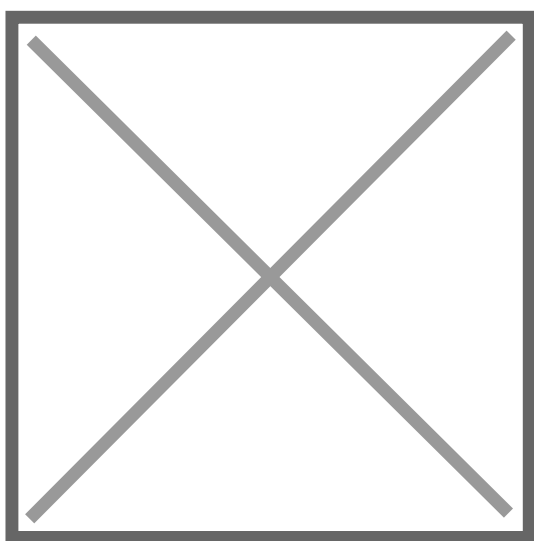


41 Nicolas Flamel

Nicholas Flamel is probably the most famous non-existent alchemist. I think he didn't not exist, but stories of Flamel abound in alchemy and even into our culture. perhaps a real Frenchman, we don't know his birth and death dates because no record exists of his existence that I trust. A will, a tombstone and the story of an arch that isn't in the churchyard he said it was is what we have, and all could have been faked later. We guess 1330-1415. All we have is one peculiar tract where he describes buying a book he can't read. But this book has pictures, so he describes the pictures and gives his guess as to what they mean. Hardly an auspicious and important alchemical work. His wife Perrenelle is always included in the narrative, and Flamel claims she could do the work, but she acts as an assistant only.



An imaginative version of Flamel, from the 1600's.

Laurinda Dixon published his sort-of biography in 1994 and claims there he is one of the most well-documented medieval alchemists. I haven't read it. Documented in legend?

Part 1: Flamel's book.

Flamel's *Exposition of the Hieroglyphical Figures* (first French edition, 1612) is dated to 1413, I don't know how. These are from *His Exposition of the Hieroglyphicall Figures . . . Faithfully, and . . . religiously done into English out of the French and Latine copies*. By Eirenæus Orandus (London, 1624). The text describes his buying a book he could not read, an emblem book of 21 pages (shorter than most emblem books by over half) with many illustrations. Despite not knowing even which language it is, he can read the title. The introduction says the book had seven figures, that the letters were Latin, and that he went to Spain to get it translated in 1378.

The Introduction.

Although that I *Nicholas Flammel, Notary*, and abiding in *Paris*, in this yeere one thousand three hundred fourescore and nineteene, and dwelling in my house in the street of Notaries, neere unto the Chappell of St. *James* of the Bouchery; although, I say, that I learned but a little Latine, because of the small meanes of my Parents, which nevertheless were by them that envie me the most, accounted honest people; yet by the grace of God, and the intercession of the blessed Saints in *Paradise* of both sexes, and principally of Saint *James* of *Gallicia*, I have not wanted the understanding of the Bookes of the Philosophers, and in them learned their so hidden secrets. And for this cause, there shall never bee any moment of my life, when I remember this high good, wherein upon my knees (if the place will give me leave) or otherwise, in my heart with all my affection, I shall not render thanks to this most benigne God, which never suffereth the child of the Just to beg from doore to doore, and deceiveth not them which wholly trust in his blessing.

Whilest therefore, I *Nicholas Flammel, Notary*, after the decease of my Parents, got my living in our Art of Writing, by making Inventories, dressing accounts, and summing up the Expenses of Tutors and Pupils, there fell into my hands, for the sum of two Florens, a guilded Booke, very old and large; It was not of Paper, nor Parchment, as other Bookes bee, but was onely made of delicate Rindes (as it seemed unto me) of tender yong trees: The cover of it was of brasse, well bound, all engraven with letters, or strange figures; and for my part, I thinke they might well be Greeke Characters, or some such like ancient language: Sure I am, I could not reade them, and I know well they were not notes nor letters of the Latine nor of the Gaule, for of them wee understand a little. As for that which was within it, the leaves of barke or rinde, were ingraven, and with admirable diligence written, with a point of Iron, in faire and neate Latine letters coloured. It contained thrice seven leaves, for so were they counted in the top of the leaves, and alwayes every seventh leafe was without any writing, but in stead thereof, upon the first seventh leafe, there was painted a Virgin, and Serpents swallowing her up; In the second seventh, a Crosse, where a Serpent was crucified; and in the last seventh, there were painted Desarts, or Wildernesses, in the midst whereof ran many faire fountaines, from whence there issued out a number of Serpents, which ran up and downe here and there. Upon the first of the leaves, was written in great Capitall Letters of gold, ABRAHAM THE JEW, PRINCE, PRIEST, LEVITE, ASTROLOGER, AND PHILOSOPHER, TO THE NATION OF THE JEWES, BY THE WRATH OF GOD DISPERSED AMONG THE GAULES, SENDETH HEALTH. After this it was filled with great execrations and curses (with this word MARANATHA, which was often repeated there) against every person that should cast his eyes upon it, if hee were not Sacrificer or Scribe.

