luous party of angels who were driven from Heaven along with him; that Lucifer in his exile created this world with its inhabi-
tants, where he reigned, and where all was evil. It is alleged that the
Albigenses further believed that, for the reestablishment of
order, God produced a second son, Jesus Christ. Furthermore
the Catholic writers on the Albigenses charged them with be-
lieving that the souls of men were demons lodged in mortal bo-
dies in punishment of their crimes.

Following the murder of the legate of Pope Innocent III,
who was sent to root out the heresy, a crusade was brought
against them, resulting in wholesale massacres. The Inquisition
was also set upon them, and they were driven to hide in the for-
est and among the mountains, where, like the Covenanters of
Scotland, they met secretly. The Inquisition so terrorized the
district in which they lived that the very name of Albigenses was
practically blotted out, and by the year 1330, the records of the
Holy Office show no further writs issued against the heretics.
It seems possible that such heresies as the Albigenses and
the Cathari, with their belief in Lucifer as lord of the world,
may have sometimes merged with the pagan folklore that went
to form the witchcraft heresy, which was also ruthlessly perse-
cuted by the Inquisition. (See also Gnostics; Arthur Guird-
ham)

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Albiggerian (ca. 400 C.E.)
A Carthaginian soothsayer mentioned by St. Augustine.
He would fall into strange ecstasies in which his soul, separated
from his body, would travel abroad and find out what was tak-
ing place in distant places. He could read people’s thoughts
and discover anything he wished to learn. These wonders were
ascribed to the agency of the Devil. St. Augustine also speaks
of a time when the possessed man was ill of a fever. Though not
in a trance, he saw the priest who was coming to visit him while
he was yet six leagues away, and Albiggerius told the company
assembled around him the exact moment when the priest
would arrive.

Albumazar (or Abu-Maaschar) (805–885 C.E.)
Arabian astrologer of the ninth century. Born in Balkh, he
lived in Baghdad and was known principally for his astrological
treatise entitled Thousands of Years, in which he declares that the
world could only have been created when the seven planets
were in conjunction in the first degree of Aries, and that the
end of the world will take place when these seven planets
(the number has now risen to twelve) will be together in the last
degree of Pisces. His treatises include De Magna Componuntibus
(Augsburg, 1488), Introductarium in Astronomiam (Venice, 1506),
and Flores Astronomiae (Augsburg, 1488). He died at Wasit, Cen-
tral Asia.

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Alchemy
The art and science by which the chemical philosophers of
medieval times attempted to transmute the baser metals into
gold and silver. Alchemy is also the name of the Gnostic philos-
ophy that undergirded the alchemical activity, a practical phi-
losophy of spiritual purification. There is considerable dis-
agreement as to which, the scientific or the philosophical, is the
dominant aspect and the manner in which the two were inte-
grated (which to some extent varied tremendously from alche-
mist to alchemist).

There is also considerable divergence of opinion as to the
etymology of the word. One highly possible origin is the Arabic
al (the) and kimya (chemistry), which in turn derived from late
Greek chemea (chemistry), from chume (a mingling), or cheen
(to pour out or mix). The Aryan root is ghuh, (to pour), whence
comes the modern word guhit. E. A. Wallis Budge, in his Egy-
tian Magic, however, states that it is possible that alchemy may
be derived from the Egyptian word khemen, “the preparation of
the black ore,” or “powder,” which was regarded as the ac-
tive principle in the transmutation of metals. To this name the
Arabs affixed the article al, resulting in al-khemen, or alchemy.

History of Alchemy
From an early period the Egyptians possessed the reputa-
tion of being skillful workers in metals, and, according to Greek
writings, they were conversant with their transmutation, employ-
ing quicksilver in the process of separating gold and silver from
the native matrix. The resulting oxide was supposed to possess
marvelous powers, and it was thought that there resided within
it the individualities of the various metals—that in it their vari-
ious substances were incorporated. This black powder was mys-
tically identified with the underworld god Osiris, and conse-
quently was credited with magical properties. Thus there grew
up in Egypt the belief that magical powers existed in fluxes and
alloys. It is probable such a belief existed throughout Europe
in connection with the bronze-working castes of its several
races. (See Shelta Thari)

It was probably in the Byzantium of the fourth century, how-
ever, that alchemical science received embryonic form. There
is little doubt that Egyptian tradition, filtering through Alexan-
drian Hellenic sources, was the foundation upon which the in-
fant science was built, and this is borne out by the circumstance
that the art was attributed to Hermes Trismegistus and sup-
posed to be contained in its entirety in his works.

