

A COMMENTARY ON
THE CHYMICAL WEDDING OF
CHRISTIAN ROSENKREUTZ:
ANNO 1459

FOREWORD

"The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz: Anno 1459" was written down in 1604, and first published in Strasbourg in 1616, having been widely circulated in manuscript during the intervening years.

It was written down by Valentin Andreae, then a seventeen-year-old student in Tübingen University, later to become a Lutheran pastor. Of him Rudolf Steiner says: "His hand wrote it, his body was present; but through him a spiritual power not then on earth wished to communicate this to men, in a way which at that time was possible." 1 (Lecture, December 9, 1923).

"The year 1459 in the title indicates the year in which, in a decisive and actual way - the new Rosicrucian Movement was founded in the West."2 (Karl Heyer: Lecture Course on the Historical Impulse of Rosicrucianism) (SEE NOTE 1)
Rudolf Steiner speaks of Rosicrucianism as "a Mystery School having as its aim the cultivation of an understanding of the Christ Mystery in a way suited to the new era".3(Lecture: European Mysteries and their Initiates) It is a continuation of The Order of the Grail and the Order of the Templars; its contents are couched in different terms in succeeding centuries to meet changes in human consciousness and changing human needs.2

When "The Chymical Wedding" was first written down, it was still possible to convey spiritual revelations as they are here conveyed, in pictorial Imaginations. Later, such Imaginations dried out into abstract, purely conceptual thinking. Today the time is ripe to enliven the intellectual consciousness into a renewed pictorial one. It is therefore in accordance with the spiritual demands at this point of time that "The Chymical Wedding" again begins to attract notice and that its beautiful sequences of imaginative pictures again

begin to speak to our hearts and understanding.

Christian Rosenkreutz, the Founder of the Rosicrucian Movement, is in our time the Keeper of the Gate, the spiritual leader of this modern age. "The Chymical Wedding" tells of a spiritual adventure, a kind of initiation journey, undertaken by him as the pioneer of a new way into the higher worlds suited to our present epoch. It is therefore a book of great significance for our time, one that it is important should be studied both for the deep impression made by its Mystery pictures and for an understanding of its spiritual revelations. We need it as a traveller needs guide-book and map when he journeys into an unknown land; for the journey of which it tells is a journey we must all take sooner or later.

Who was, who is, Christian Rosenkreutz? (See Note 2) Rudolf Steiner has told us that in the middle of the thirteenth century a child was born who had a very special destiny. He came into the care of the twelve wisest men of that age, who by world destiny were gathered in a certain spot in Europe. The child was very carefully trained by them, and taught their twelve-fold wisdom. As a young man, he became very ill; he took no nourishment; his body became almost transparent; and finally he lay in a trance for some days. When he returned to consciousness it seemed as if the twelve streams of wisdom had been woven by him into an all-embracing wisdom. Soon after this he died, having in this incarnation been kept withdrawn from outer earthly activity. He was reborn in 1378 (1 The Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz) In 1406, when he was twenty-eight years of age, he began a seven-year journey to many Centres of Mystery Wisdom, returning in 1413, when he was thirty-five years of age (see Note 3). He had gathered from these centres the essence of their teaching and now grasped intellectually the radiant wisdom that had suffused his feeling-life in the previous century. He was just over eighty years of age when the experience came to him which is recounted in "The Chymical Wedding"; at the age of 106 he died.(2 Fama Fraternitas Roseae Crucis - first printed 1614)

This individuality is said to have reappeared at the French Court at the time of the French Revolution as the Comte de St. Germain. He warned the royal family and the nobility of their approaching fate, but in vain. He gave to the world the watchwords "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"; and though these were misunderstood by the French Revolutionists in the first flush of wild excitement, rightly interpreted they can become watch-words of our present epoch and the key to the development of the future. (3 The Problems of Our Time)

It is said that Christian Rosenkreutz is in almost continuous incarnation, powerfully directing events from a hidden Centre, and always in the service of the Christ Power. Those who wish to know of this important subject should read *The Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz, its Character and Purpose*, by Rudolf Steiner.

Plato said of the myth of Isis and Osiris that it could be understood on twenty different levels, and was true on all of them. This could equally be said of "The Chymical Wedding." Our Commentary looks at its pictures on the very simplest level; but for those who would go deeper a few slight indications of other levels are given in the Notes.

This booklet is the substance of a course of lectures given at Hawkwood College, July 2-9, 1964. It is printed in response to requests from members of the Course to have the material in a permanent form for further study. We send it out in the hope that it may be of some pleasure and profit not only to them but also to a wider circle of people interested in such matters, without as well as within the Anthroposophical Movement.

A distinguished Dutch lecturer who was present at the Course wrote later: "I have started to read 'The Chymical Wedding' and now I begin to love it. I can read it ten times, like a child with its picture-book." This is in accord with Rudolf Steiner's indication that all imaginative knowledge based on truth is healing and health-giving, and that the best educator is this same imaginative knowledge (1 *Theosophy of the Rosicrucians*), an indication which points to the importance of study of such pictorial records of spiritual life as this story.

The outline of the story, which has been included for readers not already familiar with the book itself, has of necessity had to be reduced to barest essentials; but as far as possible we have retained the phraseology of the first translation into English (made by Foxcroft in 1690), as this carries with it something of the flavour of the language of the period in which it was first written down. We understand that two unabridged translations into modern English, one made in England, the other in America, will shortly be available at the Rudolf Steiner Book Shop, 35 Park Road, London, N.W. 1, and from New Knowledge Books, 18 Elizabeth Crescent, East Grinstead, Sussex.

For this first tentative effort in understanding the story we have drawn largely on Rudolf Steiner's three articles published in *Das Reich* (October 1917 to April 1918) entitled "The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz". All quotations from these, (given in translation) are marked with an asterisks. All other books and lectures quoted are by Rudolf Steiner unless otherwise stated.

OUTLINE OF THE STORY

THE FIRST DAY

THE SECOND DAY

THE THIRD DAY

THE FOURTH DAY

THE FIFTH DAY

THE SIXTH DAY

THE SEVENTH DAY

THE FIRST DAY

On Easter eve I was sitting at my table in my cottage on a hilltop, preparing my heart for the next day's festival, when all of a sudden there arose so horrible a tempest that the hill whereon my little house was founded was like to fly all in pieces.

