THE DAILY EVENING TELEGRAPH-PHILADELPHIA, TUESDAY, JULY 13, 1839.

7 HE ALCHEMISTS.

From the Cornhill Magazine. PART II.

The curious tale of Bottger, or Botticher. the originator of the Dresden porcelain manufacture, belongs to a comparatively late pe-riod in the annals of alchemy. It is worth relating as one of the remarkable instances where the search after the philosopher's stone led by side-doors to real and valuable discoveries. Botticher was an apothecary's apprentice at Berlin in the time of Frederick I, King of Prussia (1701-1713). He boasted of having received a bit of the genuine stone from a Greek named Lascaris, and of having done marvellous things with it in the way of transmutation. The King expressed his desire to judge personally of his pretensions. Botticher was by no means inclined to stand the trial, and crossed the borders to Wittenberg. His sovereign lord demanded his extradition by the Saxon Government. It was refused, and the garrison of Wittenberg was strengthened for fear of a surprise; while, for greater security, the valuable emigrant was transferred to Dresden. Here he somehow satisfied the Prince von Furstenberg, who was governing in the Saxon king's absence, that he really could make gold. The King, Augustus II, wrote to him in the most deferential terms, made him a nobleman, and, with all marks of respect, stowed him away in his strong tower of Konigstein, where he was assiduously watched, in the hope of winning his secret from him in some unguarded moment. However, not to anger him, and thus defeat the royal hopes, he was allowed to return to Dresden, in a sort of honorable captivity, while freedom and additional rewards were promised him should he give up the required recipe. He actually signed a contract to that effect, and was accordingly guarded, if possible, more carefully, and treated more sumptuously, than ever. He was looked upon as a precious jewel of the crown; and when a hostile invasion soon threatened, he was transferred, with the other treasures of royalty, once more to the Konigstein. Meanwhile, three years passed, and his contract was not fulfilled. The King waxed impatient. Botticher had gone on experimenting, in the desperate hope of being able to make good his pretensions; but gold would not come at his bidding. He might, perchance, have been hung with ignominy, like so many of his predecessors; but, luckily for him, a really important discovery had emerged out of some of his manipulations.

He now ventured to confess to the King that he never had made gold, nor knew how to do so, but offered his Majesty the results of his porcelain invention instead. Augustus swallowed his mortification, and forgave him, placing him at the head of the Dresden porcelain works, so famous in after years; but to the day of his death, which occurred in 1719, the recalcitrant alchemist was carefully watched lest perchance some more valuable secret might escape him. The casual discoveries made by alchemists would fill many volumes of science and industrial history. Thus Roger Bacon stumbled by a chance on the composition of gunpowder; Geber, on the properties of acids; Van Helmont, on the nature of gas, "geist," or "spirit," so named by him; and Dr. Glauber, of Amsterdam, in the seventeenth century, eliminated in this haphazard way the uses of the "salts" which bear his name.

Paracelsus and Van Helmont are the greatest names connected with alchemy in the sixteenth century. The pompous charlatanry of Paracelsus gave impulse to its subsequent development under the forms of Rosierucianism, whose secret societies and freemasonry occupied the fancy of mankind so much in the seventeenth century. In Germany, the natural tendency of men to mysticism was greastly assisted by the barbarizing effects of the Thirty Years' War. As in literature, so in science: culture was absolutely repressed, and made retrograde by the singular desolations of the gloomy period from 1618 to 1648. This was conspicuously shown in the department of jurisprudence. Dr. Erdmann has collected some curious cases of law decisions resting on the theories of alchemy as evidence. It seems not to have been late in the seventeenth century, however, that the Austrian jurist, Von Rain, went so far as to assert that disbelief in the existence of the stone actually brought a man within the penalties of lese-majeste, on the ground that so many emperors had undoubtedly performed transmutations by its agency. As early as 1580, the Leipsic tribunals prononneed judgment against an unhappy wretch called Beuther, body-alchemist of that Augustus, Elector of Saxony, of whom we have already had occasion to speak. Beuther was reputed to possess certain valuable MSS, treating of "special transmutations," i. e., the transmutation of some one particular metal, which, having promised on oath to impart to certain other persons, he had afterwards declined to give up, besides having been culpably negligent in his official capacity. He was adjudged to be undoubtedly in possession of THE SE-CRET, and sentenced accordingly to be tortured for its extraction; then, for his official negligence, to be scourged with rods; for his perjury to his comrades, to lose three of his fingers; finally, for the good of the land, to be shut up securely in prison, lest he might be tempted to tell his secret to foreign potentates. As late as the year 1725 there was a curious case of litigation before the same court at Leipsic. A certain Countess von Erbach had given shelter in her castle to a reputed robber, who was flying from justice. This robber turned out to be an adept in alchemy, and a robber only out of, as it would seem; most superfluous amateurship. In the excess of his gratitude to his benefactress, he turned all her silver plate into gold. But here the Countess' husband stepped in and claimed half of the treasure, on the plea that the increase of value had been effected on his territory, and under the matrimonial conditions as to property. The Leipsic lawyers decided against him, saying that, as the plate had been recognized as belonging solely to the Countess prior to the transmutation, so it must be her exclusive property afterwards, under whatever changes it might have passed. It was a not uncommon point of law whether alchemical gold, which was not capable of being distinguished from original gold, was to be held of equivalent value or not; the doubt being, in the true mystic phraseology, whether it could possess the same hidden or innate powers. Special treatises were written on the subject of the coins supposed to have been struck from alchemical metal. As late as 1797, a large medal was shown at Vienna, purporting to be minted from the gold ide out of quicksilver by the Emperor Ferdinand III, through a virtue of a grain of red powder given him by one Richthausen, at Prague. Nothing is more characteristic of the strange history of this science than the important part played in it by "Unknowns"-weird, mysterious visitors, who