The Arabs, after their conquest of Egypt in the seventh cen-
tury, carried on the traditions of the Alexandrian school, and
through their instrumentality the art was carried to Morocco
and in the eighth century to Spain, where it flourished. During
the next few centuries Spain served as the repository of alchem-
ic science, and the colleges at Seville, Cordova, and Granada
were the centers from which this science radiated throughout
Europe. The first practical alchemist was probably the Arabian
Geber, who flourished in the early to mid-eighth century C.E.
His Summa Perfectionis implies that alchemical science had al-
ready matured in his day, and that he drew his inspiration from
a still older unbroken line of adepts. He was followed by Avi-
cenna, Meiserer, and Rhasis; in France by Alain de Lisle, Ar-
alus de Villanova, and Jean de Meung the troubadour; in
England by Roger Bacon; and in Spain by Raymond Lully.

Later, in French alchemy, the most illustrious names are
those of Nicolas Flamel (fifteenth century), and Bernard
Trévieux (fifteenth century), after which the center of interest
changes in the sixteenth century to Germany and in some mea-
sure to England, in which countries Paracelsus, Heinrich
Khunrath, Michael Maier, Jakob Boehme, Jean Van Hel-
mont, the Brabanter, George Ripley, Thomas Norton, Thom-
as Dalton, Jean Martin Charnock, and Robert Fludd kept the
alchemical flame burning brightly. In Britain, the great scient-
ist Sir Isaac Newton conducted alchemical research.

It is surprising how little alteration is found throughout the
period between the seventh and the seventeenth centuries, the
heyday of alchemy, in the theory and practice of the art. The
same sentiments and processes put forth by the earliest alchem-
ical authorities are also found expressed by the later experts,
and a unanimity regarding the basic canons of the art is ex-
pressed by the hermetic students of all periods, thus suggesting
the dominance of the philosophical teachings over any "scientific" applications. With the introduction of chemistry as a practical art, alchemical science fell into disuse, already having suffered from the number of charlatans practicing it. Here and there, however, a solitary student of the art lingered, and the subject has to some extent been revived during modern times.

The Theory and Philosophy of Alchemy

The grand objects of the alchemical art were (1) the discovery of a process by which the baser metals might be transmuted into gold and silver; (2) the discovery of an elixir by which life might be prolonged indefinitely; and there is sometimes added (3) the manufacture of an artificial process of human life (see Homunculus). Religiously, the transmutation of metals can be thought of as a symbol of the transmutation of the self to a higher consciousness and the discovery of the elixir as an affirmation of eternal life.

The transmutation of metals was to be accomplished by a process, stone, or elixir often called the philosophers' stone, the application of which would effect the transmutation of the baser metals into gold or silver, depending on the length of time of its application. Basing their conclusions on the examination of natural processes and metaphysical speculation concerning the secrets of nature, the alchemists arrived at the axiom that nature was divided into four principal regions: the dry, the moist, the warm, and the cold, from which all that exists must be derived. Nature was also divisible into the male and the female. She is the divine breath, the central fire, invisible yet ever active, and is typified by sulphur, which is the mercury of the sages, which slowly fructifies under the genial warmth of nature.

Thus, the alchemist had to be ingenious, of a truthful disposition, and gifted with patience and prudence, following nature in every alchemical performance. He recalled that like attracts like, and had to know how to obtain the "seed" of metals, which was produced by the four elements through the will of the Supreme Being and the Imagination of Nature. We are told that the original matter of metals was double in its essence, being a dry heat combined with a warm moisture, and that air is water coagulated by fire, capable of producing a universal solvent. These terms the neophyte must be cautious of interpreting in their literal sense, for it is likely that alchemists, other than the several frauds, were speaking about the metaphysics of inner spirituality. Great confusion exists in alchemical nomenclature, and the gibberish employed by the scores of charlatans who in later times pretended to a knowledge of alchemical matters did not tend to make things any more clear.

