angel of the Grand Council. Go, and devote yourself to
“ prayer, and I shall be at your house at two o’clock to-
“ morrow afternoon.”

We came back to Paris, and on the way I led him once

more to discourse against atheists and libertines. I have never heard arguments so well supported by reason, nor such sublime and subtle ideas advanced for the existence of God, and against the blindness of those who go through life without wholly surrendering themselves to a serious and continual worship of Him to whom we owe the gift and preservation of our being. I was surprised at the character of this man, and I could not comprehend how it was possible for him to be at once so strong, and so weak, so admirable, yet so ridiculous.

FOURTH DISCOURSE

*Concerning the Marriages of the Children of Men with
the Beings of the Elements.*



AWAITED the Comte de Gabalis at my house, as we had arranged at parting. He came at the appointed hour and accosting me with a smiling air said, “Ah well, my Son, which of the Invisible Peoples does God give you most inclination for, and would you prefer an alliance with Salamanders, Gnomes, Nymphs, or Sylphids?”

“I have not yet quite made up my mind to this marriage, Sir,” I replied.

“What deters you?” he inquired.

“To be frank with you, Sir,” said I, “I cannot conquer my imagination, which always represents these pretended hosts of the Elements as so many imps of Satan.”

“Dissipate, O Lord!” cried he, “O God of Light! Dissipate the darkness in which ignorance and a perverse education have enveloped the mind of this chosen one, whom Thou hast made me know that Thou dost destine for such great things! And you, my Son, close not the door against Truth which is willing to enter in unto you. Be non-resistant. Nay, you need not be so, for it is most injurious to Truth to prepare the way for her. She knows how to break through gates of iron and how to enter where she pleases despite all resistance of falsehood. What have you to oppose to her? Would you say that God has not power to create in the Elements real beings such as I have described?”

“I have not looked into the matter,” said I, “to ascertain whether the thing itself be impossible, whether a single

“Element can furnish blood, flesh and bones; whether temperament can exist without admixture, and action without opposing force; but assuming that God has been able thus to create, what sound proof is there that He has done so?”

“Let me convince you of it at once, without further temporising. I am going to summon the Sylphs of Cardan; and you shall hear from their own lips what they are, and what I have taught you about them.”

“By no means, Sir,” I exclaimed hastily. “Postpone such proof, I beg of you, until I am persuaded that these folk are not the enemies of God; for until then I would rather die than wrong my conscience by——”

“Behold the ignorance and false piety of these unhappy times,” interrupted the Comte wrathfully, “Why do they not expunge the greatest of the Anchorites from the Calendar of the Saints? Why do they not burn his statues? It is a thousand pities people do not insult his venerable ashes and cast them to the winds, as they would those of the poor wretches who are accused of having had dealings with devils! Did he bethink himself to exorcise the Sylphs? And did he not treat them as men? What have you to say to that! scrupulous Sir, you and all your miserable doctors? And is it your opinion that the Sylph who discoursed concerning his nature to this Patriarch was an imp of Satan? Did this incomparable man confer with a hobgoblin concerning the Gospel? And will you accuse him of having profaned the adorable Mysteries by conversing concerning them with a phantom enemy of God? In that case Athanasius and Jerome are most unworthy of the great name accorded them by your learned men, for they have written eloquent eulogies of a man who treated devils thus humanely.

“If they had taken this Sylph for a devil they would either have concealed the adventure or have altered the sense of the sermon, or of that very pathetic apostrophe, which the

“Anchorite—more zealous and more credulous than you—
“made to the city of Alexandria. Now if they thought him a
“being who had, as he affirmed, a share in the redemption as
“well as we ourselves, and if they considered this apparition
“an extraordinary favour bestowed by God upon the Saint
“whose life they wrote, are you rational in thinking yourself
“better informed than Athanasius and Jerome, and a greater
“Saint than the divine Antony? What would you have said
“to that admirable man had you been one of the ten thousand
“and hermits to whom he recounted the conversation he had
“just been having with the Sylph? Wiser and more enlightened
“than all those terrestrial Angels, you would doubtless
“have demonstrated to the Holy Abbot that his entire
“adventure was but pure illusion, and you would have dissuaded
“his disciple Athanasius from making known to all
“the world a story so little in keeping with religion, philosophy,
“and common sense. Is not this true?”

“It is true,” said I, “that I should have thought best either
“to say nothing whatever about it or to tell more.”

“Athanasius and Jerome,” replied he, “were careful not to
“tell more, for that was all they knew, and even though they
“had known all, which is impossible if one is not of our
“number, they would not rashly have divulged the secrets of
“the Sages.”

“But why not? Did not the Sylph propose to St. Antony
“what you are to-day proposing to me?”

“What?” said the Comte laughing, “Marriage? Ah!
“would that have been quite fitting?”

“Probably the good man would not have accepted the
“offer,” I ventured.

“No, certainly not,” said the Comte, “for it would have
“been tempting God to marry at that age and to ask Him for
“children.”

“What!” I exclaimed. “Do people marry Sylphs for the

“ purpose of having children?”

“ Indeed!” said he, “ Is it ever permissible to marry for any other purpose?”

“ I did not imagine,” said I, “ that they aspired to the planting of family trees. I had supposed their sole object to be the immortalisation of the Sylphids.”

“ Ah! you are mistaken,” quoth he. “ The charity of the Philosophers causes them to have as their ultimate aim the immortality of the Sylphids, but Nature makes them desire to see them fruitful. Whenever you wish you shall see these philosophic families in the Air. Happy world, if there had been no other families and if there had been no children of sin!”

“ What do you mean by children of sin?” I inquired.

“ They are, my Son” he explained, “ all children who are born in the ordinary way, children conceived by the will of the flesh and not by the will of God, children of wrath and malediction; in a word, children of man and woman. You are longing to interrupt me. I see exactly what you would like to say. Yes, my child, know that it was never the will of the Lord that men and women should have children in the way in which they do. The design of the Most Wise Craftsman was far nobler. He would have had the world peopled in a different manner than we see it. If wretched Adam had not grossly disobeyed God’s command not to touch Eve, and had he contented himself with all the other fruits in the garden of pleasure, with the beauties of the Nymphs and Sylphids, the world would not have had the shame of seeing itself filled with men so imperfect that they seem monsters when compared with the children of the Philosophers.”

“ Apparently, Sir,” said I, “ you believe Adam’s crime to have been other than that of eating the apple.”