Hee that sold mee this Booke, knew not what it was worth, no more than I when I bought it; I beleeeve it had beene stolne or taken from the miserable Jewes; or found hid in some part of the ancient place of their abode. Within the Booke, in the second leafe, hee comforted his Nation, counselling them to flie vices, and above all, Idolatry, attending with sweete patience the coming of the Messias, which should vanquish all the Kings of the Earth, and should raigne with his people in glory eternally. Without doubt this had beene some very wise and understanding man. In the third leafe, and in all the other writings that followed, to helpe his Captive nation to pay their tributes unto the Romane Emperours, and to doe other things, which I will not speake of, he taught them in common words the transmutation of Mettalls; hee painted the Vessels by the sides, and hee advertised them of the colours, and of all the rest, saving of the first Agent, of the which hee spake not a word, but onely (as he said) in the fourth and fifth leaves entire hee painted it, and figured it with very great cunning and workemanship; for although it was well and intelligibly figured and painted, yet no man could ever have beene able to understand it, without being well skilled in their Cabala, which goeth by tradition, and without having well studied their bookes. The fourth and fifth leafe therefore, was without any writing, all full of faire figures enlightened, or as it were enlightened, for the worke was very exquisite. First he painted a yong man, with wings at his ankles, having in his hand a Caducæan rodde, writhen about with two Serpents, wherewith hee strooke upon a helmet which covered his head; he seemed to my small judgement, to be the God Mercury of the Pagans: against him there came running and flying with open wings, a great old man, who upon his head had an houre-glasse fastened, and in his hands a hooke (or sithe) like Death, with the which, in terrible and furious manner, hee would have cut off the feet of Mercury. On the other side of the fourth leafe, hee painted a faire flowre on the top of a very high mountaine, which was sore shaken with the North wind; it had the foot blew, the flowres white and red, the leaves shining like fine gold: And round about it the Dragons and Griffons of the North made their nests and abode. On the fifth leafe there was a faire Rose-tree flowred in the midst of a sweet Garden, climbing up against a hollow Oake; at the foot wherof boyled a fountaine of most white water, which ranne head-long downe into the depths, notwithstanding it first passed among the hands of infinite people, which digged in the Earth seeking for it; but because they were blinde, none of them knew it, except here and there one which considered the weight.

On the last side of the first leafe, there was a King with a great Fauchion, who made to be killed in his presence by some Souldiers a great multitude of little Infants, whose Mothers wept at the feet of the unpittifull Souldiers: the bloud of which Infants was afterwards by other Souldiers gathered up, and put in a great vessell, wherein the Sunne and the Moone came to bathe themselves. And because that this History did represent the more part of that of the Innocents slaine by Herod, and that in this Booke I learned the greatest part of the Art, this

was one of the causes, why I placed in their Churchyard these Hieroglyphick Symbols of this secret science. And thus you see that which was in the first five leaves: I will not represent unto you that which was written in good and intelligible Latine in all the other written leaves, for God would punish me, because I should commit a greater wickednesse, then he who (as it is said) wished that all the men of the World had but one head that hee might cut it off at one blow.⁸ Having with me therefore this faire Booke, I did nothing else day nor night, but study upon it, understanding very well all the operations that it shewed, but not knowing with what matter I should beginne, which made me very heavy and solitary, and caused me to fetch many a sigh. My wife Perrenelle, whom I loved as my selfe, and had lately married, was much astonished at this, comforting mee, and earnestly demanding, if shee could by any meanes deliver mee from this trouble: I could not possibly hold my tongue, but told her all, and shewed her this faire Booke, whereof at the same instant that shee saw it, shee became as much enamored as myselfe, taking extreame pleasure to behold the faire cover, gravings, images, and portraicts, whereof notwithstanding shee understood as little as I: yet it was a great comfort to mee to talke with her, and to entertaine my selfe, what wee should doe to have the interpretation of them. In the end I caused to bee painted within my Lodging, as naturally as I could, all the figures and portraicts of the fourth and fifth leafe, which I shewed to the greatest Clerkes in Paris, who understood thereof no more then my selfe; I told them they were found in a Booke that taught the Phylosophers stone, but the greatest part of them made a mocke both of me, and of that blessed Stone, excepting one called Master Anselme, which was a Licentiate in Physick, and studied hard in this Science: He had a great desire to have seene my Book, and there was nothing in the world, which he would not have done for a sight of it; but I alwayes told him, that I had it not; onely I made him a large description of the Method. He told mee that the first portraict represented Time, which devoured all; and that according to the number of the sixe written leaves, there was required the space of sixe yeeres, to perfect the stone; and then he said, wee must turne the glasse, and seeth it no more. And when I told him that this was not painted, but onely to shew and teach the first Agent, (as was said in the Booke) hee answered me, that this decoction for sixe yeeres space, was, as it were a second Agent; and that certainly the first Agent was there painted, which was the white and heavy water, which without doubt was Argent vive, which they could not fixe, nor cut off his feete, that is to say, take away his volatility, save by that long decoction in the purest bloud of young Infants; for in that, this Argent vive being joined with gold and silver, was first turned with them into an herb like that which was there painted, and afterwards by corruption, into Serpents: which Serpents being then wholly dried, and decocted by fire, were reduced into powder of gold, which should be the stone. This was the cause, that during the space of one and twenty yeeres, I tried a thousand broulleries,⁹ yet never with bloud, for that was wicked and villanous: for I found in my Booke, that the Phylosophers called Bloud, the minerall spirit,

which is in the Mettals, principally in the Sunne, Moone, and Mercury, to the assembling whereof, I alwayes tended; yet these interpretations for the most part were more subtile then true. Not seeing therefore in my workes the signes, at the time written in my Booke, I was alwayes to beginne againe. In the end having lost all hope of ever understanding those figures, for my last refuge, I made a vow to God, and St. James of Gallicia, to demand the interpretation of them, at some Jewish Priest, in some Synagogue of Spaine: whereupon with the consent of Perrenelle, carrying with me the Extract of the Pictures, having taken the Pilgrims habit and staff, in the same fashion as you may see me, without this same Arch in the Church-yard, in the which I put these hyeroglyphicall figures, where I have also set against the wall, on the one and the other side, a Procession, in which are represented by order all the colours of the stone, so as they come & goe, with this writing in French.