"Melmoth the Wanderer," and to have vanished as unaccountably-men who, if the wanking as unaccountably men who, if the theory of the science were true, might have wielded more than the power of the united Rothschild family, and emulated the splen-dors of Monte Cristo, yet who came and went poor and haggard, and left no trace behind. Such was the "Unknown" who appeared to the philosophic Dr. Helvetius, body-physician to a Prince of Orange, in the seventeenth century, and converted him from incredulity to the most enthusiastic belief. This Unknown came into the Doctor's study one day, in the shape of a respectable burgher of North Holland, and drew from his pocket a small ivory box containing three heavy pieces of metal, brimstone-colored and brittle, from which Helvetius scraped a small portion with his thumb-nail. The stranger declined performing any feat of transmutation himself, saying he was "not allowed" to do so. Helvetius experimented in vain with the parings he had scraped off; but on a second visit the mysterious burgher proved more compliant, and, after helping Helvetius to a successful operation, he left him possession of certain directions by in. means of which he contrived to change six ounces of lead into very pure gold when alone. The Hague rang with the fame of his exploit; and the operation was successfully repeated in presence of the Prince of Orange. Moreover, the gold was examined by the authorities of the Mint, and pronounced genuine. At last the magic powder was exhaused, and, as the Unknown never visited him again, Dr. Helvetius was compelled tobring his experiments to an end. But he published in 1607 a learned work called the "Golden Calf," maintaining the truth of the doctrines he had once derided; and the skeptical philosopher Spinoza averred, after strict inquiry into the truth of the events narrated, that the evidence of that case of transmutation was sufficient to make a convert of him-

Another picturesque tale current among the records of Continental alchemy is that of Professor Martini of Helmstadt, who died in 1621, and was a supercilious foe of the art in the early part of his career, strenuously contesting in his lectures the arguments adduced in its behalf. The "Unknown" in this case was a foreign nobleman, who had just arrived at Helmstadt, and took his place one day in the lecture-hall. After listening for a while to Martini's self-satisfied expositions, he courteously interrupted the lecturer, offering to refute his opinions experimentally. A pan of coals, a crucible, and some lead, were brought in at his desire. A short manipula-tion ensued; and lo! the lead had acquired the form and substance of fine gold, which the nobleman handed over to the astounded professor with the modest words, "Solve mihi hung syllogismum!

self.

Dr. Erdmann cites Van Helmont's testimony to the existence of the philosopher's stone as one of the most difficult to treat with contempt, on account of the unquestionable integrity and scientific sagacity of the inquirer. Van Helmont loved truth with sincere devotion. A Brabant nobleman by birth, he renounced his rank and possessions to turn physician, to study nature, and do good works. His discoveries in medicine are of lasting value. He never professed to give alchemy more than a second place in his interest; yet he avera that in 1618 he himself changed eight ounces of quicksilver into pare gold by means of a substance given him from time to time by an unknown visitor. He never learned the secret of making the stone him-self, but he describes it as a heavy powder of the color of saffron, glittering like rather coarse-grained glass.