“ Why, my Son,” he replied, “ are you one of those who

“are so simple-minded as to take the story of the apple
“literally? Ah! know that the Holy Language makes use of
“these innocent metaphors to prevent us from having
“improper ideas of an action which has caused all the
“misfortunes of the human race. Thus when Solomon said,
“‘I will go up unto the palm tree and gather the fruit there-
“of,’¹ he had another appetite than that for eating dates.
“This language consecrated by the angels, and in which they
“chant hymns to the living God, has no terms to express
“what it implies figuratively by the words apple and date.
“But the Sage easily deciphers these chaste figures of speech.
“When he sees that the taste and mouth of Eve were not
“punished, and that she was delivered with pain, he knows
“that it was not the tasting which was criminal. And dis-
“covering what the first sin was, by reason of the care which
“the first sinners took to hide certain parts of their bodies
“with leaves, he concludes that God did not will men to
“multiply in this vile way. O Adam! thou shouldst only have
“begotten men like unto thyself, or have engendered none
“save heroes or giants.”

“Eh! What expedient had he,” I asked, “for either of
“these marvellous generations?”

“Obeying God,” he replied, “and touching only the
“Nymphs, Gnomids, Sylphids or Salamanders. Thus there
“would have been none save heroes born, and the Universe
“would have been peopled with marvellous men filled with
“strength and wisdom. God has been pleased to enable us to
“conjecture the difference between that innocent world and
“the guilty one we behold to-day by now and then permit-
“ting us to see children born in the manner He designed.”

“Then, Sir, have these children of the Elements occa-
“sionally been seen? If so, a Master of Arts from the Sor-
“bonne, who was citing St. Augustin, St. Jerome, and

¹ [Song of Sol. vii. 8.]

“Gregory of Nazianzus the other day, was mistaken in believing that no issue can spring from the love of spirits for women, or from the relationship men can have with certain demons he called Hyphialtes.”

“Lactantius has reasoned better,” the Comte replied, “and cautious Thomas Aquinas has learnedly determined not only that these intimacies may be fruitful, but also that the children thus born are of a far nobler and more heroic nature. In fact, when it pleases you, you shall read of the lofty deeds of those mighty and famous men whom Moses says were born in this manner.¹ We have their records in our possession in the Book of the Wars of the Lord, cited in the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers. Meantime just think what the world would be if all its inhabitants were like Zoroaster.”

“What!” said I, “Zoroaster whom people say was the inventor of necromancy?”

“The same of whom the ignorant have written that calumny,” said the Comte. “He had the honour of being the son of the Salamander Oromasis² and of Vesta, Noah’s wife. He lived for twelve hundred years, the sagest monarch in the world, and then was carried away to the Region of the Salamanders by his father Oromasis.”

“I do not doubt that Zoroaster is with the Salamander Oromasis in the Region of Fire,” said I, “but I should not like to put such an affront upon Noah as you have been guilty of.”

“The affront is not so great as you might think,” replied the Comte; “all your patriarchs considered it a great honour to be the reputed fathers of those children whom the Sons of God were pleased to have by their wives, but as yet this is too much for you. Let us return to Oromasis. He was

¹ [Gen. vi. 6.]

² [Probably a corruption of *Ahura Mazda*.]

“ beloved by Vesta, Noah’s wife. This Vesta after her death
“ became the tutelary genius of Rome, and the Sacred Fire,
“ which she desired the virgins to preserve with so much
“ care, was in honour of the Salamander, her lover. Besides
“ Zoroaster, there sprang from their love a daughter of rare
“ beauty and wisdom, the divine Egeria, from whom Numa
“ Pompilius received all his laws. She compelled Numa,
“ whom she loved, to build a temple to Vesta, her mother,
“ where the Sacred Fire should be maintained in honour of
“ her father Oromasis. This is the truth concerning the fable
“ about the Nymph Egeria which Roman poets and historians
“ have related.

“ William Postel, least ignorant of all those who have
“ studied the Cabala in ordinary books, was aware that Vesta
“ was Noah’s wife, but he did not know that Egeria was
“ Vesta’s daughter, and not having read the secret books of
“ the ancient Cabala, a copy of which the Prince de Mirande
“ bought so dearly, he confused things and believed that
“ Egeria was merely the good genius of Noah’s wife.

“ In those books we learn that Egeria was conceived upon
“ the waters when Noah was wandering upon the avenging
“ floods which inundated the Universe. Women were at that
“ time reduced to the small number who were saved in the
“ Cabalistic Ark, built by that second father of mankind.

“ This illustrious man, mourning over the frightful
“ chastisement wherewith the Lord was punishing the crimes
“ caused by Adam’s love for Eve, and seeing that Adam had
“ ruined his posterity by preferring her to the daughters of the
“ Elements and by taking her from that Salamander or Sylph
“ who would have gained her affections—Noah, I say, pro-
“ fited by the fatal example of Adam and was content that his
“ wife Vesta should yield herself to the Salamander Oromasis,
“ Prince of Fiery Beings; and persuaded his three sons like-
“ wise to surrender their three wives to the Princes of the

“ three other Elements. The Universe was, in a short time, re-peopled with heroic men, so learned, so handsome, so admirable, that their posterity dazzled by their virtues has mistaken them for divinities. One of Noah’s children, rebelling against his father’s counsel, could not resist the attractions of his wife any more than Adam could withstand the charms of his Eve. But just as Adam’s sin blackened the souls of all his descendants, so, Ham’s lack of complaisance for the Sylphs branded all his black posterity; whence comes the horrible complexion of the Ethiopians, say our Cabalists, and of all those hideous peoples who have been commanded to dwell in the torrid zone as punishment for the profane ardour of their father.”

“ These are very singular fancies, Sir,” said I, marvelling at the man’s ravings, “ and your Cabala is of wonderful service in illuminating antiquity.”

“ Of wonderful service,” he rejoined gravely, “ and without it Scripture, history, fable and Nature are obscure and unintelligible. You believe, for example, that the injury Ham did his father was what it seems literally to be; as a matter of fact, it was something quite different. Noah went forth from the Ark, and perceiving that his wife Vesta had but grown more beautiful through her love for Oromasis, fell passionately in love with her again. Ham, fearing that his father was about to re-people the earth with progeny as black as his own Ethiopians, seized his opportunity one day when the old man was full of wine, and mercilessly maltreated him. You laugh?”

“ I laugh at Ham’s indiscreet zeal,” said I.