*Moult plaist a Dieu procession,
S'elle est faicte en devotion: that is,
Much pleaseth God procession,
If't be done in devotion.*

Which is as it were the beginning of King Hercules his Book, which entreateth of the colours of the stone, entituled Iris, or the Rainebow, in these termes, Operis processio multum naturæ placet, that is The procession of the worke is very pleasant unto Nature: the which I have put there expressly for the great Clerkes, who shall understand the Allusion. In this same fashion, I say, I put my selfe upon my way; and so much I did, that I arrived at Montjoy,¹⁰ and afterwards at Saint James, where with great devotion I accomplished my vow. This done, in Leon at my returne I met with a Merchant of Boloyn, which made me knowne to a Physician, a Jew, by Nation, and as then a Christian, dwelling in Leon aforesaid, who was very skilfull in sublime Sciences, called Master Canches. As soone as I had shoven him the figures of my Extraict, hee being ravished with great astonishment and joy, demanded of me incontinently, if I could tell him any newes of the Booke, from whence they were drawne? I answered him in Latine (wherein hee asked me the question) that I hoped to have some good newes of the Book, if any body could decipher unto me the Enigmaes: All at that instant transported with great Ardor and joy, hee began to decipher unto mee the beginning: But to be short, hee wel content to learn newes where this Book should be, and I to heare him speake; and certainly he had heard much discourse of the Booke, but (as he said) as of a thing which was beleevved to be utterly lost, we resolved of our voyage, and from Leon we passed to Oviedo, and from thence to Sanson, where wee put our selves to Sea to come into France: Our voyage had beene fortunate enough, & all ready, since we were entred into this Kingdome, he had most truly interpreted unto mee the greatest part of my figures, where even unto the very points and prickles, he found great misteries, which seemed unto mee wonderfull, when arriving at Orleans, this learned man

fell extreemely sicke, being afflicted with excessive vomitings, which remained still with him of those he had suffered at Sea, and he was in such a continuall feare of my forsaking him, that hee could imagine nothing like unto it. And although I was alwayes by his side, yet would he incessantly call for mee, but in summe hee dyed, at the end of the seventh day of his sicknesse, by reason whereof I was much grieved, yet as well as I could, I caused him to be buried in the Church of the holy Crosse at Orleans, where hee yet resteth; God have his soule, for hee dyed a good Christian: And surely, if I be not hindered by death, I will give unto that Church some renew, to cause some Masses to bee said for his soule every day. He that would see the manner of my arrivall, and the joy of Perenelle, let him looke upon us two, in this City of Paris, upon the doore of the Chappell of St James of the Bouchery, close by the one side of my house, where wee are both painted, my selfe giving thanks at the feet of Saint James of Galicia, and Perrenelle at the feet of St John, whom shee had so often called upon. So it was, that by the grace of God, and the intercession of the happy and holy Virgin, and the blessed Saints, James and John, I knew all that I desired, that is to say, the first Principles, yet not their first preparation, which is a thing most difficult, above all the things in the world: But in the end I had that also, after long errours of three yeeres, or thereabouts, during which time, I did nothing but study and labour, so as you may see me without this Arch, where I have placed my Processions against the two Pillars of it, under the feet of St. James and St. John, praying alwayes to God, with my Beades in my hand, reading attentively within a Booke, and poysing the words of the Philosophers: and afterwards trying and proving the diverse operations, which I imagined to my selfe, by their onely words. Finally, I found that which I desired, which I also soone knew by the strong sent and odour thereof. Having this, I easily accomplished the Mastery, for knowing the preparation of the first Agents, and after following my Booke according to the letter I could not have missed it, though I would. Then the first time that I made projection, was upon Mercurie, whereof I turned halfe a pound, or thereabouts, into pure Silver, better than that of the Mine, as I my selfe assayed, and made others assay many times. This was upon a Munday, the 17. of January about noone, in my house, Perrenelle only being present; in the yeere of the restoring of mankind, 1382. And afterwards, following alwayes my Booke, from word to word, I made projection of the Red stone upon the like quantity of Mercurie, in the presence likewise of Perrenelle onely, in the same house, the five and twentieth day of Aprill following, the same yeere, about five a clocke in the Evening; which I transmuted truly into almost as much pure Gold, better assuredly than common Golde, more soft, and more plyable. I may speake it with truth, I have made it three times, with the helpe of Perrenelle, who understood it as well as I, because she helped mee in my operations, and without doubt, if shee would have enterprised to have done it alone, shee had attained to the end and perfection thereof. I had indeed enough when I had once done it, but I found exceeding great pleasure and delight, in seeing and contemplating the Admirable workes of Nature, within the Vessels. To signifie

unto thee then, how I have done it three times, thou shalt see in this Arch, if thou have any skil to know them, three furnaces, like unto them which serve for our operations: I was afraid along time, that Perrenelle could not hide the extreme joy of her felicitie, which I measured by mine owne, and lest shee should let fall some word amongst her kindred, of the great treasures which wee possessed: for extreme joy takes away the understanding, as well as great heavinesse; but the goodnesse of the most great God, had not onely filled mee with this blessing, to give mee a wife chaste and sage, for she was moreover not onely capeable of reason, but also to doe all that was reasonable, and more discreet and secret, than ordinarily other women are. Above all, shee was exceeding devout, and therefore seeing her selfe without hope of children, and now well stricken in yeeres, she began as I did, to thinke of God, and to give our selves to the workes of mercy. At that time when I wrote this Commentarie, in the yeere one thousand foure hundred and thirteene, in the end of the yeere, after the decease of my faithfull companion, which I shall lament all the dayes of my life: she and I had already founded, and endued with renewes. Hospitals in this Citie of Paris, wee had new built from the ground three Chappels, we had enriched with great gifts and good rents, seven Churches with many reparations in their Church-yards, besides that which we have done at Boloigne, which is not much lesse than that which we have done heere. I will not speake of the good which both of us have done to particular poore folkes, principally to widdowes and poore Orphans, whose names if I should tel, and how I did it, besides that my reward should be given mee in this World, I should likewise doe displeasure to those good persons, whom I pray God blesse, which I would not doe for any thing in the World. Building therefore these Churches, Churchyards, and Hospitals in this City, I resolved my selfe, to cause to be painted in the fourth Arch of the Church-yard of the Innocents, as you enter in by the great gate in St. Dennis street, and taking the way on the right hand, the most true and essentiall markes of the Arte, yet under vailes, and Hieroglyphicall covertures, in imitation of those which are in the gilded Booke of Abraham the Jew, which may represent two things, according to the capacity and understanding of them that behold them: First, the mysteries of our future and undoubted Resurrection, at the day of judgement, and comming of good Jesus, (whom may it please to have mercy upon us) a Historie which is well agreeing to a Churchyard. And secondly, they may signifie to them, which are skilled in Naturall Philosophy, all the principall and necessary operations of the Maistry. These Hieroglyphicke figures shall serve as two wayes to leade unto the heavenly life: the first and most open sence, teaching the sacred Mysteries of our salvation; (as I will shew hereafter) the other teaching every man that hath any small understanding in the Stone, the lineary way of the worke; which being perfected by any one, the change of evill into good, takes away from him the roote of all sinne (which is covetousnesse) making him liberall, gentle, pious, religious, and fearing God, how evill soever hee was before, for from thence forward, hee is continually ravished with the great grace and mercy which hee hath obtained from God, and