I feared this to be another trick of the devil, who had done me many a spite; and now I felt my coat being twitched behind me. Hugely terrified, I turned to look; and there I beheld a fair and glorious lady, in garments of sky-blue, bespangled with golden stars, and with large and beautiful wings, full of eyes, wherewith she could mount aloft and fly swifter than any eagle. In her right hand was a golden trumpet, and in her left a great bundle of letters in all languages, which she (as I afterwards understood) was to carry into all countries. From among them she chose a small one and laid it reverently on the table. Then, without speaking, she spread her wings and mounted upward, blowing so mighty a blast on her gallant trumpet that for a full quarter of an hour afterward the whole

hill echoed thereof.

I took up the letter in fear and trembling, and found it so heavy as almost to outweigh gold. It was sealed with a little seal which bore a curious cross, together with the inscription, "In this Sign conquer," at which I felt greatly comforted, knowing that this sign was little acceptable, and much less useful, to the devil.

Inside I found this verse written, in golden letters on an azure ground:

"This day, this day, this, this,
The Royal Wedding is.
If you by birth and by God's choice
Are bidden to this feast, rejoice!
Forthwith now to the mountain wend
Whereon three stately Temples stand,
And there see all from end to end.
Yourself examine first with care;
Let him who weighs too light beware;
No guest this Wedding can endure
Who keeps not watch and is not pure."

As I read these warnings, all my hair stood on end. Seven years previously, I had learned in a vision that one day I would be invited to a Royal Wedding; and when I now calculated the positions of the planets, I found that this was indeed the appointed time. But when I examined myself, as bidden by the letter, and contemplated my blindness in mysterious things, my ticklings of the flesh, my rearing of stately palaces in the air and other like carnal designs, I was so overwhelmed by my own unworthiness that I swung between hope and fear. The obscure words concerning the three Temples also afflicted me. At last I begged of my good angel that I might be rightly directed in my sleep.

In my sleep I found myself in a dark dungeon, fettered, with a multitude of companions all struggling with their chains and swarming like bees over each other. When presently we heard trumpets and kettle drums, and the dungeon was uncovered, and a small light lowered into it, I contrived to slip from under the rest and heave myself on to a boulder against the dungeon wall.

Then an old man with ice-grey locks appeared at the edge of the opening, calling for silence. He announced that, by the

grace of his ancient Mother, a rope would be let down seven times among us, and that whoever was able to cling to it would be drawn up and set at liberty.

When the Ancient Matron's servants let down the rope, I could get nowhere near it, while the heaving of the rest was pitiful to see. After seven minutes a little bell rang, and the rope was drawn up with four men clinging to it. Again and yet again the rope descended, and each time a few more were drawn up, those already released helping the servants to pull.

At its sixth lowering, the rope swung aside, so that I was able to catch it, and so beyond all hope came out, bleeding from a head-wound received from a sharp stone on the way. Now the dungeon was covered again, and those of us who had been drawn up were freed from our fetters, and our names recorded on a golden tablet. As we thanked the Ancient Matron for our deliverance and took our leave of her, each of us was given a piece of gold to spend by the way, stamped on one side with the rising sun, and on the other with the letters D.L.S. As for me, I could scarcely well go forward for the wounds left on my feet by the fetters. The Ancient Matron, seeing this, said to me: "My son, let not this defect afflict you, but thank God, Who hath permitted you, even in this world, to come into so high a light. Keep these wounds for my sake." Pondering my dream when I awoke, I well understood from it that God had vouchsafed me to be present at this mysterious and hidden Wedding. So I rose and arrayed myself in a white linen coat with a blood-red stole bound cross-wise over my shoulders; then, with four red roses stuck in my hat, and taking bread, salt and water for food by the way, I set out joyfully on my journey.

THE SECOND DAY

Now I went singing through a forest filled with Nature's rejoicings, emerging on a green heath, where stood three tall cedar trees, to one of which was fastened a tablet, offering a choice of four ways to the Wedding.

The first it described as short but dangerous, leading into rocky places scarcely possible to pass. The second was long, but easy provided we kept to it and were guided by our magnet. The third was a royal road, which only one in a thousand might follow. The fourth was a consuming way, encompassed by fire and cloud, fit only for incorruptible bodies.

The tablet warned us that once we had entered upon any of

these ways there could be no turning back, and that if we knew ourselves by the smallest fault to be unworthy, we should not venture further.

At these dire warnings, I sank down beneath the tree in great perturbation of spirit. While I sat perplexed, pondering whether to turn back, and, if not, which way to follow, I took out a slice of my bread from my bag and began to eat.

At once a snow-white dove fluttered down from the branches above, betaking herself to me very familiarly, and I willingly shared my slice of bread with her. But now a black raven darted down at the dove, who took refuge in flight, the raven hastening after her and I after him.

When I had chased the raven away, I bethought me of my bag and bread, left behind beneath the cedar. But when I turned myself about, to go back to retrieve them, a contrary wind was so strong against me that it was ready to fell me; yet if I went forward, I perceived no hindrance. Looking about me, I saw I was already, without my knowledge, entered upon one of the four ways - the long, circuitous one.

So all that day I followed this road, taking care to stray neither to the left nor to the right. The way itself was so rugged that I was often in doubt about it; but the dove had flown due south, so with the help of my compass I kept strictly to that direction.

At last, just as the sun was setting, I spied a stately Portal, set high on a distant hill. So now I made mighty haste, to reach it before nightfall, seeing elsewhere no other abiding-place.

As I drew near, a venerable man in a sky-blue habit stepped forth, made himself known as the Guardian of the Portal, and asked for my Letter of Invitation. With what joy did I present it!

When the Guardian heard my name and that I was a Brother of the Rose Cross, he both wondered and seemed to rejoice at it, and treated me with abundance of respect, saying: "Come in, my brother. An acceptable guest you are to me!"

In exchange for my bottle of water, the Guardian gave me a golden token, and with it a sealed letter for the Guardian of the Second Portal, entreating me that when these stood me in good stead I would remember him.

Dusk was now falling; and a beautiful Virgin, robed in sky-blue and bearing a glorious torch, was lighting lanterns along the road to the inner Portal. To this I hastened, and was dismayed to find it barred by a terrible chained lion, who, as soon as he espied me, arose and made at me with great roaring.