The neophyte alchemist also had to acquire a thorough knowledge of the manner in which metals "grow" in the bowels of the earth. They were said to be engendered by sulphur, which is male, and mercury, which is female, and the crux of alchemy was to obtain their "seed" —a process the alchemistical philosophers did not describe with any degree of clarity. The physical theory of transmutation is based on the composite character of metals, and on the presumed existence of a substance which, applied to matter, excalts and perfecit it. This substance, Eugenius Philalethes and others called "The Light." The elements of all metals were said to be similar, differing only in purity and proportion. The entire trend of the metallic kingdom was toward the natural manufacture of gold, and the production of the baser metals was only accidental as the result of an unfavorable environment. The philosophers' stone was the combination of the male and female "seeds" that form gold. The composition of these was so veiled by symbolism as to make their precise identification impossible.

Occult scholar Arthur Edward Waite, summarized the alchemical process once the secret of the stone was unveiled:

"Given the matter of the stone and also the necessary vessel, the processes which must be then undertaken to accomplish the magnum opus are described with moderate perspicuity. There is the calcination or purgation of the stone, in which kind is worked with kind for the space of a philosophical year. There is dissolution which prepares the way for congelation, and which is performed during the black state of the mysterious body. The stone, in its vulgar state, has been considered as the substance, which is performed during the white state of the stone, and which is performed during the white state of the stone, and which is performed during the white state of the stone. There is the separation of the subtle and the gross, which is to be performed by means of heat. In the conjunction which follows, the elements are dried and scrupulously purified. Putefaction afterwards takes place, 'Without which pole no seed may multiply.'

Then, in the subsequent congelation the white colour appears, which is one of the signs of success. It became pronounced in cibation. In sublimation the body is spiritualised, the spirit made corporeal, and again a more glittering white, for it is apparent. Fermentation afterwards fixes itself on the alchemical earth and water, and causes the mystic medicine to flow like wax. The matter is then augmented with the alchemistical spirit of life, and the exaltation of the philosophic earth is accomplished by the natural rectification of its elements. When these processes have been successfully completed, the mystic stone will have passed through three chief stages characterised by different colours, black, white, and red, after which it is capable of infinite multiplication, and when projected on mercury, it will absolutely transmute it, the resulting gold bearing every test. The base metals made use of must be purified to insure the success of the operation. The process for the manufacture of silver is essentially similar, but the resources of the matter are not carried to so high a degree.

"According to the Commentary on the Ancient Way of the Knights the transmutations performed by the perfect stone are so absolute that no trace remains of it. It cannot, however, destroy gold, nor exalt it into a more perfect metallic substance; it therefore, transmutes it into a medicine a thousand times superior to any virtues which can be extracted from it in its vulgar state. This medicine becomes a most potent agent in the exaltation of base metals."

Other modern authorities have denied that the transmutation of metals was the grand object of alchemy, and from reasons highlighted earlier, among others, inferred from the alchemistical writings that the object of the art was the spiritual regeneration of mankind. Mary Ann Atwood, author of A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery, and Civil War General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, author of Remarks upon Alchemy and the Alchemists, were perhaps the chief protagonists of the belief that, by spiritual processes akin to those of the chemical processes of alchemy, the soul of man may be purified and exalted. Both somewhat overstated their case in their assertion that the alchemical writers did not claim that the transmutation of base metal into gold was their grand object. While the spiritual quest may have been dominant, none of the passages that Atwood and Hitchcock quote was inconsistent with the physical aspect of alchemy. Eugenius Philalethes, for example, in his work The Marrow of Alchemy, argues forcefully that the real quest is for gold. It is constantly impressed upon the reader, however, in the perusal of esteemed alchemical works, that only those who are instructed by God can achieve the grand secret. Others, again, state that while a novice might possibly stumble upon it, unless guided by an adept the beginner has small chance of achieving the grand arcana.

The transcendental view of alchemy, however, rapidly gained ground through the nineteenth century. Among its exponents was A. E. Waite, who argued, "The gold of the philosopher is not a metal, on the other hand, man is a being who possesses within himself the seeds of a perfection which he has never realized, and that he therefore corresponds to those metals which the Hermetic theory supposes to be capable of development. It has been constantly advanced that the concept of lead into gold was only the assumed object of alchemy, and that it was in reality in search of a process for developing the latent possibilities in the subject man."

At the same time, it must be admitted that the cryptic character of alchemical language was probably occasioned by a fear of
on the part of the alchemical mystic that he might lay himself open through his magical opinions to the rigors of the law.