with the profoundnesse of his Divine & admirable works. These are the reasons which have mooved mee to set these formes in this fashion, and in this place which is a Churchyard, to the end that if any man obtaine this inestimable good, to conquere this rich golden Fleece,¹¹ he may thinke with himselfe (as I did) not to keepe the talent of God digged in the Earth, buying Lands and Possessions, which are the vanities of this world: but rather to worke charitably towards his brethren, remembring himselfe that hee learned this secret amongst the bones of the dead, in whose number hee shall shortly be found; and that after this life, hee must render an account, before a just and redoubtable Judge, which will censure even to an idle and vaine word. Let him therefore, which having well weighed my words, and well knowne and understood my figures, hath first gotten elsewhere the knowledge of the first beginnings and Agents, (for certainly in these Figures and Commentaries, he shall not finde any step or information thereof) perfect to the glory of God, the Maistery of Hermes, remembring himself of the Church Catholike, Apostolike, and Romane; and of all other Churches, Churchyards, adi Hospitals; and above all, of the Church of the Innocents in this Citie, (in the Churchyard whereof hee shall have contemplated these true demonstrations) opening bounteously his purse, to them that are secretly poore, honest people desolate, weake women, widdowes, and forlorne orphanes. So be it.

Chap. 1: Of the Theologicall Interpretations, which may be given to these Hieroglyphickes, according to the sence of mee the Authour.

I have given to this Churchyard, a Charnell-house, which is right over against this fourth Arch, in the midst of the Churchyard, and against one of the Pillers of this Charnell house, I have made bee drawne with a coale, and grosely painted, a man all blacke, which lookes straight upon these Hieroglyphickes, about whom there is written in French; Je voy merveille donc moult Je m'esbahi: that is, I see a marveile, whereat I am much amazed: This, as also three plates of Iron and Copper gilt, on the East, West, and South of the Arch, where these Hieroglyphickes are, in the midst of the Church-yard, representing the holy Passion and Resurrection of the Sonne of God; this ought not to be otherwise interpreted, than according to the common Theologicall sence, saving that this black man, may as well proclaime it a wonder to see the admirable workes of God in the transmutation of Mettals, which is figured in these Hieroglyphicks, which he so attentively looks upon, as to see buried so many bodies, which shall rise againe out of their Tombes at the feareful day of judgement. On the other part I doe not thinke it needfull to interpret in a Theological sence, that vessell of Earth on the right hand of these figures, within the which there is a Pen and Inkhorne, or rather a vessell of Phylosophy, if thou take away the strings, and joyne the Penner to the Inkhorne: nor the other two like it, which are on the two sides of the figures of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, within one of the which, there is an N. which signifieth Nicholas, and within the other an F. which

signifieth Flammell. For these vessels signifie nothing else, but that in the like of them, I have done the Maistry three times. Moreover, he that will also beleewe, that I have put these vessels in forme of Scutchions, to represent this Pen and Inkhorne, and the capitall letters of my name, let him beleewe it if he will, because both these interpretations are true.

Neither must you interpret in a Theological sence, that writing which followeth, in these termes, NICHOLAS FLAMMEL, ET PERRENELLE SA FEMME, that is Nicholas Flammel, and Perrenelle his wife, in as much as that signifieth nothing, but that I and my wife have given that Arche.

As to the third, fourth, and fifth Tables following, by the sides whereof is written, COMMENT LES INNOCENTS FURENT OCCIS PAR LE COMMANDEMENT DU ROY HERODES, that is, How the Innocents were killed by the commandement of King Herod. The theologicall sence is well enough understood by the writing, we must onely speake of the rest, which is above.

The two Dragons united together the one within the other, of colour blacke and blew, in a field sable, that is to say, blacke, whereof the one hath the wings gilded and the other hath none at all, are the sinnes which naturally are enterchayned, for the one hath his originall and birth from another: Of them some may be easily chased away, as they come easily, for they flie towards us every houre; and those which have no wings, can never be chased away, such as is the sinne against the holy Ghost. The gold which is in the wings, signifieth that the greatest part of sinnes commeth from the unholy hunger after gold; which makes so many people diligently to hearken from whence they may have it: and the colour black and blew, sheweth that these are the desires that come out of the darke pits of hell, which we ought wholly to flye from. These two Dragons may also morally represent unto us the Legions of evill spirits which are alwayes about us, and which will accuse us before the just Judge, at the feareful day of judgement, which doe aske, nor seeke nothing else but to sift us.

