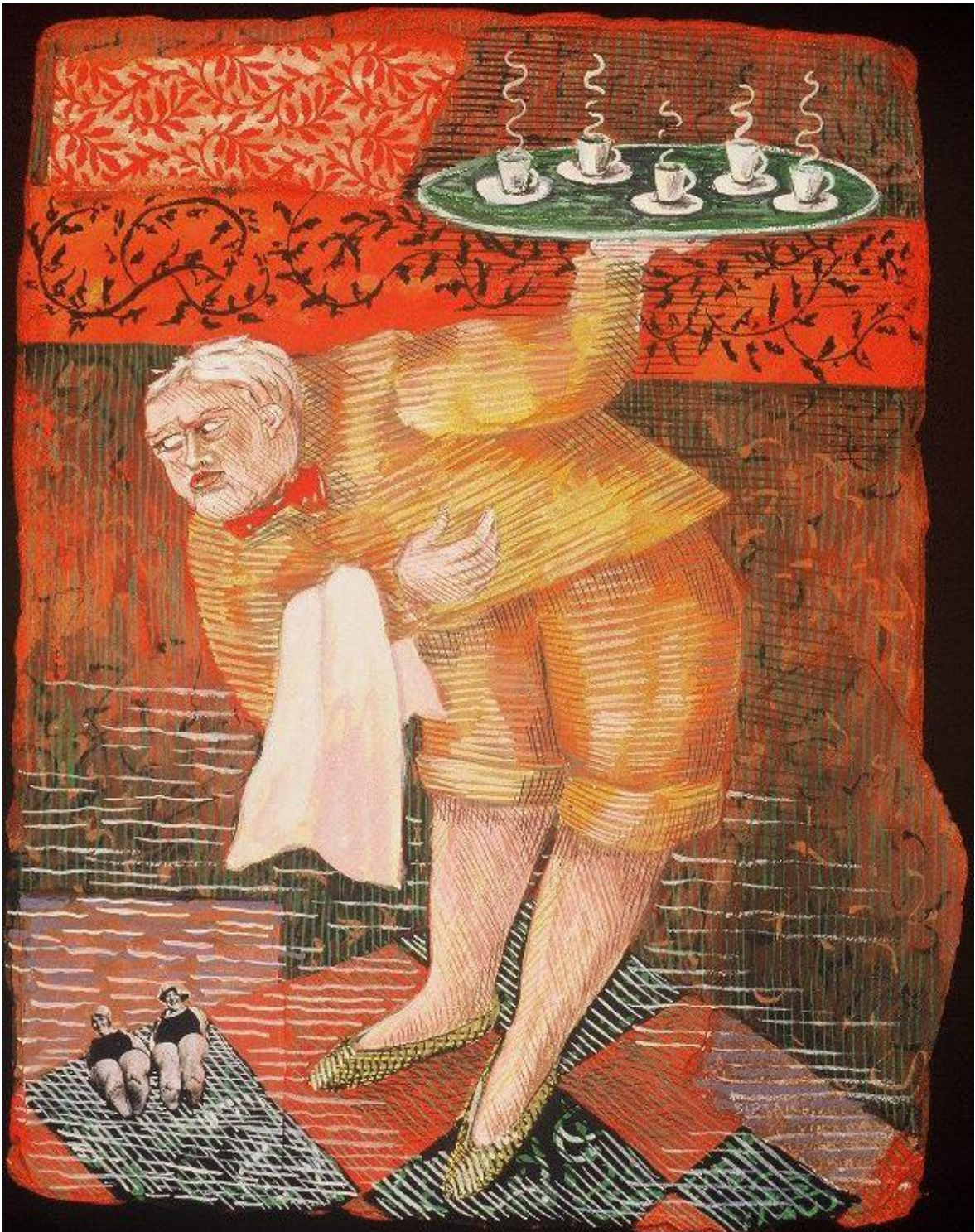


Éliphas Lévi
Warns the impudent



THE OPERATIONS OF SCIENCE ARE NOT DEVOID OF DANGER, as we have stated several times. They may end in madness for those who are not established firmly on the basis of supreme, absolute, and infallible reason. Terrible and incurable diseases can be occasioned by excessive nervous excitement. Swoons and death itself, as a consequence of cerebral congestion, may result from imagination when it is unduly impressed and terrified. We cannot sufficiently dissuade nervous persons, and those who are naturally disposed to exaltation, women, young people, and all who are not habituated in perfect self-control and the command of their fear. In the same way, there can be nothing more dangerous than to make magic a pastime, or, as some do, a part of an evening's entertainment. Even magnetic experiments, performed under such conditions, can only exhaust the subjects, mislead opinions, and defeat science. The mysteries of life and death cannot be made sport of with impunity, and things which are to be taken seriously must be treated not only seriously but also with the greatest reserve. Never yield to the desire of convincing others by phenomena. The most astounding phenomena would not be proofs for those who are not already convinced. They can always be attributed to ordinary artifices and the magus included among the more or less skilful followers of Robert Houdin or Hamilton. To require prodigies as a warrant for believing in science is to shew one's self unworthy or incapable of science. *Sancta Sanctis*.¹ Contemplate the twelfth figure of the Tarot-keys, remember the grand symbol of Prometheus, and be silent. All those magi who divulged their works died violently, and many were driven to suicide, like Cardan, Schroppfer, Cagliostro,² and others. The magus should live in retirement, and be approached with difficulty. This is the significance of the ninth key of the Tarot, where the initiate appears as a hermit completely shrouded in his cloak. Such retirement must not, however, be one of isolation; attachments and friendships are necessary, but he must choose them with care and preserve them at all price. He must also have another profession than that of magician; magic is not a trade. . . .

The milder and calmer you are, the more effective will be your anger; the more energetic you are, the more precious will be your forbearance; the more skilful you are, the better will you profit by your intelligence and even by your virtues; the more indifferent you are, the more easily will you make yourself loved. This is a matter of ex-