“ Rather,” replied he, “admire the kindness of the Salamander Oromasis, whom jealousy did not prevent from taking pity upon the disgrace of his rival. He taught his son Zoroaster otherwise known as Japhet, the Name of Omnipotent God which expresses His eternal fecundity. Japhet

“pronounced the Redoubtable Name JABAMIAH six times
“alternately with his brother Shem, walking backward to-
“wards the patriarch, and they completely restored the old
“man. This story, misunderstood, caused the Greeks to say
“that the oldest of the Gods was maltreated by one of his
“children;¹ but this is the truth of the matter. Hence you
“can see how much more humane are the ethics of the
“Children of Fire than our own and even more so than those
“of the Peoples of the Air or the Water; for their jealousy is
“cruel, as the divine Paracelsus shows us in an incident he
“recounts, and which was witnessed by the entire town of
“Stauffenberg. A certain Philosopher, with whom a Nymph
“was engaged in an intrigue of immortality, was so disloyal as
“to love a woman. As he sat at dinner with his new
“paramour and some friends, there appeared in the air the
“most beautiful leg in the world. The invisible sweetheart
“greatly desired to show herself to the friends of her faithless
“lover, that they might judge how wrong he was in preferring
“a woman to her. Afterward the indignant Nymph killed
“him on the spot.”

“Ah Sir,” I exclaimed, “this is quite enough to disgust me
“with these tender sweethearts.”

“I confess,” he rejoined, “that their tenderness is apt to
“be somewhat violent. But if exasperated women have been
“known to murder their perjured lovers, we must not wonder
“that these beautiful and faithful mistresses fly into a passion
“when they are betrayed, and all the more so since they only
“require men to abstain from women whose imperfections
“they cannot tolerate, and give us leave to love as many of
“their number as we please. They prefer the interest and
“immortality of their companions to their personal satis-
“faction, and they are very glad to have the Sages give to
“their Republic as many immortal children as possible.”

¹ [A reference to the castration of Ouranos (Heaven) by Kronos.]

“But after all, Sir,” I asked, “how does it happen that there are so few examples of all that you tell me?”

“There are a great number, my child,” he answered, “but they are neither heeded nor credited, in fact, they are not properly interpreted for lack of knowledge of our principles. People attribute to demons all that they should ascribe to the Elementary Peoples. A little Gnome was beloved by the celebrated Magdalen of the Cross, Abbess of a Monastery at Cordova in Spain. Their alliance began when she was twelve years of age; and they continued their relationship for the space of thirty years. An ignorant confessor persuaded Magdalen that her lover was a hobgoblin, and compelled her to ask absolution of Pope Paul III. It could not possibly have been a demon, however, for all Europe knew, and Cassiodorus Renius was kind enough to transmit to posterity, the daily miracles wrought through the intercession of this holy maiden, and which obviously would never have come to pass if her relationship with the Gnome had been as diabolical as the venerable Dictator imagined. This same Doctor, if I mistake not, would impertinently have said that the Sylph who immortalised himself with the youthful Gertrude, nun of the Monastery of Nazareth in the diocese of Cologne, was some devil or other.”

“And so he was, no doubt,” I said.

“Ah, my Son,” pursued the Comte mirthfully, “If that were the case the Devil is not the least unfortunate if he has power to carry on an intrigue with a girl of thirteen, and to write her such *billets doux* as were found in her casket. Rest assured, my child, that the Devil, in the region of death, has sadder employment and that more in keeping with the hatred which the God of Purity bears him; but thus do people wilfully close their eyes to the truth. We find, for instance, in Titus Livy, that Romulus was the son of Mars. The sceptics say that this is a fable, the theo-

“logians that he was the son of an incubus devil, the wags
“that Mademoiselle Sylvia had lost her gloves and sought to
“cover her confusion by saying that a god had stolen them
“from her.

“Now we who are acquainted with Nature, and whom
“God has called out of darkness into His wonderful Light,
“know that this so-called Mars was a Salamander in whose
“sight the young Sylvia found favour, and who made her the
“mother of the great Romulus, that hero who, after having
“founded his superb city, was carried away by his father in a
“fiery chariot as Zoroaster was by Oromasis. Another Sala-
“mander was the father of Servius Tullius. Titus Livy
“deceived by the resemblance, says that he was the God of
“Fire. And the ignorant have passed the same judgment
“upon him as upon the father of Romulus. The renowned
“Hercules and the invincible Alexander were sons of the
“greatest of the Sylphs. Not knowing this, the historians
“said that Jupiter was their father. They spoke the truth for,
“as you have learned, these Sylphs, Nymphs and Sala-
“manders set themselves up for divinities. The historians,
“believing them to be so, called all those who were born of
“them ‘Children of the Gods.’

“Such was the divine Plato, the most divine Apollonius of
“Tyana, Hercules, Achilles, Sarpedon, the pious Æneas, and
“the celebrated Melchizedek. For do you know who the
“father of Melchizedek was?”

“No, indeed,” said I, “St. Paul himself did not know.”

“Rather, say that he did not tell,” returned the Comte,
“and that he was not permitted to reveal the Cabalistic
“Mysteries. He well knew that Melchizedek’s father was a
“Sylph, and that the King of Salem was conceived in the
“Ark by the wife of Shem. That Pontiff’s method of sacri-
“ficing was the same as that which his cousin Egeria taught
“King Numa, as well as the worship of a Supreme Deity

“without image or statue, for which reason the Romans, becoming idolaters at a later period, burned the Holy Books of Numa which Egeria had dictated. The first God of the Romans was the true God, their sacrifice a true sacrifice. They offered up bread and wine to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe: but all that became perverted in course of time. In acknowledgment of this first worship, however, God gave the Empire of the World to this city which had owned His supremacy. The same sacrifice which Melchizedek——”

“Sir,” I interposed, “Pray let us drop Melchizedek, the Sylph that begat him, his cousin Egeria, and the sacrifice of bread and wine. These proofs seem to be rather remote. I should be greatly obliged if you would tell me some more recent news. For when someone asked a certain Doctor what had become of the companions of that species of Satyr which appeared to St. Antony and which you call a Sylph, I heard him say that all these folk are dead nowadays. So it may be that the Elementary Peoples have perished since you own they are mortal and we hear no tidings of them.”

“I pray God,” exclaimed the Comte with emotion, “I pray God, who is ignorant of nothing, to be pleased to ignore that ignoramus who decides so presumptuously that of which he is ignorant. May God confound him and all his tribe! Where has he learned that the Elements are abandoned and that all those wonderful Peoples are annihilated? If he would take the trouble to read history a little, and not ascribe to the Devil, as the old wives do, everything which goes beyond the bounds of the chimerical theory which has been constructed about Nature, he would find in all ages and in all places proofs of what I have told you.