Meanwhile, several records of alleged transmutations of base metals into gold have survived. These were reported, for instance, by Nicholas Flamel, Van Helmont, Martini, Richthausen, and Sethon. In nearly every case the transmuting element was said to be a mysterious powder or the "philosopher's stone."

Modern Alchemy

A correspondent writing to the British newspaper *Liverpool Post* in its Saturday, November 28, 1907, edition gave an interesting description of a veritable Egyptian alchemist whom he had encountered in Cairo not long before:

"I was not slow in seizing an opportunity of making the acquaintance of this alchemist living in Cairo, which the winds of chance had blown in my direction. He received me in his private house in the native quarter, and I was delighted to observe that the appearance of the man was in every way in keeping with my ideas of what an alchemist should be and in the flowing robes of a graduate of Al Azhar, his long grey beard giving him a truly venerable aspect, the sage by the eager, far-away expression of his eyes, betrayed the mind of the dreamer, of the man lost to the meaner comforts of the world in his devotion to the secret mysteries of the universe. After the customary salams, the learned man informed me that he was seeking three things—the philosophers' stone, at whose touch all metal should become gold—the elixir of life, and the universal solvent which would dissolve all substances as water dissolves sand. As soon as he had indeed discovered a short time since. I was well aware of the reluctance of the medieval alchemists to divulge their secrets, believing as they did that the possession of them by the vulgar would bring about ruin of states and the fall of divinely constituted princes; and I feared that the reluctance of the modern alchemist to divulge any secrets to a stranger and a foreigner would be no less. However, I drew from my pocket Sir William Crookes's spectroscope—a small box containing a particle of radium highly magnified—and showed it to the sheikh. When he applied it to his eye and beheld the wonderful phenomenon of this dark speck flashing out its fiery needles on all sides, he was lost in wonder, and when I assured him that it would retain this property for a thousand years, he hailed me as a fellow-worker, and as one who had indeed penetrated into the secrets of the world. His retort disappeared at once, and he began to tell me the aims and methods of alchemical research, which were indeed the same as those of the ancient alchemists of yore. His universal solvent he would not show me, but assured me of its efficacy. I asked him in what he kept it if it dissolved all things. He replied 'in wax,' this being the one exception. I suspected that he had found some hydrofluoric acid, which dissolves glass, and so has to be kept in wax bottles, but said nothing to dispel his illusion.

"The next day I was granted the unusual privilege of inspecting the sheikh's laboratory, and duly presented myself at the appointed time. My highest expectations were fulfilled; every-thing was exactly what an alchemist's laboratory should be. Yes, there was the sage, surrounded by his retorts, alembics, crucibles, furnaces, and bellow:s, and, best of all, supported by familiars of gnome-like appearance, squatting on the ground, one blowing the fire (a task to be performed daily for six hours continuously), one pounding substances in a mortar, and another seemingly engaged in doing odd jobs. Involuntarily my eyes sought the pentacle inscribed with the mystic word 'Abracadabra,' but here I was disappointed, for the black arts had no place in this laboratory. One of the familiars had been on a voyage of discovery to London, where he bought a few alchemical materials; another had explored Spain and Morocco, without finding any alchemists, and the third had indeed found alchemists in Algeria, though they had steadily guarded their secrets. After satisfying my curiosity in a general way, I asked the sage to explain the principles of his researches and to tell me on what his theories were based. I was delighted to find that his ideas were precisely those of the modern alchemists, namely, that all metals are debased forms of the original gold, which is the only pure, non-composite metal; all nature strives to return to its original purity, and all metals would return to gold if they could; nature is simple and not complex, and works upon one principle, namely, that of sexual reproduction. It was not easy, as will readily be believed, to follow the mystical explanations of the sheikh. Air was referred to by him as the 'vulture,' fire as the 'scorpion,' water as the 'serpent,' and earth as 'calacant;' and only after considerable cross-questioning and confusion of mind was I able to disentangle his arguments. Finding no notions so entirely medieval, I was anxious to discover whether he was familiar with the phlogistic theory of the seventeenth century. The alchemists of old had noticed that the earthly matter which remains when a metal is calcined is heavier than the metal itself, and they explained this by the hypothesis, that the metal contained a spirit known as 'phlogiston,' which becomes visible when it escapes from the metal or combustible substance in the form of flame; thus the presence of the phlogiston lightened the body just as gas does, and on its being expelled, the body gained weight. I accordingly asked the chemist whether he had found that iron gains weight when it rusts, an experiment he had ample means of making. But no, he had not yet reached the seventeenth century; he had not observed the fact, but was none the less ready with his answer; the rust of iron was an impurity proceeding from within, and which did not affect the weight of the body in that way. He declared that a few days would bring the realisation of his hopes, and that he would shortly send me a sample of the philosophers' stone and of the divine elixir; but although his promise was made some weeks since, I have not yet seen the faithful discovery.