This awoke the Guardian, who was asleep on a slab of marble; he drove back the lion, and, having read the sealed letter, greeted me with great respect, crying:

"Now welcome in God's name unto me, the man who of long time I would gladly have seen!"

In exchange for my salt, this second Guardian gave me a second token.

By now the dusk had deepened, and a bell began to ring within the Castle. The Guardian warned me to run apace, or I would not reach the innermost gate before it closed for the night. The lights along the path were already being extinguished, and I was thankful to have the Virgin's torch to guide me through the darkness. As I entered the Third Portal at her very heels, the gate clapped to so suddenly that part of my coat was locked out, and, since its Guardian could not be prevailed upon to open the gate again, had to be left behind.

The Third Guardian now wrote my name in a little book of vellum, and gave me a third token, together with a new pair of shoes, for the floor of the Castle was pure shining marble. My old pair I bestowed on a beggar who sat by the gate.

Two pages, each bearing a torch, now conducted me into the Castle, and left me alone in a little room, where, to my terror, invisible barbers cut away the hair from the crown of my head, but on my forehead, ears and eyes they permitted my ice-grey locks to hang. The hair cut off was carefully gathered up by invisible hands and carried away.

Now a little bell began to ring; and the two pages, returning, lighted me through many doors and up winding stairs to a spacious hall, where there was a great multitude of guests -- emperors, kings, princes, lords, noble and ignoble, rich and poor, all sorts of people, including some I knew well, and as yet had never any reason to esteem; these, when I enquired of

them as to their route, I found had mostly been forced to clamber over the rocks.

When, presently, trumpets sounded to bid us to the feast, these were they who scrambled for the highest seats, so that for me and some other sorry fellows there was hardly a little nook left at the lowermost table. But next to me was sitting a very fine, quiet man, who discoursed of excellent matters. Meat was now brought in, and served by invisible hands, everything so orderly managed that it seemed as if every guest had his own attendant. When one boasted that he could see these invisible servitors, one of them reached him so handsome a cuff upon his lying muzzle that not only he, but many who were by him, became as mute as mice.

As they grew warm with wine, these guests of the lewder sort began to vaunt of their abilities; one heard the movements of the Heavens, the second could see Plato's Ideas, the third could number the atoms of Democritus. One would prove this, another that; and commonly the most sorry idiots made the loudest noise. In this tumult I had almost cursed the day wherein I had come hither, and I opined that the Lord Bridegroom would have done well to seek some other fool than me for his wedding. But this was really one part of the lameness whereof I had dreamed.

Suddenly we heard strains of such delicate music that the babel was hushed and no one spoke one word for the space of half an hour. Then came louder music, all so master-like as if the Emperor of Rome had been entering. The door opened of itself, and many thousands of lighted tapers entered, marching of themselves, and followed by a gliding gilded throne, on which sat the Virgin whose torch had lighted me to the Castle. She was robed no longer in sky-blue, but in snow-white, sparkling with purest gold.

She welcomed us in the name of the Bride and the Bridegroom, but warned us that next morning we must all be weighed, to determine which were worthy to stay and assist at the Wedding. Any who felt assured of his own worthiness was now to be conducted to his bed-chamber; any who felt doubtful was to spend the night in this hall.

When she had departed on her gliding throne, the tapers, held by invisible hands, conducted the confident to their beds. Only I and eight others remained in the hall, among them my

table companion. An hour later, pages came in, bound all nine of us with ropes, and left us to spend the night in darkness and discomfort, bewailing our presumption in accepting the Wedding invitation.

But during the night I dreamed that I stood on a high mountain, overlooking a great valley, in which a multitude of men were suspended, some high, some low, by ropes looped round their necks. An ancient man flew up and down among them, cutting the ropes with his shears. Those who had hung near the earth fell gently; those who had hung high had a most shameful fall. This scene joyed me at the heart, till, in my highest fit of jollity, I waked.

This dream I recounted to my companion, who felt assured that by it some comfort was intended. So he and I lay side by side in the dark, and passed the time till daybreak in harmonious discourse.

THE THIRD DAY

At daybreak those who had deemed themselves worthy came again into the hall where we others still lay bound. Then a fanfare of trumpets ushered in the Virgin, arrayed now in red velvet, girded with a white scarf, and on her head a green wreath of laurel, which much became her.

She was attended by two hundred knights in armour, with surcoats of red and white; some of these she directed to unbind us, and to place us where we could see well what was to follow. Seeing me among them, she laughed and exclaimed: "Good lack! Have you also submitted yourself to the yoke? I imagined you would have made yourself very snug!"

Great golden scales were now brought in and hung in the middle of the hall, beside them was placed a little table covered with red velvet and bearing seven weights - a pretty great one, then four little ones, then two great ones severally; these weights in proportion to their bulk were so heavy that no man can believe it. The knights were divided into seven groups, the captain of each being placed in charge of one of the weights.

A stately Emperor was the first to step into the scale. One by one the captains laid in their weights; the first six he withstood, but when the seventh was added he was outweighed;

he was therefore bound and delivered over in great anguish to the sixth band of knights. One by one the other Emperors were in turn weighed and also found wanting, except the last, who held out so steadfastly that methought had there been more weights he would have outstood these, too.

To him the Virgin, rising and bowing, gave a red velvet gown and a laurel branch, and seated him on the steps of her throne.

The other ranks - kings, lords, gentry, learned and unlearned - were now all weighed in turn. In each condition, one, at most two, but mostly none, passed the test; those who did so were, like the Emperor, honoured with a red velvet gown, a laurel bough, and a seat on the steps of the Virgin's throne. Now it was our turn, we who had slept in the hall. Only my companion and I outstayed all the weights. My companion held out bravely, whereupon all applauded him, and the Virgin showed him deep respect. When, with trembling, I myself stepped up, my companion, who already sat by in his velvet, looked friendly upon me, and the Virgin herself smiled a little.

So far did I outstay all the weights that to these the Virgin added three knights in full armour. Still I outweighed them all, upon which one of the pages stood up, and cried out, exceeding loud:

"That is he!"

Because I had proved the weightiest, the Virgin graciously permitted me to release one of the captives, whomsoever I pleased; I elected the first emperor, who was immediately set free, and with all respect seated among us. Meanwhile, the Virgin espied my roses, which I had taken out of my hat into my hands; thereupon by her page she graciously requested them of me, which I readily sent her.

