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A Bristol Alchemist

by M. Nierenstein
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ragged hair appears on a diminutive altar of a portable size, which was found at Lemington near Moreton-in-Marsh in 1906. By the kindness of Lord Dulverton the altar has been placed (at the writer's suggestion) in the museum at Chedworth Villa, where there are two others which may be compared with this one.

Another of these household altars is illustrated in the report (p. 17) of the Colchester Corporation museum for 1924.

ST. CLAIR BADDELEY

A BRISTOL ALCHEMIST

In a letter addressed to Henkel,¹ dated from Prague, 17 October 1739, de Bournet writes to say that at Amsterdam in 1712 the alchemist Peter of Leyden transmuted in his presence 177 pounds of mercury into pure gold, which de Bournet sold to a merchant called Grill through the agency of the bank at Amsterdam. He goes on to say that the alchemist in question was an Englishman, a native of Bristol, and that his true name was Abraham Kington.

There is nothing remarkable in the adoption of the professional name Peter by Abraham Kington. There have been many alchemists who figured under this name, held in high esteem since the days of Peter of Apono, contemporary and friend of Arnold of Villanova. Although, however, it is easy to trace such names as Peter of Arlen, Ferrara, Lombardy and Toledo, no reference whatever can be found in alchemical literature to Peter of Leyden. Similarly, no mention is made of Abraham Kington in the books of the freemen of Bristol, or in any of the historical works on Bristol we have examined.

The only suggestive reference is in a will preserved in the Probate Registry at Bristol, dated 17 June 1706,

¹ *Mineralogische, Chemische und Alchemische Briefe* . . . vol. 1, p. 79, Dresden, 1794.

which reads: ' I John Kienton of Bedminster in Sommersetshire . . . give unto my brothers Richard and Abraham and to my Sister Bridget Wood the Sum of Five Shillings to each of the said Brothers and Sister and I give all the rest of Goods Chattles and all my Estate both real and personal with my one moiety of a House in Redcliff-Street wherein now dwelleth Edward Mortimer Baker unto my Dear and well beloved Brother William Kienton being my only Brother by both Father and Mother . . . '

It will be realised that the Abraham mentioned in the will is the half-brother of John Kienton, but as no reference is made to any difference in his surname it may be assumed that his name was Kienton (Kington).

In view of the fact that John Kienton is spoken of as being of Bedminster a search was also made into the parish registers of St. John's church. Here again no reference could be found, to either Abraham Kienton or Abraham Kington. In this connexion it must however be noted that the complete record of these registers begins only with the year 1690, and would thus scarcely have contained any reference to an alchemist who was probably of mature age in 1712.

Bristol counts already one alchemist amongst her sons, namely, Thomas Norton, who lived in the 15th century, and this privilege must now apparently be extended also to Peter of Leyden, or Abraham Kington, whoever he was.

In conclusion, I wish to thank Miss N. Dermott Harding, of the Archives Department, the Council House, Bristol and the Rev. Cyril H. Norton, Vicar of St. John's church, Bedminster, for the facilities they have granted us during these inquiries. My thanks are also due to Miss Frances M. Price, who undertook the sifting of a large number of historical works—including the *Transactions* of the Society—for this quite fruitless inquiry.

M. NIERENSTEIN