That alchemy has continued to be studied in relatively modern times there can be no doubt. Louis Figuier in his *L'Alchimie* (1854), dealing with the subject of modern alchemy, as expressed by the initiates of the first half of the nineteenth century, states that many French alchemists of his time regarded the discoveries of modern science as merely so many evidences of the truth of the doctrines they embraced. Throughout Europe, he said, the positive alchemical doctrine had many adherents at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Reportedly, a "cast association of alchemists" called the *Hermetic Society*, founded in Westphalia in 1790, continued to flourish in the year 1819. In 1837 an alchemist of Thurignia presented to the Société Industrielle of Weimar a tincture heavered would effect metallic transmutation. About the same time several French journals announced a public course of lectures on hermetic philosophy by a professor of the University of Munich.

Figuier further stated that many Hanoverian and Bavarian families pursued in common the search for the grand arcanum. Paris, however, was regarded as the alchemical Mecca. There lived many theoretical alchemists and "empirical adepts." The first pursued the arcanum through the medium of books; the others engaged in practical efforts to effect transmutation.

During the 1840s Figuier frequented the laboratory of a certain Monsieur L., which was the rendezvous of the alchemists of Paris. When Monsieur L.'s pupils left the laboratory for the day the modern adepts dropped in one by one, and Figuier relates how deeply impressed he was by the appearance and costumes of these strange men. In the daytime he frequently encountered them in the public libraries, buried in the study of gigantic folios, and in the evening they might be seen pacing the solitary bridges with eyes fixed in vague contemplation upon the first pale stars of night. A long cloak usually covered their meager limbs, and their untrimmed beards and matted locks lent them a wild appearance. They walked with a solemn and measured gait, and used the figures of speech employed..."
by the medieval illuminés. Their expression was generally a mixture of the most ardent hope and a fixed despair.

Among the adepts who sought the laboratory of Monsieur L., Figuier noticed especially a young man in whose habits and language he could see nothing in common with those of his strange companions. He confounded the wisdom of the alchemical adept with the tenets of the modern scientist in the same way as any at the observatory. M. Figuier renewed the subject of their last discussion, deploring that "a man of his gifts could pursue the semblance of a chimera." Without replying, the young adept led him into the observatory garden and proceeded to reveal to him the mysteries of modern alchemical science.

The young man recognized a limit to the research of the modern alchemists. Gold, he said, according to the ancient authors, has three distinct properties: (1) resolving the baser metals into itself, and interchanging and metamorphosing all metals into one another; (2) curing afflictions and the prolongation of life; and (3) serving as a spiritus mundi to bring mankind into rapport with the supermundane spheres. Modern alchemists, he continued, rejected the greater part of these ideas, especially those connected with spiritual contact. The object of modern alchemy might be reduced to the search for a substance having power to transform and transmute all other substances one into another—in short, to discover that medium known to the alchemists of old as the philosophers' stone and now lost to us. In the four principal substances of oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, and azote, we have the tetragram of Pythagoras and the tetragram of the Chaldeans and Egyptians. All the sixty elements are referable to these original four. The ancient alchemical theory claimed that all metals are the same in their composition that all are formed from sulphur and mercury, and that the difference between them is according to the proportion of these substances in their composition. Further, all the products of minerals present in their composition complete identity with those substances most opposed to them. For example, fulminating acid contains precisely the same quantity of carbon, oxygen, and azote as cyanic acid, and "cyanhydric" acid does not differ from formate ammoniac. This new property of matter is known as "isomerism." Figuier's friend then proceeded to quote in support of his thesis the operations and experiments of M. Dumas, a celebrated French chemist, as well as those of William Prout and other English chemists of standing.