“What would your Doctor say to this authentic account of a recent occurrence in Spain? A beautiful Sylphid was beloved by a Spaniard, lived with him for three years,

“ presented him with three fine children and then died. Shall
“ one say that she was a devil? A clever answer that!
“ According to what Natural Philosophy can the Devil orga-
“ nise for himself a woman’s body, conceive, bear children
“ and suckle them? What proof is there in Scripture of the
“ extravagant power which your theologians are forced in this
“ instance to accord the Devil? And with what probable
“ reason can their feeble Natural Philosophy supply them?
“ The Jesuit Delrio in good faith naïvely recounts several of
“ these adventures, and without taking the trouble to give
“ physical explanations, extricates himself by saying that
“ those Sylphids were demons. How true it is that your
“ greatest doctors very often know no more than silly women!

“ How true it is that God loves to withdraw into His
“ cloud-enveloped throne, and deepening the darkness which
“ encompasses His Most Awful Majesty, He dwells in an
“ inaccessible Light, and reveals His Truths only to the
“ humble in heart. Learn to be humble, my Son, if you would
“ penetrate that sacred night which environs Truth. Learn
“ from the Sages to concede the devils no power in Nature
“ since the fatal stone has shut them up in the depths of the
“ abyss. Learn of the Philosophers to seek always for natural
“ causes in an extraordinary events; and when natural causes
“ are lacking have recourse to God and to His holy Angels,
“ and never to evil spirits who can no longer do aught but
“ suffer, else you would often be guilty of unintentional
“ blasphemy and would ascribe to the Devil the honour of
“ the most wonderful works of Nature.

“ If you should be told, for example, that the divine
“ Apollonius of Tyana was immaculately conceived, and that
“ one of the noblest Salamanders descended to irnmortalise
“ himself with his mother, you would call that Salamander a
“ demon and you would give the Devil the glory of fathering
“ one of the greatest men who ever sprang from our

“Philosophic marriages.”

“But, Sir,” I remarked, “this same Apollonius is reputed amongst us to be a great sorcerer, and they have nothing better to say of him.”

“Behold,” exclaimed the Comte, “one of the most wonderful effects of ignorance and bad education! Because one hears one’s nurse tell stories about sorcerers, every extraordinary occurrence can have only the Devil for author. The greatest doctors may strive in vain, they are not believed unless they echo the nurses. Apollonius was not born of man; he understood the language of birds; he was seen on the same day in different parts of the world. He vanished in the presence of the Emperor Domitian who wished to do him harm; he raised a girl from the dead by means of Onomancy. He announced at Ephesus, in an assembly gathered from all parts of Asia, that at that very hour they were killing the tyrant at Rome. A judgment of this man is the point at issue. The nurses say that he was a sorcerer. St. Jerome and St. Justin Martyr say that he was merely a Philosopher. Jerome, Justin and our Cabalists are to be adjudged visionaries, and silly women are to carry the day. Ah! Let the ignorant perish in their ignorance, but do you, my child, save yourself from shipwreck.

“When you read that the celebrated Merlin was immaculately conceived by a nun, daughter of a king of Great Britain, and that he foretold the future more clearly than Tyresias, do not say with the masses that he was the son of an incubus devil, because there never have been any; nor that he prophesied through the assistance of devils, since according to the Holy Cabala a devil is the most ignorant of all beings: Rather say with the Sages that the English Princess was consoled in her retirement by a Sylph who took pity on her, that he diverted her with his attentions, that he knew how to please her, and that Merlin, their son, was

“brought up by the Sylph in all knowledge, and learned from him to perform the many wonders which English history relates of him.

“No longer cast aspersion upon the Comtes de Cleves by saying that the Devil is their father, and have a better opinion of the Sylph who, so the story goes, came to Cleves in a miraculous boat drawn by a swan harnessed with a silver chain. After having several children by the heiress of Cleves, this Sylph re-embarked on his aerial boat one day at high noon, in full view of everyone. What has he done to your doctors that constrains them to pronounce him a devil?

“Have you so little regard for the honour of the House of Lusignan as to give your Comtes de Poitiers a diabolical genealogy? What will you say of their celebrated mother?”

“I verily believe, Sir,” I declared, “that you are about to tell me the fairy tale of Melusina.”

“Ah!” he replied, “If you deny the story of Melusina I am inclined to think you prejudiced. But in order to deny it you must burn the books of the great Paracelsus who affirms in five or six different places that nothing is more certain than the fact that this same Melusina was a Nymph. And you must give the lie to your historians who say that since her death or, to speak more accurately, since she disappeared from the sight of her husband, whenever her descendants are threatened with misfortune, or a King of France is to die in some extraordinary way, she never fails to appear in mourning upon the great tower of the Chateau of Lusignan which she had built. If you persist in maintaining that she was an evil spirit, you will pick a quarrel with all those who are descended from this Nymph, or who are related to her house.”

“Do you think, Sir,” said I, “that these noblemen prefer to trace their origin to the Sylphs?”

“They would undoubtedly prefer to do so,” he rejoined, “if they knew that which I am now teaching you, and they would consider these extraordinary births a great honour. If they had any Cabalistic Light they would know that such births are more conformable with the method whereby God, in the beginning, intended mankind to multiply. Children born in this way are happier, more valiant, wiser, more renowned and more blest of God. Is it not more glorious for these illustrious men to be descended from beings so perfect, wise and powerful than from some foul hobgoblin or infamous Asmodeus?”

“Sir,” said I, “our theologians are far from saying that the Devil is the father of all those men who are born without one’s knowing who is responsible for them. They recognise the fact that the Devil is a spirit and therefore cannot engender.”

“Gregory of Nice,” replied the Comte, “does not say that, for he holds that demons multiply among themselves as men do.”

“We are not of his opinion,” I answered, “but it happens, our doctors say, that——”

“Ah!” the Comte interrupted, “do not tell me what they say or you will be talking very obscene and indecent foolishness as they do. What abominable evasion they have been guilty of! The way in which they have all, with one accord, embraced this revolting idea is amazing. And what pleasure they have taken in posting hobgoblins in ambush to take advantage of the unoccupied lower nature of the recluse, and so hasten into the world those miraculous men whose illustrious memory they blacken by so base an origin. Do they call this philosophising? Is it worthy of God to say that He has such complaisance for the Devil as to countenance these abominations, granting them the grace of fecundity which He has denied to great Saints, and reward-

“ing such obscenity by creating for these embryos of iniquity
“souls more heroic than for those formed in the chastity of
“legitimate marriage?”

“If I dared to break in upon your declamation, Sir,” said I, “I would own, in order to pacify you, that it were greatly to
“be desired that our doctors had hit upon some solution less
“offensive to such pure ears as yours. Indeed, they have
“been obliged altogether to deny the facts upon which the
“question is founded.”

“A rare expedient!” he rejoined. “How is it possible to
“deny manifest truths? Put yourself in the place of an
“ermine-furred theologian and suppose the blessed Dan-
“huzerus comes to you as the Oracle of his religion——”

At this point a lackey came to say that a certain young nobleman had come to visit me.

