### THE GOLDEN AGE RESTORED.

AS I pondered in my mind the marvels of the Most High, and the duty of fervent love to our neighbours, which He laid upon us; I remembered the wheat harvest, when Reuben, the son of Leah, found Dudaim in the field, which Leah gave to Rachel for the love of the Patriarch Jacob. Then I was carried forward, being plunged in profound thought, to the time of Moses, who rendered potable the golden calf (which Aaron had formed) by reducing it to powder in the fire, throwing it into the water, and giving it the children of Israel to drink; and I marvelled greatly at the wonderful and masterly destruction of the metal by the man of God. But when I reflected upon the matter, the truth was borne in upon my mind, and my eyes were opened like those of the disciples at Emmaus, who knew their Master in the breaking of bread; and my heart burned within me. Then I retired to rest, that I might consider the matter further (on the morrow), and fell into a deep slumber; when, behold, Solomon appeared to me in all his power, wealth, and glory, and with him came his whole harem: sixty were queens, eight hundred concubines, and of virgins there was a countless number. One of them was his most beautiful dove, and was dearest to his heart. They formed a procession according to the Catholic rite, in the centre of which was one greatly praised and beloved, whose name was like ointment poured out, and whose fragrance was sweeter than that of spices; the fiery spirit of this person was the Key for the opening of the Temple, for entering the Holy of Holies, and taking hold on the horns of the Altar.

When the procession had been performed in the manner aforesaid, Solomon shewed me the One Centre in the Triangle

p. 58

of the Centre, and opened my understanding. Then I observed that a woman stood behind me, who had bared her breast, from a deep wound in which blood and water gushed forth. Her thighs were like two half-moons, made by the Master; her navel was like a round goblet; her belly like a heap of wheat, set about with roses; her breasts like two young roes that are twins; her neck like a tower of ivory; her eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the Gate of Bathrabbim; her nose like the Tower of Lebanon, which looketh towards Damascus; her head like Carmel, and the hair of her head like royal purple. Her garments, which were rancid, ill-savoured, and full of venom, lay at her feet, whither she had cast them; and at length she broke forth into these words: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; they took away my veil from me." Thereupon I fell to the ground with great and ignorant terror. But Solomon bade me rise, and said: "Fear not; for you see Nature bared, and the most secret of all secrets that is found beneath the sky and earth: She is beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners—and nevertheless the pure and chaste virgin of whom Adam was formed and created. The entrance of her tabernacle is sealed. She lives in gardens, sleeps in the double cave of Abraham, in the field of Hebron, and her palace is in the depths of the Red Sea, and in transparent caverns. The air bare her, the fire nourished her: therefore she is the Queen of the earth, and has honey and milk in her breasts; her lips are as a dropping honeycomb; honey and milk are under her tongue; and the smell of her garments is to the wise like the smell of Lebanon—but to the ignorant an abomination." And Solomon said further: "Awake, and see my whole harem, and say what it is like." And straightway his whole harem was stripped naked. Yet could I not find or judge, and my eyes were sealed lest I should know the secret. When Solomon saw my infirmity, he set that naked woman apart from the rest of the harem, and said: "Thy thoughts are vain, and thy mind is sunburnt; thy memory is shrouded in a thick mist, so that thou canst judge nothing