Passing on to consider the possibility of isomerism in elementary as well as in compound substances, he pointed out to Figuier that if the theory of isomerism can apply to such bodies, the transmutation of metals ceases to be a wild, impractical dream and becomes a scientific possibility, the transformation being brought about by a molecular rearrangement. Isomerism can be established in the case of compound substances by chemical analysis, showing the identity of their constituent parts. In the case of metals it can be proved by the comparison of the properties of isomeric bodies with the properties of metals, in order to discover whether they have any common characteristics.

M. Dumas, speaking before the British Association, had shown that when three simple bodies displayed great analogies in their properties, such as chlorine, bromide, and iodine, mercurium, strontium, and calcium, the chemical equivalent of the intermediate body is represented by the arithmetical mean between the equivalents of the other two. Such a statement well explains in that light. If, for instance, copper is placed in air or water, there will be no result, but if a fixed substance, say silver, is added, it will oxidize. The explanation is that "the acid provokes oxidation of the metal, because it has an affinity for the oxide which tends to form"—a material fact almost metaphysical in its production, and only explicable thereby.

Alchemy in the Twentieth Century

Since the nineteenth-century speculations of Figuier, the modern view of alchemy has primarily regarded it as a mystical approach to chemistry. With the development of subatomic physics and nuclear fission, the transmutation of elements became a reality, culminating in the atomic bomb and atomic power stations, but the vast apparatus and energy needed to transmute elements has increased skepticism that the old alchemists ever succeeded in their dreams.

The alchemical work gave way to ceremonial magic, which today carries most of what is left of the alchemical hermetic tradition. However, there have been a few contemporary figures who followed the alchemical metaphor. Among these was Frater Albertus, who emerged in the 1970s as head of the Paracelsus Research Society in Salt Lake City, Utah. He wrote a number of books about his work, however these only hinted at any alchemical success.

Sources:


Alchindus


Alchindus

Alchindus (or Alkindi) (ca. ninth century C.E.)

Arabian doctor and philosopher of the ninth century regarded by some authorities as a magician but by others as merely a superstitious writer. He used charmed words and combinations of figures in order to cure his patients. Demonologists maintained that the devil was responsible for his power, and based their statements on the fact that he had written a work entitled *The Theory of the Magic Arts.* He was probably, however, nothing more formidable than a natural philosophe at a time when all matters of science and philosophy were held in suspicion. Some of his theories were of a magical nature, as when he attempted to explain the phenomena of dreams by saying that they were the work of the elementals, who acted their strange fantasies before the mind of the sleeper as actors play in a theater. But on the whole there is little to connect him with the practice of magic.

Aldinach

An Egyptian demon, who, according to demonologists, presides over tempests, earthquakes, thunderstorms, and hailstorms and sinks ships. When he appears in visible form, he takes the shape of a woman.

Alectories (or Alectromancy)

An ancient method of divination with a cock. In practicing it, a circle must be made and divided equally into as many parts as there are letters in the alphabet. Then a wheat-corn must be placed on every letter, beginning with A, during which the depositor must repeat a certain verse. This must be done when the sun or moon is in Aries or Leo. A young cock, all white, should then be taken, his claws cut off and the cock forced to swallow them together with a little scroll of parchment made of lambskin upon which has been written certain words. Then the diviner holding the cock should repeat a form of incantation. Next, on placing the cock within the circle, he must repeat two verses of the Psalms, which are exactly in the middle of the 72 verses cited in the entry on ominancy.

With the cock inside the circle, it must be observed from which letters he pecks the grains, and upon these letters new grains must be placed. The letters, when written down and put together will reveal the name of the person concerning whom inquiry has been made.

According to legend the magician Lambicus used this art to discover the person who should succeed Valens Caesar in the empire, but the bird picking up four of the grains, those which lay on the letters “I h o e,” left it uncertain whether Theodorus, Theodotus, or Theodectes, was the person designated. Valens, however, learning what had been done, put to death several individuals whose names unhappily began with those letters, and the magician, to avoid the effects of his resentment, took a draught of poison.

A kind of Alectromancy was also sometimes practiced upon the crowing of the cock, and the periods at which it was heard, Ammianus Marcellinus (fourth century C.E.) describes the ritual that accompanied this act rather differently. The sorcerers commenced by placing a basin made of different metals on the ground and drawing around it at equal distances the letters of the alphabet. Then whoever possessed the deepest occult knowledge, advanced, enveloped in a long veil, holding in his hand branches of vervain, and emitting dreadful cries, accompanied by hideous convulsions. He would stop before the magic basin, and become rigid and motionless. He struck on a letter