“I do not care to have him see me,” remarked the Comte.

“I ask your pardon, Sir,” said I, “but as you can readily
“judge from this nobleman’s name, I cannot say that I am
“not at home to anyone; therefore may I trouble you to go
“into this closet?”

“It is not worth while,” said he, “I am about to make
“myself invisible.”

“Ah! Sir,” I exclaimed. “A truce to deviltry, I beg of you,
“I am not prepared to jest about it.”

“What ignorance,” said the Comte, smiling and shrugging his shoulders, “not to know that to become invisible one has
“only to place before oneself the opposite of the light!”

He went into my closet and the young nobleman entered at almost the same moment. I now ask his pardon for not speaking to him of my adventure.

FIFTH DISCOURSE

Continuation of this matter.



WHEN the illustrious personage had taken his departure, on my return from accompanying him to the door, I found the Comte de Gabalis in my study. “It is a great pity,” said he, “that the nobleman who has just left you is one day to become one of the seventy-two Princes of the Sanhedrim of the New Law, else he would be a great subject for our Holy Cabala. His mind is profound, pure, broad, lofty and fearless. Here is the geomantic figure which I cast for him while you were talking together. I have never seen happier aspects nor those denoting a finer soul. Just look at this ‘Mother’—what magnanimity it gives him; and this ‘Daughter’ will procure him the purple. Bad luck to her and to destiny since they deprive Philosophy of a subject who might perhaps surpass you. But where were we when he came in?”

“You were speaking, Sir,” said I, “of a Saint whom I have never seen in the Roman Calendar. I think you called him Danhuzerus.”

“Ah! I remember,” he replied, “I was bidding you put yourself in the place of one of your doctors and suppose that the Blessed Danhuzerus had just laid bare to you his conscience and said, ‘Sir, the fame of your learning has brought me from beyond the mountains. I have a slight scruple which is troubling me. A Nymph holds her court in a mountain in Italy, and a thousand Nymphs almost as beautiful as their Queen attend upon her. The handsomest and most learned and most worthy men resort

“ ‘ thither from all the habitable globe. They love these
 “ ‘ Nymphs and are beloved by them; they lead the most
 “ ‘ delightful life in the world; the Nymphs whom they love
 “ ‘ bear them very fine children; they worship the living God,
 “ ‘ injure no one and hope for immortality. I was one day
 “ ‘ walking upon this mountain and found favour in the eyes
 “ ‘ of “ he Queen of the Nymphs, who appeared to me and
 “ ‘ showed me her charming court. The Sages perceiving that
 “ ‘ she loved me, revered me almost as their Prince. They
 “ ‘ exhorted me to yield to the Nymph’s sighs and beauty.
 “ ‘ She told me of her martyrdom, and left unsaid nothing
 “ ‘ which might touch my heart, and in short convinced me
 “ ‘ that she would die if I did not love her, and that if I loved
 “ ‘ her she would be indebted to me for her immortality. The
 “ ‘ arguments of those learned men prevailed over my
 “ ‘ principles, even as the charms of the Nymph won my
 “ ‘ heart. I love her and she has borne me children of great
 “ ‘ promise, but in the midst of my felicity I am sometimes
 “ ‘ troubled by the recollection that the Church of Rome
 “ ‘ might not approve of all this. I have come to consult you,
 “ ‘ Sir, about this Nymph, those Sages, these children. and the
 “ ‘ state of my conscience.’ Well, Mr. Doctor, what answer
 “ ‘ would you make to my Lord Danhuzerus?”

“ I should say to him,” I answered, “ With all due respect
 “ to you, Lord Danhuzerus, you are letting your imagination
 “ run away with you, or else your vision is an enchantment,
 “ your children and your mistress are hobgoblins, your Sages
 “ are fools, and I must say that your conscience is thoroughly
 “ cauterized.”

“ By such an answer, my Son, you might achieve a doctor’s
 “ hood, but you would not merit admission to our Order,¹”
 rejoined the Comte with a deep sigh. “ Such is the barbarous

¹ [*vous ne mériteriez pas d’être reçu parmi nous.* It is doubtful whether this implies the kind of formal organisation which “our Order” does.]

“ tendency of all your doctors nowadays. A poor Sylph would never dare show himself lest he be straightway mistaken for a hobgoblin; a Nymph cannot labour to become immortal without passing for an impure phantom; and a Salamander would not dare appear for fear of being taken for the Devil himself: while the pure flames of which he is composed would be thought the hell fire which ever attends upon the Prince of Darkness. To dissipate these most injurious suspicions they vainly make the sign of the cross on appearing, bow the knee at Divine Names, and even pronounce them with reverence. All these precautions are futile. They cannot succeed in changing their reputation for being enemies of the God whom they worship more devoutly than do those who flee from them.”

“ But seriously, Sir,” said I, “ do you really believe these Sylphs to be such extraordinarily devout folk?”

“ Most devout,” he answered, “ and most zealous for Divinity. The superlatively excellent discourses upon the Divine Essence which they deliver to us, and their wonderful prayers edify us greatly.”

“ Have they prayers as well?” said I. “ I should very much like to hear one of their making.”

“ It is easy to gratify you,” he rejoined, “ and that I may not quote anything of questionable authority, and that you may be unable to suspect me of having fabricated it, listen to the prayer which the Salamander who gave answers in the Temple of Delphi was pleased to teach the Pagans, and which is recorded by Porphyry. It contains a sublime theology from which you will perceive that if mankind did not worship the true God, it was through no fault of these Sage Beings.”¹

¹ [Prayers of the Sylphs, Gnomes and Undines of similar form to the following exist, but are possibly of later composition.]

PRAYER OF THE SALAMANDERS

Immortal, Eternal, Ineffable and Sacred Father of all things, Thou who art borne upon the ceaselessly-rolling chariot of the ever-turning worlds. Thou Ruler of the Etherial Countries where the Throne of Thy power is raised, from the summit whereof Thy formidable eyes discover all thing, and Thine excellent and holy ears hear all things. Hearken unto Thy children whom Thou hast loved from the birth of time; for Thy golden, mighty, and eternal Majesty shines above the world and above the firmament of the Stars. Thou art exalted above them, O radiant Fire. There Thou kindlest Thyself and maintainest Thyself by Thine own Splendour, and there go forth from Thine Eternal Essence inexhaustible streams of Light which nourish Thine infinite Spirit. Thine Infinite Spirit produces all things and causes the inexhaustible treasure of matter, which can never fail in that generation which forever environs it, because of the forms without number wherewith it is pregnant and wherewith Thou in the beginning didst fill it. From this Thy Spirit, likewise, are born those Holy Kings who stand about Thy Throne, and who compose Thy court, O Uniserval Father! O Thou Unique God! O Father of mortal and immortal Saints! Thou hast in particular created Powers which are marvellously like unto Thine Eternal Thought, and unto Thine Adorable Essence. Thou hadst set them higher than the Angels who announce to the world Thy Will. Lastly Thou hast created in the Elements a third rank of Sovereigns. Our continual exercises is to praise Thee and and to worship Thy Will. We burn with desire to possess Thee, O Fahter, O Mother, who art tenderest of Mothers, O wonderful exemplar of the sentiments and tenderness of Mothers, O Son, the flower of all Sons, O Form of all Forms, Thou Soul, Spirit, Harmony and Number of all things!