By ten in the forenoon we had all been weighed. At the meal which followed, we in our red velvet robes were seated at the high table, which was also decked with red velvet and set with drinking-cups of pure silver and gold. Here two pages presented to us, on the Bridegroom's behalf, the insignia of the Golden Fleece and the Flying Lion.

The attendants who before had been invisible were now visible to us, whereat I was exceeding joyful. To those others who had

failed, and who were now seated at a lower table, the attendants were still invisible.

When the meal was over, and a golden chalice sent by the Bridegroom had gone round, we new Knights of the Golden Fleece, seated on the steps of the Virgin's throne, were carried into the garden, to see those who had failed receive judgement. Here the Virgin led us by winding stairs into a gallery. But how the Emperor whom I had released behaved towards me I cannot relate for fear of slander.

And now that the virgin who had brought me my invitation, and whom I had hitherto never since seen, stepped forward and, giving one blast upon her trumpet, declared sentence on those guests who had been weighed and found wanting. Those who had weighed only a little too light were allowed to redeem themselves with gold and jewels, and to depart with dignity, receiving at the door the Draught of Forgetfulness. Some, who were lighter, were to be stripped and sent forth naked. Some, lighter yet, were to be scourged forth with rods and whips. Those who were proved imposters, and had never been invited, were to forfeit their lives to sword or halter.

Watching the execution of these sentences, I felt my eyes run over, till at last the garden, which had been so full, was emptied, and a silence fell upon it.

Into this silence delicately stepped a snow-white unicorn, a golden collar about his neck. He knelt in reverence before a lion who stood on a fountain with a naked sword held in his paw. The lion broke the sword, and the pieces sank into the fountain; then he reared till a snow-white dove came flying to him with an olive branch in her bill. This the lion devoured, and so was quieted; and the unicorn returned to his place with joy, while our Virgin led us back down the winding stairs. When we had washed our heads and hands in the fountain, we each received from the Virgin a richly habited and learned page, able aptly to discourse on all subjects, by whom we were conducted back into the Castle, and shown its paintings, treasures, and antiquities. Many occupied themselves in copying the paintings; but I, on whom the page of greatest power had been bestowed, was led with my companion into parts of the Castle usually kept private, the keys of these having been committed to my page.

Here for several hours we stayed, seeing treasures none of the

others were permitted to see, such as the Royal Sepulchre, with its glorious Phoenix, and a most noble Library. Though by now it had struck seven, and I began to feel the pangs of hunger, I was yet well content; I could be happy to fast all my life with such an entertainment.

When the King sent his page for the keys, we were shown a costly clockwork regulated according to the course of the planets; and next a huge terrestrial globe, on which we found our native lands marked with little rings of gold; others doing likewise, we discovered that our company was drawn from all parts of the Earth.

This globe being hollow, we were able to sit within it and contemplate the stars glittering in an agreeable order in the interior of the Earth, and moving so gallantly that I had scarce any mind ever to go out again, as our page told our Virgin, and with which she twitted me, for it was already supper time, and I was almost the last at table.

At supper, as all grew merry with wine, the Virgin began to propound enigmas, for which, try as we would, we could find no solution. She told us, for example:

"My sister and I have an eagle, whom we both cherish. One day we entered our chamber and found him with a laurel branch in his beak. I also had one in my hand; my sister had none in hers. The eagle went first to her, and gave her his branch, then came to me, motioning me to give him mine. Now whom did he love the better, my sister or myself?"

The Virgin was become so familiar that I adventured and requested her name. Smiling at my curiosity, she replied in another riddle:

"My name contains 6 and 50, yet has only 8 letters. The third is a third part of the fifth, which, added to the sixth, will produce a number whose sum will exceed the third itself by just the first, and which is half of the fourth. The fifth and seventh are equal. So are the last and first. The first and second together equal the sixth, which contains four more than the third tripled. Now, my lord, how am I called?"

The answer was intricate enough; yet I left not off, but said:

"Noble and virtuous Lady, may I not obtain only one letter?"

"Yea," said she, "that may well be done."
"What, then," I proceeded, "may the seventh contain?"
"It contains," said she, "as many as there are lords here".

With this I easily found her name, at which she was well pleased.

She now invited us to assist at the ceremony of Hanging Up the Weights. Six virgins entered, bearing lights and escorting a stately Duchess, less worldly than our Virgin, and looking up towards Heaven rather than towards Earth. We all took her for the Bride, but were much mistaken, although in honour, riches and state she much surpassed the Bride, and afterwards ruled the whole Wedding.

To me she said: "You have received more than others; see that you also make a larger return."

To me this was a very strange sermon.

Though the scales had been removed from the hall, the weights were still standing on their little table. The Duchess directed each of her virgins to take up one, and to our Virgin she gave her own, the largest and heaviest. The company then went in procession up to seven chapels, in the first of which our Virgin hung up the Duchess's weight, while in each of the others one of the other virgins hung up hers; in all the chapels, led by the Duchess, we sang a hymn together and prayed that the Royal Wedding might be blessed.

Then each of us was conducted by his page to a richly furnished bedchamber, where the page lay on a pallet near him, in case he had need of anything in the night. This was the first night that I slept in quiet; and yet a scurvy dream would not suffer me to rest, for I was troubled with a door which I could not open, though at last I did so; and with these fantasies I passed the time till I awaked.

THE FOURTH DAY

Next morning I over-slept my breakfast, they being unwilling to waken me because of my age; but I was soon ready with my habit, and found the rest assembled beside the fountain in the garden.

Today the lion on the fountain, in place of his broken sword,

bore a tablet announcing that in its water Prince Mercury had a healing medicine for all ills, and concluding:

"Let him drink of me who is able.
Let him who will, wash.
Let him trouble me who dares.
Drink, Brethren, and live!"

When we had all washed in the fountain, and drunk of its water from a golden cup, we were given new garments of cloth-of-gold, gloriously set out with flowers, and a new insignia of the Golden Fleece, from which hung a disc of gold, with the sun and the moon on one side, and on the other this inscription:

"The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun shall be seven times brighter than at present."