The man and the woman which are next them, of an orange colour, upon a field azure and blew, signifie that men and women ought not to have their hope in this World, for the orange colour intimates despaire, or the letting goe of hope, as here; and the colour azure and blew, upon the which they are painted, shewes us that we must thinke of heavenly things to come, and say as the roule of the man doth, HOMO VENIET AD JUDICIUM DEI, that is, Man must come to the judgement of God, or as that of the woman, VERE ILLA DIES TERRIBILIS ERIT, that is, That day will be terrible indeed, to the end that keeping our selves from the Dragons, which are sinnes, God may shew mercy unto us. Next after this, in a field of Synople, that is greene, are painted two men and one woman rising againe, of the which one comes out of a Sepulchre, the other two out of the Earth, all three of colour exceeding white and pure, lifting their hands towards their eyes, & their eyes towards Heaven on high: Above these three bodies there

are two Angels sounding musically Instruments, as if they had called these dead to the day of judgement; for over these two Angels is the figure of our Lord Jesus Christ, holding the world in his hand, upon whose head an Angel setteth a Crowne, assisted by two others, which say in their roles, O pater Omnipotens, O Jesu bone, that is O Father Almighty, O good Jesu. On the right side of this Saviour is painted St Paul, clothed with white & yellow, with a Sword, at whose feet there is a man clothed in a gown of orange colour, in which there appeared pleights or folds of blacke and white, (which picture resembleth mee to the life) and demandeth pardon of his sinnes, holding his hands joined together, from betweene which proceed these words written in a role, DELE MALA QUÆ FECI, that is to say, Blot out the evils that I have done: On the other side on the left hand is Saint Peter with his Key, clothed in reddish yellow, holding his hand upon a woman clad in a gown of orange colour, which is on her knees, representing to the life Perrenelle, which holdeth her hands joyned together, having a rowle where is written, CHRISTE PRECOR ESTO PIUS, that is, Christ I beseech thee be pittifull: Behind whom there is an Angel on his knees, with a role, that saith, SALVE DOMINE ANGELORUM, that is, All haile thou Lord of Angels. There is also another Angel on his knees, behinde my Image, on the same side that S. Paul is on, which likewise holdeth a role, saying, O REX SEMPITERNE, that is O King everlasting. All this is so cleere, according to the explication of the Resurrection and future judgement, that it may easily be fitted thereto. So it seemes this Arch was not painted for any other purpose, but to represent this. And therefore we needed not stay any longer upon it, considering that the least and most ignorant, may well know how to give it this interpretation.

Next after the three that are rising againe, come two Angels more of an Orange colour upon a blew field, saying in their roles, SURGITE MORTUI, VENITE AD JUDICIUM DOMINI MEI, that is, Arise you dead, come to the Judgment of my Lord. That also serves to the interpretation of the Resurrection: As also the last Figures following, which are, A man red vermillion, upon a field of Violet colour, who holdeth the foot of a winged Lyon, painted of red vermillion also, opening his throte, as it were to devoure the man: For one may say that this is the Figure of an unhappy sinner, who sleeping in a Lethargy of his corruption and vices, dieth without repentance and confession; who without doubt, in this terrible Day shall be delivered to the Devill, heere painted in forme of a red roaring Lyon, which will swallow and devoure him.

Chap. 2: The interpretations Philosophicall, according to the Maistry of Hermes.

I desire with all my heart, that he who searcheth the secrets of the Sages, having in his Spirit passed over these Idæa's of the life and resurrection to come, should first make his profit of them: And in the second place, that hee be

more advised than before, that hee sound and search the depth of my Figures, colours, and rowles; principally of my rowles, because that in this Art they speake not vulgarly. Afterward let him aske of himselfe, why the Figure of Saint Paul is on the right hand, in the place where the custome is to paint S. Peter? And on the other side that of Saint Peter, in the place of the figure of Saint Paul? Why the Figure of Saint Paul is clothed in colours white and yellow, and that of S. Peter in yellow and red? Why also the man and the woman which are at the feet of these two Saints, praying to God, as if it were at the Day of Judgement, are apparrelled in divers colours, and not naked, or else nothing but bones, like them that are rising againe? Why in this Day of Judgement they have painted this man and this woman at the feet of the Saints? For they ought to have beene more low on earth, and not in heaven. Why also the two Angels in Orange colour, which say in their rowles, SURGITE MORTUI, VENITE AD JUDICIUM DOMINI MEI, that is, Arise you dead, come unto the Judgment of my Lord, are clad in this colour, and out of their place, for they ought to bee on high in heaven, with the two other which play upon the Instruments? Why they have a field Violet and blew? but principally why their roule, which speaks to the dead, ends in the open throate of the red and flying Lyon? I would then that after these, and many other questions which may justly bee made, opening wide the eyes of his spirit, he come to conclude, that all this, not having beene done without cause, there must bee represented under this barke, some great secrets, which hee ought to pray God to discover unto him. Having then brought his beliefe by degrees to this passe, I wish also that he would further beleeeve, that these figures and explications are not made for them that have never seene the Bookes of the Philosophers, and who not knowing the Mettallicke principles, cannot bee named Children of this Science; for if they thinke to understand perfectly these figures, being ignorant of the first Agent, they will undoubtedly deceive themselves, and never bee able to know any thing at all. Let no man therefore blame me, if he doe not easily understand mee, for hee will be more blame-worthy than I, inasmuch as not being initiated into these sacred and secret interpretations of the first Agent, (which is the key opening the gates of all Sciences) he would notwithstanding, comprehend the most subtile conceptions of the envious Philosophers, which are not written but for them who already know these principles, which are never found in any booke, because they leave them unto God, who revealeth them to whom he please, or else causeth them to bee taught by the living voyce of a Maister, by Cabalisticall tradition, which happeneth very seldome. Now then, my Sonne, let mee so call thee, both because I am now come to a great age, and also for that, it may be, thou art otherwise a child of this knowledge, (God enable thee to learne, and after to worke to his glory) Hearken unto mee then attentively, but passe no further if thou bee ignorant of the foresaid Principles.