“What say you to this prayer of the Salamanders? Is it “not exceedingly learned, lofty and devout?”

“And exceedingly obscure as well,” I answered. “I once heard it paraphrased by a preacher who proved thereby that the Devil, in addition to his other vices, is above all else a great hypocrite.”

“Alas!” exclaimed the Comte, “Poor Elementary Peoples! What resource is left you? You tell marvellous things concerning the Nature of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Assisting Intelligences, Angels and Heavens. You make wonderful prayers and teach them to man; yet after all you are nothing but hypocritical hobgoblins!”

“Sir,” I hastily observed, “it makes me uncomfortable to have you thus apostrophise these Peoples.”

“Nay, my Son,” he replied, “do not fear lest I summon them, but rather lest your faintheartedness should in the future prevent you from having any realisation beyond that of amazement that you see fewer examples of their alliance with men than you could wish for. Alas! Where is the woman whose imagination has not been beclouded by your doctors, and who does not look with horror upon this relationship, and who would not tremble at the appearance of a Sylph? Where is the man with least pretension to being good who does not flee the sight of them? Do we find, save very rarely, a man of worth who would care to be on familiar terms with them? Only profligates, misers, ambitious men or knaves court this honour to which, however, (*praise God*), they shall never attain; ‘for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.’”

“Then what is to become of all these flying Nations,” I inquired, “now that honest folk are so prejudiced against them?”

“Ah!” said he, “The arm of God is in no wise shortened, and the Devil does not derive all the advantage he anticipated from the ignorance and error which he has spread to their detriment; for in addition to the fact that the

“Philosophers, of whom there are a great number, do their utmost to remedy it by absolutely renouncing women, God has given all these Peoples permission to make use of every innocent artifice of which they can bethink themselves in order to converse with men without their knowledge.”

“What do I hear, Sir?” I exclaimed.

“You hear nothing but the truth,” he replied. “But I have a much greater secret to communicate to you. Know, my Son, that many a man believes himself to be the son of a man, who is really the son of a Sylph. Did I not tell you the other day that the Sylphs and other Lords of the Elements are overjoyed that we are willing to instruct them in the Cabala? Were it not for us their great enemy the Devil would alarm them exceedingly, and they would have difficulty in immortalising themselves without the knowledge of the maidens.”

“I cannot sufficiently wonder at the profound ignorance in which we live,” I remarked. “It is currently believed that the Powers of the Air sometimes help lovers to attain their desires. Apparently the contrary is true; the Powers of the Air require the assistance of men in their love affairs.”

“Quite so, my Son,” the Comte went on, “the Sage lends assistance to these poor people who, were it not for him, would be too wretched and too weak to resist the Devil. But when a Sylph has learned from us to pronounce Cabalistically the potent Name *Nehmahmihah*, and to combine it in mantric form¹ with the delicious name *Eliael*, all powers of darkness take flight and the Sylph peacefully enjoys the society of his loved one.

“When these gentlemen are immortalised, they labour earnestly and live most piously that they may not lose their recently-acquired right to the possession of the Supreme

¹ [“mantric” is a spurious interpolation by the translators; the French has “à le combiner dans les formes avec le nom délicieux Eliael.”]

“ Good. They therefore desire the person to whom they are allied to live with exemplary innocence, as is apparent in that celebrated adventure of a young Lord of Bavaria. He was inconsolable at the death of his wife, whom he loved passionately. A certain Sylphid was advised by one of our Sages to assume the likeness of the wife. She had confidence in the Sage and presented herself to the sorrowing young man, saying that God had raised her from the dead to console him in his extreme affliction. They lived together many years and had several beautiful children. The young nobleman, however, was not a good enough man to retain the gentle Sylphid; he used to blaspheme and use bad language. She often warned him, but seeing that her remonstrances were unavailing she disappeared one day, and left him nothing but her petticoats and the regret of having been unwilling to follow her pious counsel. Thus you see, my Son, that Sylphs sometimes have reason to disappear. You see too that neither the Devil nor the fantastic caprices of your theologians can prevent the People of the Elements from working with success for their immortality when they are helped by one of our Sages.”

“ But honestly, Sir,” I asked, “ are you, persuaded that the Devil is so great an enemy of these seducers of young girls?”

“ A mortal enemy,” said the Comte, “ especially of the Nymphs, Sylphs and Salamanders. As for the Gnomes, he does not hate them nearly so much because, as I believe you have already learned, the Gnomes, frightened by the howlings of the Devils which they hear in the centre of the earth, prefer to remain mortal rather than run the risk of being thus tormented should they acquire immortality. Thence it comes to pass that these Gnomes and the demons, their neighbours, have a good deal to do with one another. The latter persuade the Gnomes, who are natur-

“ally most friendly to man, that it is doing him a very great service and delivering him from great danger, to compel him to renounce his immortality. In exchange, they promise the man whom they can persuade to this renunciation that they will provide him with all the money he asks for, will avert the dangers which might threaten his life during a given period, or will grant any other condition pleasing to him who makes this wretched covenant. Thus the Devil, wicked fellow that he is, through the mediation of a Gnome, causes the soul of such a man to become mortal and deprives it of the right to eternal life.”

“Then, Sir,” cried I, “in your opinion those covenants, of which demonographers cite so many examples, are not made with the Devil at all?”

“No, assuredly not,” replied the Comte, “Has not the Prince of the World been driven out? Is he not confined? Is he not bound? Is he not the *terra damnata et maledicta* which is left at the bottom of the retort of the Supreme and Archetype Distiller? Can he ascend into the Region of Light and spread there his concentrated darkness? He can do nothing against man. He can only inspire the Gnomes, his neighbours, to come and make these propositions to those among mankind whom he most fears may be saved, to the end that their souls may die with their bodies.”

“Then,” said I, “according to you these souls do die?”

“They die, my child,” he answered.