¹ [Holy gifts for holy people.]

² [Cagliostro's ignominious death sentence was changed to lifelong imprisonment "owing to a mysterious interference or influence brought to bear on the Pope!" See "Blavatsky on Count Alessandro di Cagliostro" in our Buddhas and Initiates Series. — ED. PHIL.]

perience in the moral order, and is literally realised in the sphere of action. Human passions produce blindly the opposites of their unbridled desire, when act without direction. Excessive love produces antipathy; blind hate counteracts and scourges itself; vanity leads to abasement and the most cruel humiliations. Thus, the Great Master revealed a mystery of positive magical science when He said, “Forgive your enemies, do good to those that hate you, so shall ye heap coals of fire upon their heads.” Perhaps this kind of pardon seems hypocrisy and bears a strong likeness to refined vengeance. But we must remember that the magus is sovereign, and a sovereign never avenges because he has the right to punish; in the exercise of this right he performs his duty, and is implacable as justice. Let it be observed, for the rest, so that no one may misinterpret my meaning, that it is a question of chastising evil by good and opposing mildness to violence. If the exercise of virtue be a flagellation for vice, no one has the right to demand that it should be spared, or that we should take pity on its shame and its sufferings.

The man who dedicates himself to the works of science must take moderate daily exercise, abstain from prolonged vigils, and follow a wholesome and regular rule of life. He must avoid the effluvia of putrefaction, the neighbourhood of stagnant water, and indigestible or impure food. Above all, he must daily seek relaxation from magical preoccupations amongst material cares, or in labour, whether artistic, industrial, or commercial. The way to see well is not to be always looking; and he who spends his whole life upon one object will end without attaining it. Another precaution must be equally observed, and that is never to experiment when ill.

The ceremonies being, as we have said, artificial methods for creating a habit of will become unnecessary when the habit is confirmed. It is in this sense, and addressing himself solely to perfect adepts, that Paracelsus proscribes their use in his *Occult Philosophy*. They must be progressively simplified before they are dispensed with altogether, and in a proportion to the experience we obtain in acquired powers, and established habit in the exercise of extra-natural will.¹



¹ *Transcendental Magic*, (WARNING TO THE IMPUDENT) pp. 248-50. Translated by Arthur Edward Waite.