Led by our Virgin with sixty virgins in attendance, and by musicians clad in red velvet, we mounted a winding staircase of 365 steps to the Royal Hall, where I saw the young King and Queen as they sat in their majesty amid unspeakable glory; for besides that the room glittered of pure gold and precious stones, the Queen's robes were so made that I was not able to behold them.

Our Virgin presented us to the King as wedding guests who had ventured hither at peril of body and life. It would have been fitting for one of us to have spoken somewhat on such an occasion; but, seeing we were all troubled with a falling of the uvula, old Atlas, the Court Astrologer, stepped forward and welcomed us on the King's behalf.

The young King and Queen sat under a great arch at the western end of the hall; each wore a wreath of laurel, and over them hung a large and costly crown. On one side of them sat enthroned an ancient grey-bearded king with a fair young queen; on the other, a black king, middle-aged, with a veiled and dainty old matron.

Cupid darted hither and thither; sometimes he seated himself between the two lovers; sometimes he made as if he would shoot one of us; he was so full of his waggery that he would not spare even the little birds, which flew about the chamber in multitudes. The virgins also had their pastimes with him; and

when they could catch him, it was no easy matter for him to get from them again. Thus this little knave made all the sport and mirth.

Before the King and Queen stood a little altar, bearing six curious objects -- a book bound with black velvet, overlaid with gold; a taper alight in an ivory candlestick, upon which Cupid now and then puffed in sport; a celestial globe, turning of itself; a chiming clock; a crystal fountain of red water; and a skull through whose eye-holes a small white snake wound in and out.

The audience over, the musicians played us down the winding stairs again to our own hall, where, our mirth falling into our feet, virgins and lords struck up a civil dance together; after which we attended their Majesties through many stately walks to the House of the Sun, to see a merry comedy, the Duchess leading, carrying a small pearl crucifix, her six virgins carrying the sacred objects from the altar, and Atlas bringing up the rear.

The merry comedy opened with an ancient King sitting upon his throne; a little chest found floating on the sea was brought to him. In it he found the infant princess of a neighbouring kingdom, who had been stolen by the Moors. He had her tenderly and royally brought up, and planned to marry her to his son when she came of age.

Again she fell into the hands of the Moors and was rescued by an ancient knight; she was restored to her lost kingdom and crowned queen. A third time, and now of her own free will, she fell into the hands of the Moor, who usurped her kingdom, stripped and scourged her, and cast her into prison.

The young king to whom she was betrothed made war upon the Moors on her behalf, and was victorious; he released the young queen, and restored her to her kingdom; they were married amid great rejoicings; and the play closed with a wedding hymn, calling down blessing on our King and Queen, and praying that a fairer future race might spring from them.

We now returned to the Royal Hall for the wedding feast. Though the tables were richly furnished, and all the royal persons were attired afresh in snow-white glittering garments, there was no music, the young King sighed often, the old King and Queen were grave, and all was performed with such state and solemn stillness, and all things had so strange a

face, that foreboding of some imminent peril hung over us all.

Presently the young King took the black-bound book from the altar, and asked those of us who were resolved to keep faith with him to write our names in it. One after another, we all rose and did so. Then the crystal fountain of red water was brought, and with it a small crystal drinking-cup, from which the whole company drank the Draught of Silence, as in any House of the Mysteries.

At the tolling of a bell, the white garments were exchanged for black ones; floors, ceiling, walls, all were covered with black velvet. Our Virgin brought in six black taffeta scarves, with which she bound the eyes of the three Kings and the three Queens. The tables were removed, and six covered coffins placed in the centre of the hall, around a low black seat. Finally, in came a coal-black Moor, with a naked axe in his hand.

The old King was led to the low black seat, and there solemnly and reverently beheaded. His head was wrapped in a black cloth; his blood was caught in a golden cup; both were placed with his body in the first coffin. One after another, the other two Kings and the three Queens submitted with silent dignity to the same fate. Then the black executioner, preparing to withdraw, was himself beheaded, and his head placed with his axe in a little shrine.

To me this seemed indeed a bloody Wedding, and I and others wept; but our Virgin bade us be of good courage, telling us: "The life of these Kings and Queens stands now in your hands; if you will but follow me, this death shall make many to live."

She bade us all good-night, bidding our pages conduct us to our chambers. Mine alone looked out over the lake. About midnight, being unable to sleep, I became aware of a bright glow on the water, and, rising from my bed, I saw seven ships sailing swiftly to the Castle, all full of lights. Over each ship hovered a flame; as soon as I saw them I knew: "These are the spirits of the beheaded."

As the ships drew gently to land, our Virgin went through the night to meet them, torch in hand; behind her came attendants, bearing the six covered coffins and the little shrine, which they placed one in each ship. I roused my page; together we

saw all the lights but one on each ship go out; the flames pass again across the lake; and the Virgin return to the Castle, leaving hundreds of watchmen encamped along the shore, to keep guard through the night.

Then my page and I again retired to rest; and at last, being extremely weary, we both fell asleep.

THE FIFTH DAY

Next morning, being awake long before the rest, I entreated my page to lead me a little about the Castle, and show me somewhat that was rare, whereupon he led me down an underground staircase to an iron door, on which was inscribed in copper letters:

"Here lies buried Lady Venus, the fair woman who hath undone many a great man."

My page led me by the hand through this door and along a dark passage to another, normally kept locked, but unlocked today because the coffins had yesterday been brought out through it. Through it we reached the King's Treasury, a glorious vault which had no other light but from certain huge carbuncles, and where, my page told me, I would see things which no human eye outside the Royal Family had ever seen till now.

In the middle of the vault was a rich tomb, like an altar, triangular in shape, supported by an ox, and eagle and a lion, and made entirely of gold and precious stones. On it, in a vessel of polished copper, stood an angel, bearing a tree in his arms. From this tree fruit fell continually into the vessel, turned there to water, and ran out into three smaller golden bowls.

Opening a copper door in the pavement, my page now led me down another exceeding dark staircase to an even deeper chamber. I was mightily terrified when he lit a torch from a small, ever-burning taper, and asked how he durst do this. He gave me for answer:

"As long as the Royal Persons are still at rest, I have nothing to fear."

In this chamber, by the light of the torch, I espied a rich bed hung about with curious curtains, one of which my page

drew, and I saw the Lady Venus, stark naked (for he heaved up the coverlets, too), lying there in such beauty that I was almost beside myself.