“And are not those who enter into such covenants damned?”

“They cannot be damned,” said he “for their souls die with their bodies.”

“Then they are let off easily, and they are very lightly punished for so heinous a crime as that of renouncing the saving grace of their Baptism, and the Death of Our Lord.”

“Do you call it being lightly punished,” said the Comte,

“ to return into the black abyss of nonexistence? Know that
 “ it is a greater punishment than that of being damned, and
 “ that there is still a remnant of mercy in the justice which
 “ God exercises towards the sinners in Hell: it is a great grace
 “ not to let them be consumed by the fire which burns them.
 “ Non-existence is a greater evil than Hell, This is what the
 “ Sages preach to the Gnomes when they assemble them to
 “ make them understand the wrong they do themselves in
 “ preferring death to immortality and non-existence to the
 “ hope of a blessed eternity, which they would have the right
 “ to possess if they would only ally themselves to men with-
 “ out exacting from them such criminal renunciation. Some
 “ yield to our persuasions and we marry them to our daughters.”

“ Then, Sir, do you evangelise the Subterranean Peoples?”
 I inquired.

“ Why not?” he replied. “ We are instructors to them as
 “ well as to the Peoples of the Fire, Air and Water; and
 “ Philosophic charity is extended without distinction to all
 “ these children of God. As they are more subtle and more
 “ enlightened than the generality of mankind, they are more
 “ tractable and amenable to discipline, and listen to the
 “ divine truths with a reverence which charms us.”

“ It must be charming indeed,” I exclaimed mirthfully, “ to
 “ see a Cabalist in the pulpir holding forth to these gentlemen!”

“ You shall have that pleasure, my Son, whenever you
 “ wish,” said the Comte, “ and if you so desire I will assemble
 “ them this very evening and will preach to them at midnight.”

“ At midnight,” I protested, “ I have been told that that is
 “ the hour of the Sabbat.”

The Comte began to laugh. “ You remind me,” he said,
 “ of all the imbecilities related by the demonographers in that
 “ chapter on their imaginary Sabbat. You are not going to tell
 “ me that you also believe in it, that would indeed be a joke!”

“ Oh!” I retorted, “ as for those tales of the Sabbat, I

“ assure you I do not believe one of them.”

“ That is right, my Son,” said he, “ for I repeat that the Devil has not power thus to amuse himself at the expense of mankind, nor to enter into covenants with men, still less to make himself worshipped as the inquisitors believe. What has given rise to the popular rumour is that the Sages, as I have just told you, assemble the Inhabitants of the Elements to preach their Mysteries and Ethics to them. And as it usually happens that some Gnome turns from his gross error, comprehends the horrors of non-existence and consents to become immortalised, they bestow upon him one of our daughters; he is married and the nuptials are celebrated with all the rejoicing called for by the recent conquest. There are dances and those shouts of joy which Aristotle says were heard in certain isles where, nevertheless, no living being was visible. The mighty Orpheus was the first to convoke these Subterranean Peoples. At his first lecture *Sabazius*. the most ancient of the Gnomes, was immortalised; and from that *Sabazius* was derived the name of this Assembly wherein the Sages were wont to address a speech to him as long as he lived, as is apparent in the Hymns of the divine Orpheus.¹

“ The ignorant have confounded things, and have made them the occasion of a thousand impertinent tales, and of defaming an Assembly which we convene solely to the glory of the Supreme Being. “

“ I should never have imagined the Sabbat to be a devotional assembly,” said I.

“ And yet it is a most holy and Cabalistic one;” he rejoined, “ a fact of which it would not be easy to persuade the world. But such is the deplorable blindness of this unjust age; people are carried away by popular rumour and

¹ [Hymn 47 of the so-called *Orphic Hymns* is addressed to Sabazios, and appears to identify him with Zeus.]

“ do not in the least wish to be undeceived. Sages speak in
“ vain, fools are more readily believed than they. In vain does
“ a Philosopher bring to light the falsity of the chimeras people
“ have fabricated, and present manifest proofs to the contrary.
“ No matter what his experience, nor how sound his argu-
“ ment and reasoning, let but a man with a doctor’s hood
“ come along and write them down as false,—experience and
“ demonstration count for naught and it is henceforward
“ beyond the power of Truth to re-establish her empire.
“ People would rather believe in a doctor’s hood than in their
“ own eyes. There has been in your native France a memor-
“ able proof of this popular mania. The famous Cabalist
“ Zedechias, in the reign of your Pépin, took it into his head
“ to convince the world that the Elements are inhabited by
“ these Peoples whose nature I have just described to you.
“ The expedient of which he bethought himself was to advise
“ the Sylphs to show themselves in the Air to everybody; they
“ did so sumptuously. These beings were seen in the Air in
“ human form, sometimes in battle array marching in good
“ order, halting under arms, or encamped beneath magnifi-
“ cent tents. Sometimes on wonderfully constructed aerial
“ ships, whose flying squadrons roved at the will of the
“ Zephyr. What happened? Do you suppose that ignorant
“ age would so much as reason as to the nature of these
“ marvellous spectacles? The people straightway believed
“ that sorcerers had taken possession of the Air for the
“ purpose of raising tempests and bringing hail upon their
“ crops. The learned theologians and jurists were soon of the
“ same opinion as the masses. The Emperors believed it as
“ well; and this ridiculous chimera went so far that the wise
“ Charlemagne, and after him Louis the Débonnaire,
“ imposed grievous penalties upon all these supposed Tyrants
“ of the Air. You may see an account of this in the first
“ chapter of the Capitularies of these two Emperors.

“ The Sylphs seeing the populace, the pedants and even
“ the crowned heads thus alarmed against them, determined
“ to dissipate the bad opinion people had of their innocent
“ fleet by carrying off men from every locality and showing
“ them their beautiful women, their Republic and their
“ manner of government, and then setting them down again
“ on earth in divers parts of the world. They carried out their
“ plan. The people who saw these men as they were descen-
“ ding came running from every direction, convinced before-
“ hand that they were sorcerers who had separated from their
“ companions in order to come and scatter poisons on the
“ fruit and in the springs. Carried away by the frenzy with
“ which such fancies inspired them, they hurried these
“ innocents off to the torture. The great number of them
“ who were put to death by fire and water throughout the
“ kingdom is incredible.