This Vessell of earth, in this forme, is called by the Philosophers, their triple Vessell, for within it, there is in the midst a Stage, or a floore, and upon that a

dish or a platter full of luke-warm ashes, within the which is set the Philosophicall Egge, that is, a viall of glasse full of confections of Art (as of the scumme of the red Sea, and the fat of the Mercuriall winde:) which thou seest painted in forme of a Penner and Inkehorne. Now this Vessell of earth is open above, to put in the dish and the viall, under which by the open gate, is put in the Philosophicall fire, as thou knowest. So thou hast three vessels; and the threefold vessell: The envious have called an Athanor, a sive, dung, Balneum Mariæ, a Furnace, a Sphære, the greene Lyon, a prison, a grave, a urinall, a phioll, and a Bolts-head: I my selfe in my Summarie or Abridgement of Philosophy, which I composed foure yeeres and two moneths past, in the end thereof named it the house and habitation of the Poulet, and the ashes of the Platter, the chaffe of the Poulet; The common name is an Oven, which I should never have found, if Abraham the Jew had not painted it, together with the fire proportionable, wherein consists a great part of the secret. For it is as it were the belly, or the wombe, containing the true naturall heate to animate our yong King: If this fire be not measured Clibanically, saith Calid the Persian, sonne of Jasichus; If it be kindled with a sword, saith Pithagoras: If thou fire thy Vessell, saith Morien, and makest it feele the heate of the fire, it will give thee a box on the eare, and burne his flowres before they be risen from the depth of his Marrow, making them come out red, rather than white, and then thy worke is spoiled; as also if thou make too little fire, for then thou shalt never see the end, because of the coldnesse of the natures, which shall not have had motion sufficient to digest them together.

The heate then of thy fire in this vessell, shall be (as saith Hermes and Rosinus) according to the Winter; or rather, as saith Diomedes, according to the heate of a Bird, which beginnes to flie so softly from the signe of Aries to that of Cancer: for know that the Infant at the beginning is full of cold flegme, and of milke, and that too vehement heate is an enemy of the cold and moisture of our Embrion, and that the two enemies, that is to say, our two elements of cold and heate will never perfectly imbrace one another, but by little and little, having first long dwelt together, in the midst of the temperate heate of their bath, and being changed by long decoction, into Sulphur incombustible. Govern therefore sweetly with equality and proportion, thy proud and haughty natures, for feare lest if thou favour one more then another, they which naturally are enemies, doe grow angry against thee through Jelousy, and dry Choller, and make thee sigh for it a long time after. Besides this, thou must entertain them in this temperate heate perpetually, that is to say, night and day, until the time that Winter, the time of the moisture of the matters, be passed, because they make their peace, and joyne hands in being heated together, whereas should these natures finde themselves but one onely half houre without fire, they would become for ever irreconcilable. See therefore the reason why it is said in the Book of the seventy precepts, Looke that their heate continue indefatigably without ceasing, and that none of their dayes bee forgotten. And Rasis, the haste, saith hee, that

brings with it too much fire, is alwaies followed by the Divell, and Errour. When the golden Bird, saith Diomedes, shall be come just to Cancer, and that from thence it shall runne toward Libra, then thou maist augment the fire a little: And in like manner, when this faire Bird, shall fly from Libra towards Capricorne, which is the desired Autumne, the time of harvest and of the fruits that are now ripe.

[The next five chapters present alchemical interpretations of individual details of the arch diagram; the two chapters printed below, the last in Flamel's treatise, concern the figures of St. Peter and Perrenelle on the right-hand side of the illustration and the winged lion atop a man at the far right.]

Chap. 8: The figure of a man, like unto Saint Peter, cloathed in a robe Citrine red, holding a key in his right hand, and laying his left hand upon a woman, in an orange coloured robe, which is on her knees at his feete, holding a Rowle.

Looke upon this woman clothed in a robe of orange colour, which doth so naturally resemble Perrenelle as she was in her youth; Shee is painted in the fashion of a suppliant upon her knees, her hands joyned together, at the feete of a man which hath a key in his right hand, which heares her graciously, and afterwards stretcheth out his left hand upon her. Wouldest thou know that this meaneth? This is the Stone, which in this operation demandeth two things, of the Mercury of the Sunne, of the Philosophers, (painted under the forme of a man) that is to say Multiplication, and a more rich Accoustrement; which at this time it is needfull for her to obtaine, and therefore the man so laying his hand upon her shoulder accords & grants it unto her. But why have I made to bee painted a woman? I could as well have made to bee painted a man, as a woman, or an Angell rather (for the whole natures are now spirituall and corporall, masculine and foeminine:) But I have rather chosen to cause paint a woman, to the end that thou mayest judge, that shee demaunds rather this, than any other thing, because these are the most naturall and proper desires of a woman. To shew further unto thee, that shee demandeth Multiplication, I have made paint the man, unto whom shee addresseth her prayers in the forme of Saint Peter, holding a key, having power to open and to shut, to binde and to loose; because the envious Phylosophers have never spoken of Multiplication, but under these common termes of Art, APERI, CLAUDE, SOLVE, LIGA, that is Open, shut, binde, loose; opening and loosing, they have called the making of the Body (which is alwayes hard and fixt) soft fluid, and running like water: To shut and to bind, is with them afterwards by a more strong decoction to coagulate it, and to bring it backe againe into the forme of a body.