Behind the bed was tablet, on which was inscribed:

"When the fruit of my tree shall be completely melted, then will I awake and be the mother of a King."

When we ascended again to the King's Treasury, I there observed small tapers of pyrites, burning with flames so still and clear that I had mistaken them before for precious stones. It was the heat from these that melted the fruit on the tree held by the angel, and caused more fruit continually to grow. No sooner had we re-entered the Treasury than in flew the little Cupid, who promptly locked the copper door leading down to Venus's chamber, exclaiming:

"My old busy grandsire, you might lightly have served me a scurvy trick, had you been aware of this door. I must look better to it! Yet can I not let it pass unrevenged that you were so near stumbling upon my dear mother."

And he heated the point of his dart in one of the taper-flames, and with it pricked my hand. I thanked God he had lighted on us no sooner, for at his unlooked-for appearance I felt more like the dead than the living.

I now joined my fellow-guests in our hall, where Cupid would needs have me show him my hand, where he still found a little drop of blood, at which he heartily laughed, and had the rest have a care of me, as I would shortly end my days. We all wondered how he could be so merry and have no sense of yesterday's sad passages.

Our Virgin, dressed in black velvet, now conducted us to the garden, where we found six sepulchres under a roof supported by seven columns, above which floated a flag with a Phoenix painted on it. Here we assisted at the interring of six coffins and a little shrine. The other guests thought they had been present at the royal funeral; only I knew differently. Our Virgin now reminded us of our oaths of allegiance to the Bridegroom, and invited us to sail with her to the island Tower of Olympus, to assist in preparing the medicaments needed to restore the Royal Persons to life. We willingly followed her to the shore, where the seven ships still lay at anchor, five of them flying planetary signs, one a globe and

one a pyramid. Here she assigned us to the various ships, which then set sail in this order:

Foremost, A, the Pyramid, carrying the Moor's head, with twelve musicians making excellent music. Then B, C, D, abreast, in which we were disposed, our Virgin and I being in C, which flew the Globe. Then the two stateliest ships, E and F, whose flags were the Sun and Moon, having no passengers. In the rear, G, in which were forty virgins.

From the lake we passed through a narrow strait into the sea, where sirens, nymphs and sea-goddesses swam to meet us, begging to be allowed to sing to us. Our Virgin, having re-arranged her ships in a pentagon about the Sun and Moon, yielded to their entreaties, whereupon the sirens sang of love so delicately and sweetly that I no more wondered at Ulysses for stopping the ears of his companions; Cupid began to work with me, too, which tended little to my credit. This was the wound I received on my head in a dream.

Presently we sailed on, and after some hours came within sight of the Tower of Olympus. Its Warden, a very ancient man, came out in a gilded pinnace to receive us and conduct us to his island. This was a perfect square, with a great wall running all round it, two hundred and sixty paces thick. The Tower itself was as if seven round towers had been built one by another, yet the middlemost was somewhat higher, and within they all entered one into another.

At the gate of the Tower, we were led a little aside while the six coffins and the little shrine were brought in without anyone but myself noticing. Then we were taken into its underground laboratory, to wash herbs, crush precious stones and extract juices and essences, our Virgin being so busy with us, and so full of directions, that she knew not how to give us employment enough.

By nightfall these tasks were completed; a little broth and a little wine were distributed, and mattresses were laid on the laboratory floor. I could not sleep, but walked for a while in the garden, where, coming to stone steps leading to the top of the wall, I mounted them, to contemplate the calm, moonlit sea and the starry sky.

Here I was much moved to observe a conjunction of the planets such as is seldom seen. Then, just before midnight, I saw the

seven flames appear again far across the sea, and pass over it to the island, coming to rest above the spire of the central tower.

Suddenly the winds rose, the sea grew rough, and clouds covered the moon. Hastily I stumbled back to the laboratory, where, lulled by a gently purling fountain, I quickly fell asleep.

THE SIXTH DAY

Next morning the Warden of the Tower entered the underground laboratory, followed by youths carrying ladders, ropes and large wings.

"My dear sons," he said, "one of these three things must each one of you this day constantly bear about with him. To make choice you shall cast lots."

My lot fell on a ladder, twelve foot long, and pretty weighty; and I must be forced to carry it, whereas the others could handsomely coil their ropes about them, while as for the wings, the old man joined them so neatly on to the third sort as if they had grown upon them.

He then withdrew, taking with him the fruits of our yesterday's labours, and locking the door behind him, so that we imagined we had been imprisoned in the Tower. But after a quarter of an hour, a round hole in the ceiling was uncovered from above, where we saw our Virgin, who bade us a cheerful goodmorrow, desiring us to come up. The winged sort were able to do so instantly. Those with ladders followed, each drawing up his ladder after him. But those with ropes had to wait until these had been suspended for them from iron hooks, and even then the ascent was not compassed without blisters. The hole being covered again, we found ourselves in a laboratory surrounded by six stately vestries, to which we were first directed, to pray for the life of the King and Queen. The twelve musicians who had sat in the ship of the Pyramid now brought in a fountain, and with it a great oval casket, which, as I surmised, contained the bodies of the beheaded Kings and Queens. Then, while they played a most delicate voice of music, in came our Virgin, bearing the little shrine containing the Moor's head, and followed by veiled virgins with laurel boughs and torches.

All now stood round the fountain while our Virgin took from the little shrine the Moor's head, wrapped in taffeta, and placed it in a vessel, into which were then poured the essences and tinctures prepared yesterday. It was from the Moor's head that this solution conceived so great a heat, the virgins also placing their torches on spikes beneath the vessel, so that the water driving from the fountain seethed and simpered. Their laurel boughs they stuck into holes all round the fountain, so that the spray falling on them dropped into the vessel coloured a deeper yellow.

For two hours the fountain played, and the distillations dripped into the oval casket till the bodies it contained were quite dissolved. Then our Virgin had a golden globe brought in; into this ran a red liquid from the oval casket; then the globe was carried forth again.

We laborators now sat alone for a quarter of an hour or so, till I, perceiving a trampling overhead, had an eye to my ladder. The cover in the ceiling was lifted; and up we went by wings, ladders and ropes. It did not a little vex me that our Virgin could go up another way; yet I could judge we must leave somewhat for the old man (the Warden) to do.