In the seventeenth century the fantastic doctrines of Paracelsus fertilized in men's minds to all sorts of 'extravagant outgrowths. The English quacks, Fludd, Dee, and Kelly, the German mystic Jacob Bohme, were noted Rosierucians of that period. Men now took to binding themselves into societies for the prosecution of their occult researches, instead of, as heretofore, brooding over them in solitary devotion. The "Alchemical Society" of Nuremberg was extant in 1700, and one of its members, and its secretary for a time, was Leibnitz. Leibnitz and Spinoza! strange names to bring into connection with this science of the superstitions. Yet Bacon of Verulam did not disbelieve in alchemy, though to him we are first indebted for the excellent application of the old fable of the dying man's will and the field to be dug over in search of the treasure which never existed save in the fertilizing process of culture. Robert Boyle is also cited as having faith in its pretensions. The last professed adept in England was one James Price, who, in 1782, announced himself the possessor of a tincture which could change from thirty to sixty times its weight into gold. Semier, the well-known theological professor at Halle in the last century, was a votary of alchemy. The story of his performances before the merchalous chemist, Klaproth, may be given as illustrative of the trickery of which experimenters were oftentimes the dupes, and by means of which at least as often, though not in this case, they established their pretensions. In the year 1786 Dr. Semler and one Baron von Hirschen occupied themselves with preparing a Universal Medicine, called by them "Luft Salz," atmospheric salts. Three treatises on "Hermetic Medicine" were composed in relation to it by Semler, and he went beyond the original pretensions of the medicine, asserting that gold could be made by means of it in well-warmed glasses, without the intervention of crucible or coals. He got into a lively discussion with the leading chemists of the day, and at last submitted to Klaproth, for his own use, a mass of m stal which he said contained the seeds of gold. To Klaproth's ill-success in making these "seeds" germinate, Semler could only reply that he found a residuran of gold in his glasses every five or dx days. On close examination it was dist vered that a trick had been played upon him Some subordinates to whom he had intrusted the task of warming his glasses had contrive to insert a small quantity of gold leaf. It was worth their while, as the sanguine philo-sopher kept them well fed and lodged. At ast, however, they tried the substitution of baser material, pinchbeck, and this led to their detection. Father Kircher openly challenged the belief in alchemy in his "Subterranean World published about 1670. He did not seruple to call the alchemists knaves and impostors, and their science a delusion. Great was the storm he drew down upon himself thereby. Dr. Glauber, of the "salts," was one of his antagonists. A still more elaborate reputation was that made by M. Geoffroy before the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris, in 1722, wherein he was at the pains to show the various modes of trickery by which alchemical pretensions were sustained: false-bottomed crucibles, hollow wan'ts filled with gold, perforated lead, soldered nails, etc. By degrees the credit of the science hopelessly declined, although daring impostors shot like meteors ever and anon are stated to have sppcared here and there as " athwart the sober pathway of modern life.

unexpectedly as Maturin's incomparable bogie, | Thus Louis XIII of France made a Franciscun monk named Chataigne his grand almoter because he had held before him the prospect of a hundred years' reign by means of the grand elixir. Thus Jean de Lisle expiated by an early death in the Bastile his bold attempts to persuade the Ministers of Louis XIV that he possessed the gold-making stone; and thus the adventures of the Count de St. Germain, and of Cagliostro, rested mainly on their claims to the possession of the talisman either of long life or of unbounded wealth. As we said at the outset of our article, the

publication of Lavoisier's system was the real death-blow to the study of alchemy, by pointing out the veritable objects and achievements of chemical induction, and the road by which further progress was to be accomplished.

The hopeless gyrations of the baffled science, ever circling back to its first beginning, and making no advance in its gains and experiences, did, at last, after many busy ages, cease to attract intelligent minds. While we review its promises and its destinies, how profound a human pathos seems to attach to those stately words of Paracelsus, which, doubtless, comforted the heart of many a patient plodder over air-drawn inferences:-"Refuse not the waters of Shiloah because they go softly; for they that wade in deep waters cannot go fast." Isaac Disraeli, in more than one of his de-

ightful miscellanies, quotes the prophecy of Dr. Girtanner, of Leipsic, not far from our own times, who presaged that in the course of the nineteenth century the mystery of gold-making would surely be discovered, and the commonest utensils of cookery would come to be made of the precious metal, whereby all evils of metal-poisoning through the use of corroded vessels would be averted. The ninetcenth century is far advanced on its downward slope, and it cannot be said that as yet any symptoms appear of the realization of such visions. The stone is still to seek, if it be worth the seeking; the alkahest, the universal dissolver, remains a myth; the crucible yields no treasure; but in one way the "eternal hope" has had an answer; for, within the last thirty years, the shining prize has learnt to yield itself up at man's call, with a fulness far surpassing the harvests of Spagiric fable, when sought by spade and mattock in its native ores.

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BANKRUPTCY .- EASTERN DISTRICT

IN BANKRUPTCY.-EASTERN DISTRICT of Pennsylvania, ss., at Philadelphia, the 15th day of may, A. D. 1865. The undersigned hereby gives notice of his appointment Mary, A. D. 1865. The undersigned hereby gives notice of his appointment as assignee of WILLIAM H. CAREY, of Philadelphia, in the county of Philadelphia, and State of Pennsylvania, within said District, who has been adjudged bankrupt, upon his own petition, by the District Court of axid Dis-trict. A. W. RAND, 7,123t No. 124 N. SIXTH Street, Philadelphia.

IN BANKRUPTCY.-EASTERN DISTRICT of Pennsylvania, ss., at Philadelphua, the 15th day of May, A. D. 1968.

May, A The t May, A. D. Fos. The undersigned hereby gives notice of his appointmen as assignee of ISAUAH ALDRICH and JAMES YERK 6S both of Philadelphia, in the county of Philadelphia, and State of Pennsylvania, within said District, who have been adjudged bankrupts upon their own petition by the District Court of said District. A. W. RAND, 7 12 3t No. 124 N. SINTH Street, Philadelphia.

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