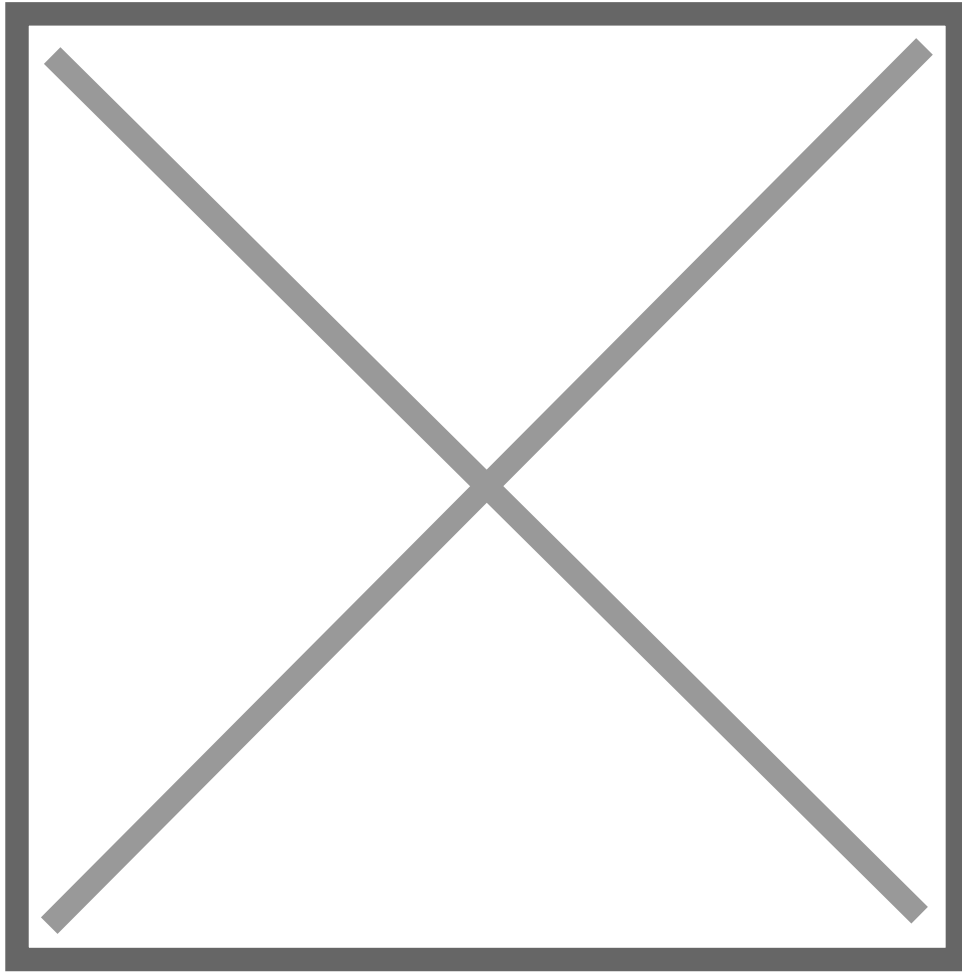
It behoved mee then, in this place to represent a man with a key, to teach thee that thou must now open and shut, that is to say, Multiply the budding and encreasing natures: for look how often thou shalt dissolve and fixe, so often will these natures multiply, in quantity, quality, and vertue according to the multiplication of ten; comming from this number to an hundred, from an hundred to a thousand, from a thousand to ten thousand, from ten thousand to an hundred thousand, from an hundred thousand to a million, and from thence by the same operation to Infinity, as I have done three times, praised be God. And when thy Elixir is so brought unto Infinity, one graine thereof falling upon a quantity of molten mettall as deepe and vaste as the Ocean, it will teine it, and convert it into most perfect mettall, that is to say, into silver or gold, according as it shall have been imbibed and fermented, expelling & driving out farre from himself all the impure and strange matter, which was joyned with the mettall in the first coagulation: for this reason therefore have I made to bee painted a Key in the hand of the man, which is in the forme of Saint Peter, to signifie that the stone desireth to be opened and shut for multiplication; and likewise to shew thee with what Mercury thou oughtest to doe this, & when; I have given the man a garment Citrine red, and the woman one of orange colour. Let this suffice, lest I transgresse the silence of Pythagoras, to teach thee that the woman, that is, our stone, asketh to have the rich Accoustrements and colour of Saint Peter. Shee hath written in her Rowle, CHRISTE PRECOR ESTO PIUS, that is Jesu Christ be pittifull unto mee, as if shee said, Lord be good unto mee, and suffer not that hee that shal be come thus farre, should spoile all with too much fire; It is true, that from henceforward I shal no more feare mine enemies, and that all fire shall be alike unto me, yet the vessell that containes me, is alwaies brittle and easie to be broken: for if they exalt the fire overmuch, it will cracke, and flying apieces, will carry mee, and sow mee unfortunately amongst the ashes. Take heed therefore to thy fire in this place, and governe sweetly with patience, this admirable quintessence, for the fire must be augmented unto it, but not too much. And pray the soveraigne Goodnesse, that it will not suffer the evill spirits, which keepe the Mines and Treasures, to destroy thy worke, or to bewitch thy sight, when thou considerest these incomprehensible motions of this Quintessence within thy vessell.

Chap. 9: Upon a darke violet field, a man red purple, holding the foote of a Lyon red as vermillion, which hath wings, & it seemes would ravish and carry away the man.

