



FIGURE 1. Emblem of The Brothers.

The printer was the Old Bourne Press, a private press founded in London in 1902 by W. Herbert Broome that produced illustrated books in limited editions. *Comte de Gabalis* fits the profile of a private commission, using the resources of Broome's workshop. It is richly illustrated in line, sepia, and photogravure. The unsigned decorations are typical of the Symbolist period of the late nineteenth century, such as the chapter heading (figure 2) which shows the four types of elementals gathered around a philosophical family. The initial letter on page 274 (figure 3) is copied, line by line, from Elihu Vedder's famous painting *The Questioner of the Sphinx* (the lesser-known version of 1875, in semi-profile). Other illustrations are taken with due acknowledgment from museums.

There is only one reference to The Brothers in the body of the book, and it is a teasing one. The photograph opposite p. 297 of a half-length, turbaned figure is captioned: "Portrait of a Master. Painted by R. Owned by The Brothers." It is visibly an "old master" oil painting with a crackled surface. Since Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* (now in the Frick Collection, New York) is the only other painting reproduced in the book, and the artist was known for his love of Oriental costume, the reader is free—perhaps even invited—to imagine The Brothers as custodians of priceless art treasures.

Examples of this edition are sometimes seen with the imprint of William Rider & Son, the London publisher of much occult literature, and the date 1922. A new title page has been pasted in, reading: "Comte de Gabalis. *Discourses on the Secret Sciences and Mysteries, in accordance with the principles of the Ancient Magi and the Wisdom of the Kabalistic Philosophers.* By the Abbé N. de Montfaucon de Villars. Newly rendered into English with Commentary and Annotations." A catalogue entry of Weiser Antiquarian Books comments: "We can only presume that Rider took over the already bound stock of books from 'The Brothers' and had a new title-page printed and inserted, and (perhaps later) a dust jacket printed."⁴ This

4. I am grateful to Keith Richmond of Weiser Antiquarian Books from bringing this to my attention.