And indeed, when we came up to this third conclave, we found the golden globe already suspended by a strong chain from the centre of the ceiling. The walls of this third laboratory were nothing but windows alternating with mirrors, so optically opposed that the sun was everywhere reflected, so that in all quarters of the room there was nothing but suns.

The heat from all these artificial refractions beat blindingly upon the golden globe, till our Virgin judged the desired temperature to have been reached. She gave orders now for the mirrors to be covered, and, when the globe had cooled, for us to lift it down and cut it asunder. After much disputation, this was at last done with a diamond; and when the two halves fell apart, a great snow-white egg was disclosed, so beautiful that we stood around it as jocund as if we ourselves had laid it.

As soon as our Virgin was satisfied that the shell had sufficiently hardened, she carried the egg from the room, locking the door behind her. What she did abroad with the egg, I know not; we were again to pause for one quarter of an hour, till the third hole opened, and we, by means of our

instruments, came up to the fourth floor.

Here we found a great square copper vessel, filled with silver sand, in which the egg was placed and warmed over a gentle fire, till, being ready, it was taken out, but needed no cracking, for the Bird soon freed himself, looking very jocund.

Our Virgin warned us to tie him up before we fed him; this we did, setting him on the warm sand and bringing him the blood of the beheaded Kings and Queens to drink, whereupon he grew before our eyes, became covered with black feathers, and bit and scratched so devilishly that, could he have had his will upon any of us, he would soon have despatched us.

When we brought him other meat, he grew tamer and more tractable; he moulted his black feathers and replaced them with snow-white ones. At his third feeding, his feathers began to be so curiously coloured that I never saw the like for beauty, and he now behaved himself so friendly with us that, our Virgin consenting, we released him from captivity. At dinner we began to make merry together, spending our time for the most part with our Bird; after which, our Virgin and our Bird departed from us, and the fifth room was opened, which we reached after the former manner.

Here we found our Bird awaiting us, and a cool milky bath prepared for him, in which he pleasantly sported; as the lamps beneath it made it warmer, we had enough to do to keep him in the bath, and therefore clapped a cover on, suffering him to thrust out his head through a hole.

In this heated bath, the Bird lost all his feathers, which the water consumed turning blue, and the Bird stepped out as smooth as a new-born babe. The bath we heated further, till all the water had evaporated, leaving only a blue stone: this we ground to powder, with which we painted the Bird blue all over, except for his head, which remained white.

Again our Virgin departed with her Bird, and we ascended through the ceiling to the sixth conclave, where we found a little altar set up in the middle of the chamber, and on it the book, the lighted taper, the heavenly globe, the chimingclock, the crystal fountain, and the skull with its white serpent, every way like those in the King's hall. The Bird stood on the altar, and drank from the blood-red

fountain, then pecked at the white serpent till she bled. The heavenly globe turned till a certain conjunction was reached, then a second, then a third; after each conjunction the clock chimed.

Then the poor Bird himself submissively laid down his neck upon the book, and willingly suffered his head to be smitten off by one of us, thereto chosen by lot. Howbeit, he yielded not one drop of blood till he was opened on the breast, and then the blood spun out so fresh and clear as if it had been a fountain of rubies. His death went to the heart of us, yet we might well judge that a naked bird would stand us in little stead. We assisted the Virgin to burn the body (together with a little tablet hanging by) to ashes, with fire kindled at the little taper, and to lay them in a box of cypress wood. Here I cannot conceal what a trick I, with three more, was served.

"My Lords," said the Virgin, "we are here in the sixth room, and have only one more before us. I have found among you these four (pointing to me and three others) lazy and sluggish laborators, and I purpose that they shall be excluded from the seventh and most glorious action."

The Virgin so well knew how to keep her countenance that the water of our grief soon ran over our baskets. The musicians were fetched and with cornets blew us out of doors with such derision that they themselves could scarcely sound for laughing. But as soon as we were come out of the door, they bid us be of good cheer, and follow them up the winding stairs to the eighth floor under the roof, where we found the old man standing.

He received us friendly, and congratulated us that we were hereto chosen by the Virgin; when he had understood the fright we conceived, his belly was ready to burst with laughing that we had taken such good fortune so heinously. "Hence," said he, "my dear sons, learn that man never knoweth how well God intendeth him".

Our Virgin, running in with her cypress box of the Bird's ashes, also joined in the laughter; and we four were set to work under the direction of the old Warden, moistening the ashes to a dough with prepared water, heating this paste, then casting it into two little moulds.

While this was cooling, we peeped through a crevice in the floor at our fellows, now busy on the storey below, where we saw them industriously blowing at furnaces, and making gold, imagining they were herein wonderfully preferred before us. When we opened our two little moulds, we found two bright and almost transparent little images, angelically fair babes, a male and a female, each being but four inches long. These we laid on two little satin cushions, and beheld them till we were almost besotted upon so exquisite an object. Under the old man's direction, we let the blood from the Bird's breast fall drop by drop from a golden cup into their mouths, till they had reached their perfect full growth, with curled gold-yellow hair. The old man commanded us to lay them on a long table covered with white velevelt and to cover them with white taffeta, which, because of their unspeakable beauty, it went hard with us to do.

Our Virgin now entered with two curious garments, which could have been crystal but that they were gentle and not transparent. These she laid upon a table; and while her musicians played, she and the old man performed many ceremonial gestures directed towards the roof. This was arched into seven hemispheres, and at the top of the middle and highest of these I spied a small aperture.

Now entered six virgins, each bearing a large trumpet, wreathed with a green, glittering, burning material. The old man took them one by one, placing them one after another on the mouths of the two sleepers, with their wider ends directed to the roof. Along each of the funnels thus made, I saw a bright stream of flame shoot down from the aperture in the roof, and enter the sleeping image, which immediately twinkled its eyes though scarcely stirring.

Next the two sleepers were neatly laid by each other in a travelling bed, where they continued to sleep behind drawn curtains. Meanwhile, we sat very still, attending when our married couple would awake; and thus about half an hour was spent. Then Cupid flew in, and tormented them till they waked, which happened to them with very great amazement, for they imagined that they had slept from the hour in which they were beheaded; and when our Virgin had clothed them in their new garments, all present kissed their hands, and escorted them down the stairs and out to the royal ship, in which, with Cupid and a train of virgins, they set sail for home.