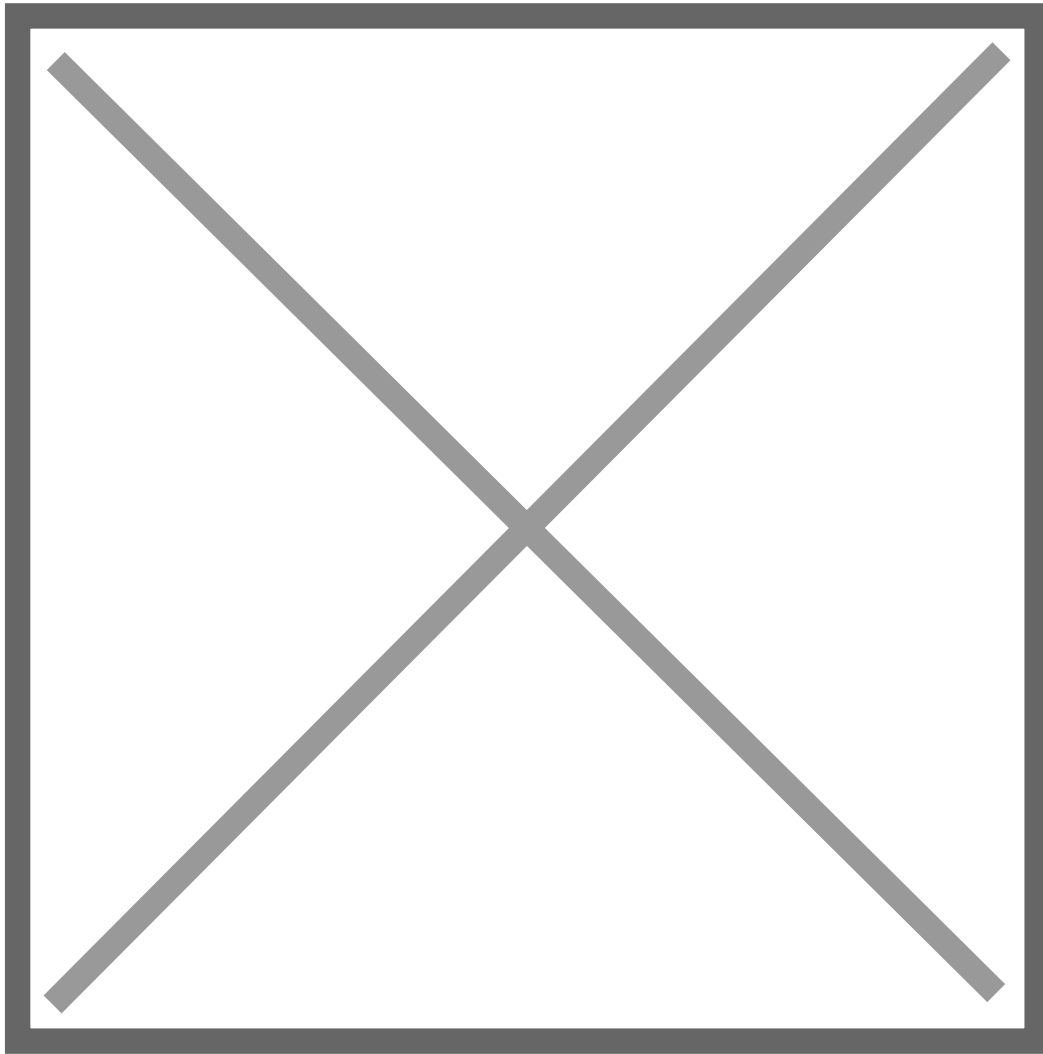
The field violet and darke, tels us that the stone hath obtained by her full decoction, the faire Garments, that are wholly Citrine and red, which shee demanded of Saint Peter, who was cloathed therewith, and that her compleat and perfect digestion (signified by the entire Citrinity) hath made her leave her old robe of orange colour. The vermillion red colour of this flying Lyon, like the

pure & cleere skarlet in graine, which is of the true Granadored, demonstrates that it is now accomplished in all right and equality. And that shee is now like a Lyon, devouring every pure mettallicke nature, and changing it into her true substance, into true & pure gold, and more fine then that of the best mines. Also shee now carrieth this man out of this vale of miseries, that is to say, out of the discommodities of poverty & infirmity, and with her wings gloriously lifts him up, out of the dead and standing waters of Ægypt (which are the ordinary thoughts of mortall men), making him despise this life and the riches thereof, and causing him night and day to meditate on God and his Saints, to dwell in the Emperiall Heaven, and to drinke the sweet springs of the Fountains of everlasting hope. Praised be God eternally, which hath given us grace to see this most fair & all-perfect purple colour; this pleasant colour of the wilde poppy of the Rocke, this Tyrian, sparkling and flaming colour, which is incapable of Alteration or change, over which the heaven it selfe, nor his Zodiacke can have no more domination nor power, whose bright shining rayes, that dazle the eyes, seeme as though they did communicate unto a man some supercoelestiall thing, making him (when he beholds and knowes it) to be astonisht, to tremble, and to be afraid at the same time. O Lord, give us grace to use it well, to the augmentation of the Faith, to the profit of our Soules, and to the encrease of the glory of this noble Realme. Amen.

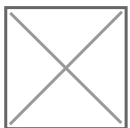
Of things which actually exist is an old tombstone, now ensconced in the wall of a stairwell in the *Musée de Cluny* in Paris. He says he designed an arch for a church, but we don't have it.



Flamel's tombstone, designed by himself



Flamel's house in Paris

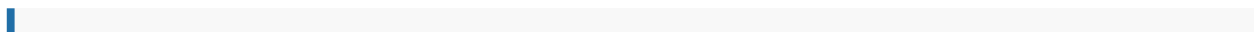


A street in Paris named for Flamel



Part II: Stories about Flamel

Far more numerous than Flamel's one tract are the stories about him. Flamel stores are for the most part versions of his making an abundance of gold, and making an elixir that gave he and his wife immortality.



The validity of this story was first questioned in 1761 by Etienne Villain. He claimed that the source of the Flamel legend was P. Arnould de la Chevalerie, publisher of *Exposition of the Hieroglyphical Figures*, who wrote the book under the pseudonym Eiranaeus Orandus. Other writers have defended the legendary account of Flamel's life, which has been embellished by stories of sightings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and expanded in fictitious works ever since.

<https://www.wikii.org/en/wiki/writer/nicolas-flamel-262703>

Flamel is mentioned in Victor Hugo's [Notre Dame de Paris](#), [Harry Potter](#) (series), [Fullmetal Alchemist](#) (2001–2010), [The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel](#) (2007–2012), and [As Above, So Below](#) (2014).

I'll find more stories to quote here.

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