“ One day, among other instances, it chanced at Lyons
“ that three men and a woman were seen descending from
“ these aerial ships. The entire city gathered about them,
“ crying out that they were magicians and were sent by
“ Grimaldus, Duke of Beneventum, Charlemagne's enemy, to
“ destroy the French harvests. In vain the four innocents
“ sought to vindicate themselves by saying that they were
“ their own countryfolk, and had been carried away a short
“ time since by miraculous men who had shown them
“ unheard-of marvels, and had desired them to give an
“ account of what they had seen. The frenzied populace paid
“ no heed to their defence, and were on the point of casting
“ them into the fire when the worthy Agobard, Bishop of
“ Lyons, who having been a monk in that city had acquired
“ considerable authority there, came running at the noise,
“ and having heard the accusations of the people and the
“ defence of the accused, gravely pronounced that both one
“ and the other were false. That it was not true that these

“men had fallen from the sky, and that what they said they had seen there was impossible.

“The people believed what their good father Agobard said rather than their own eyes, were pacified, set at liberty the four Ambassadors of the Sylphs, and received with wonder the book which Agobard wrote to confirm the judgment which he had pronounced. Thus the testimony of these four witnesses was rendered vain.

“Nevertheless, as they escaped with their lives they were free to recount what they had seen, which was not altogether fruitless for, as you will recall, the age of Charlemagne was prolific of heroic men. This would indicate that the woman who had been in the home of the Sylphs found credence among the ladies of that period and that, by the grace of God, many Sylphs were immortalised. Many Sylphids also became immortal through the account of their beauty which these three men gave; which compelled the people of those times to apply themselves somewhat to Philosophy; and thence are derived all the stories of the fairies which you find in the love legends of the age of Charlemagne and of those which followed. All these so-called fairies were only Sylphids and Nymphs. Did you ever read those histories of heroes and fairies?”

“No Sir,” said I.

“I am sorry to hear it,” he replied, “for they would have given you some idea of the state to which the Sages are one day determined to reduce the world. Those heroic men, those love affairs with Nymphs, those voyages to terrestrial paradise, those palaces and enchanted woods and all the charming adventures that happen in them, give but a faint idea of the life led by the Sages and of what the world will be when they shall have brought about the Reign of Wisdom. Then we shall see only heroes born; the least of our children will have the strength of Zoroaster, Apollonius

“or Melchizedek; and most of them will be as accomplished as the children Adam would have had by Eve had he not sinned with her.”

“Did you not tell me, Sir,” I interposed, “that God did not wish Adam and Eve to have children, that Adam was to think only of Sylphids, and Eve only of some Sylph or Salamander?”

“It is true,” said the Comte, “that they ought not to have had children in the way in which they did.”

“Then Sir,” I continued, “your Cabala empowers man and woman to create children otherwise than by the usual method?”

“Assuredly,” he replied.

“Ah Sir,” I entreated, “teach this method to me, I beg of you.”

“You will not find it out to-day, and it please you,” said he smilingly, “I wish to avenge the People of the Elements for your having been so hard to undeceive regarding their supposed deviltry. I do not doubt that you are now recovered from your panic terrors. Therefore I leave you that you may have leisure to meditate and to deliberate in the presence of God as to which species of Elementary Beings will be most appropriate to His glory and to your own, as a participant in your immortality.

“Meanwhile I go to meditate in preparation for the discourse you have made me long to deliver to the Gnomes to-night.”

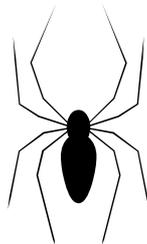
“Are you intending to explain a chapter of Averroës to them?” said I.

“I believe that it might be well to introduce something of the sort,” said the Comte, “for I intend to preach to them on the excellence of man, that I may influence them to seek his alliance. Like Aristotle, Averroës held two theories which it would be well for me to explain, one as to the

“ nature of the understanding, and the other as to the Chief Good. He says that there is only one created understanding which is the image of the uncreated, and that this unique understanding suffices for all men; that requires explanation. And as for the Chief Good, Averroës says that it consists in the conversation of Angels, which is not Cabalistic enough. For man, even in this life can, and is created to, enjoy God, as you will one day understand and experience when you shall have reached the estate of the Sages.”

Thus ends the Discourse of the Comte de Gabalis. He returned the next day and brought the speech that he had delivered to the Subterranean Peoples. It was marvellous! I would publish it with the series of Discourses which a certain Vicomtesse and I have had with this Illustrious Man, were I certain that all my readers would have the proper spirit, and not take it amiss that I amuse myself at the expense of fools. If I see that people are willing to let my book accomplish the good that it is capable of doing and are not unjustly suspecting me of seeking to give credit to the Occult Sciences under pretence of ridiculing them, I shall continue to delight in Monsieur le Comte, and shall soon be able to publish another volume.¹

¹ [Some purported sequels to the *Comte de Gabalis* appeared some decades after the death of the Abbé de Villars; they are believed to be pseudoepigraphical.]



EDITORIAL NOTE

Comte de Gabalis, ou Entretiens sur les Sciences Secrètes was first published in 1670. There have been a number of English translations, the first in 1680: that presented here was published in New York in 1913 by "The Brothers" and accompanied by a rambling and frequently redundant facing-page commentary (with another 150 pages—*i.e.*, about one and a half times the length of the main text—appended), here omitted. No attempt has been made to retain layout and style from that edition. All footnotes are by the present editor. Section headings were roughly translated from an edition of the French text included in an anthology of "romans cabalistiques" printed in 1778; it is possible that they were not part of the original work as they are not in the only other copy of the French text (London: Valliant, 1742) which I have seen.

The nameless translators appear from their commentary to have been under the influence of the theosophical schools of the late nineteenth century and as such seem to have employed certain expressions in their translation which it is doubtful are warranted by the text. While the original work contains no overt references to Rosicrucianism—the supposed *compagnie* (translated "Order" by "The Brothers") of adepts which the eponymous Count represents being called variously *philosophes*, *sages* and *cabalistes*—the first English edition was represented as printed "at the Sign of the Rosy-Crucian" and another early English translation was subtitled *A Diverting History of the Rosicrucian Doctrine of Spirits* (possibly inspired by the reference in the *Fama* to the "Elementary Inhabitants" with whom C.R.C. became acquainted at Fez), and the work quickly became associated in the minds of English readers with Rosicrucians and their supposed doctrines (see for example Pope's introduction to his *Rape of the Lock*). The murder of de Villars on the road from Paris to Lyons three years after publication helped fuel conspiracy theories about this work, it being put about that he was killed by some society of occultists either for mocking them or revealing their secrets.

A purported "continuation" of the *Comte de Gabalis* appeared some decades after the death of the author (*Nouveaux Entretiens sur les sciences secretes*, apparently first pub. 1713), followed by *Les Genies assistans & Le Gnome irréconciliable*; a three-volume edition comprising the original work and the supposed sequels being issued in 1742. The sequels are generally regarded as the pseudoepigraphal production of a later writer.

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