At supper the Virgin brought us again to our former companions, where we were to carry ourselves as if we had truly been in a lamentable condition. At this supper the old lord was with us; I learned most by this old lord, and if men would but take notice of his procedure, things would not so often and untowardly miscarry.

After supper, the old lord led us into his closet of rareties where we saw such wonderful productions of Nature and other things which man's wit, in imitation of Nature had invented, that we needed a year sufficiently to survey them. Thus we spent a good part of the night by candle-light.

We then retired to handsome bed-chambers; and I, being weary with continual labour, had good rest, continuing in one dream from eleven of the clock till eight the next morning.

THE SEVENTH DAY

Next morning, the morning of the seventh and last day, we met in the nethermost vault of the Tower, and were given habits entirely yellow, together with our golden fleeces, for we were still dressed in our black funeral garb.

After breakfast, the old lord presented each one of us with a golden medal, bearing on one side the words, "Art is the priestess of Nature," and on the other, "Nature is the daughter of Time". So we went forth to the sea, where our ships lay richly equipped. The ships were twelve in number, six of ours and six of the old lord's; but he betook himself to us in our ship, where we were all together. In the first the musicians seated themselves, of which the old lord had a great number. Our flags were the twelve celestial signs, and we sat in Libra. The sea was so calm that it was a singular pleasure to sail; but that which surpassed all was the old man's discourse, who so well knew how to pass away our time with wonderful histories that I could have been content to sail with him all my life long.

After two hours' sailing we passed from the sea into the narrow strait, and out of this into the lake, which we found covered with 500 ships which had sailed from the Castle to meet us, led by one sparkling with gold and precious stones, in which sat the young King and Queen, on whose behalf Old Atlas welcomed us.

The rest of our companions were in a huge amazement whence this King should have arisen, for they imagined no other than that they must again awaken him. We carried ourselves as if it seemed strange to us, too. After Atlas's oration, out steps our old man, wishing the King and Queen all happiness and increase, after which he delivered a curious small casket, but what was in it I know not; it was delivered to the custody of Cupid, who hovered between them both.

So we sailed on a good time together, till we arrived at another shore, near the first gate at which I first entered. Horses awaited us there; and when we disembarked, the old lord and I rode with the young King, each of us bearing a snow-white ensign with a Red Cross; I, indeed, was made use of because of my age, for we both had long grey beards and hair. I had fastened my tokens round my hat, of which the young King soon took notice, and demanded if I were he who at the gate had redeemed these tokens. I answered yes in the most humble manner; but he laughed on me, saying there henceforth needed no ceremony, I was HIS Father.

When we reached the first Portal, the Guardian in his sky-blue habit awaited us, a supplication in his hand; this he delivered to me, begging me to use my good offices in lying it before the King. On the way to the second Portal, therefore, I asked the King about this Guardian, and he replied that he was a very famous astrologer; but having on a time committed a fault against Venus by beholding her in her bed of rest, this punishment was imposed upon him, that he should so long wait at the gate till someone should release him from thence.

"May he then be released?" I asked.
And the King replied.

"Yes; if another commits the same transgression, he must take his place."

This word went to my heart; conscience convinced me that I was the offender, yet I held my peace, and delivered the supplication. As soon as the King had read it, he was mightily terrified; and as soon as we alighted, he called for Old Atlas to come to him in a little closet, and showed him the writing. Atlas made no long tarrying, but rode out to the Portal to take better cognisance of the matter.

It was now announced that after supper each of us could crave some boon of the King. Meanwhile the King and Queen began to

play together a game not unlike chess, with the virtues and vices one against another, where it might be observed with what plots the vices lay in wait for the virtues, and how to re- encounter them. During the game in comes Atlas again, and makes his report in private; yet I blushed all over, for my conscience gave me no rest.

The King now handed me the supplication to read. In it the Guardian of the First Portal reported that his observations of the stars revealed that one of the King's guests had uncovered Venus; thus the time had come when he himself should be released from his office, and he begged to be permitted to be present at that evening's banquet in the hope of discovering his successor.

The King accordingly sent to invite his to join us; and as we all sat at table he made his strict survey. Then certain curious chairs were placed in a circle, in which we, together with the King and Queen, both their old men, and the ladies and virgins, were to sit. A handsome page then announced that the King, in recognition of our services, had elected each of us Knight of the Golden Stone, and required us to make these five vows:

To ascribe our Order only to God and His handmaid, Nature.
To abominate all whoredom, and not defile our Order with such vices.

To use our talents to assist all that have need of them.
Not to strive for wordly pride and high authority.
Not to wish to live longer than God would have us.

At this last article we could not choose but laugh.
We were now, with due ceremony, installed Knights, and conducted in procession to a little chapel, where I hung up my golden fleece and my hat. And because everyone was to write his name there, I writ thus:

"The highest wisdom is to know nothing.
Brother Christian Rosenkreutz.
Knight of the Golden Stone.
1459."

The King then retired to a little closet, to which each of us was to come in private, to request our boons. I decided, even at my own peril, to release the Guardian of the First Portal from his office; so, when I was called in, I made a full

confession.

The King wondered mightily at this, and wished me to step aside a little; and as soon as I was called in again, Atlas declared to me that it was grievous to the King's Majesty that I, whom he loved above others, was fallen into such a mischance; yet, because it was not possible for him to transgress his ancient usages, the other must be released and I placed in his stead. Nor was my own release to be hoped for till the marriage feast of his future son. This sentence near cost me my life; yet I took courage, and related how this gatekeeper had been my benefactor, having bestowed a token on me by whose assistance I had stood upon the scale, and so had been made partaker of all the honour and joy already received. Hereupon the good man was pronounced free, and I imagined no other than that I must finish my life under the gate.

The ring of office was now placed upon my finger, and the King embraced me, telling me this was the last time I would see him in this manner, from all of which I understood that in the morning I, most wretched man, had nobody to show me the way, who should approach me but the two august old lords -- Atlas and the Warden of the Tower -- who conducted me into a glorious lodging, in which stood three beds, and each of us lay in one of them.

* *

At this point the narrative breaks off abruptly in the middle of a sentence; and this colophon is added:

"Here are wanting about two leaves in quarto; and he (the author hereof) whereas he imagined he must in the morning be door-keeper, returned home."