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Johanna's curious letter to Camille de Morel is of importance not only for the biography of the two young ladies, but also for the general history of the Renaissance. It indicates that an unbounded desire for knowledge filled the hearts of youthful maidens as well as plodding graybeards, or, as Rabelais expresses it, "even women and girls aspired to that celestial manna of good learning."⁷

Johanna's letter, the Latin of which savors somewhat of the school-room, follows :

S. P. Cum ad nos ex Anglia venisset Dominus Carolus Utenhovius,⁸ quem pater meus inter eos quos olim in literis eruditiv unice amplectitur,⁹ tuum mihi carmen dedit, quo lecto, verbis consequi nequeam quam fuerim gavisa. Nam in his terris nullam audio virginem in literis humanioribus magnopere versatam ; quare aequum est quod tuae gratuler felicitati, ingenio et educationi, quod virgineis moribus in tanta generis tui claritate literas latinas et graecas coniungere non erubescas, novemque Musarum et Phoebi sacra tuis studiis non indigna censeas. Mihi sane, ut verum fatear, nulla potest voluptas obvenire tanta, cuius respectu literas latinas et graecas queam

posthabere. Quibus non tantum voluptatem, sed veram felicitatem metior. Utinam domesticas curas (quod plerique in nobis nefas ducunt) prae his contemnere possem, facile paterer me totam solis Musis dedicari. Ignosce, clarissima virgo, meae audaciae, quod hac parum culta epistola tuas aures eruditissimas onerare sum ausa. Rogavit Dominus Carolus Utenhovius patrem meum ut etiam soluta oratione ad te aliquid literarum darem, meque in tuam notitiam propter literarum commercia insinuarem ; quamobrem si quid hic peccati est, id totum Domino Carolo Utenhovio tua humanitas imputabit.¹⁰ Vale, lectissima Domina Camilla, et me in tuarum ancillarum catalogo ascribi patiari. Est mihi Lutetiae¹¹ frater germanus.¹² Utinam ille per te in familia isthic pia alibi commendatus potius quam οικόστροφος viveret (sic). Iterum vale. Dunburgi.¹³ Pridie calendarum octobris.¹⁴

JOHANNA OTHONIS
Johannis Othonis filia.

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⁷ When the letter was written, Camille de Morel (b. 1547) was nineteen years old. We are safe in assuming that Johanna Otho was of about the same age.

⁸ Charles Utenhove, one of the foremost humanists of the sixteenth century, was born at Ghent in 1536. At an early age he went to Paris, where he became tutor of Jean de Morel's daughters. In 1563 he accompanied the French ambassador, Paul de Foix, to England, and remained there three years. In 1566 he went to Germany, and a few years later became professor of Greek in the University of Basel. He died in Cologne in 1600.

Utenhove was the author of some ten works, mostly in Latin. He was a most proficient linguist, having written verses in French, German, English, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Chaldean. His best known work, the *Xenia*, contains so many contributions by Joachim du Bellay that the latter might well be called a collaborator. Besides Du Bellay, Utenhove had intimate relations with Ronsard, Dorat, George Buchanan, Turnèbe, L'Hospital,—in short, with the leading scholars and men of letters of the period.

Doctor Wiepen, of Cologne, is preparing a study on the life and works of Utenhove.

Concerning Utenhove, see Chamard, *op. cit.*, Index.

⁹ In his *Epitaphium in mortem Henrici Gallorum regis*, Paris, 1560, Utenhove speaks in affectionate terms of his early association with Otho at Ghent.

THE SATOR-ACROSTIC.

In a brief communication to the *Verhandlung der Berl. Gesellschaft für Anthropologie*, 1880, p. 42, Treichel describes a curious 'Toll-tafel,'—or small wooden tablet used as a charm against the bite of a mad dog or other rabid animal,—inscribed with the acrostic

S A T O R
A R E P O
T E N E T
O P E R A
R O T A S

¹⁰ Utenhove seems to have taken a great interest in Johanna Otho. In his *Xenia* we find a poem with the following title: *Ad eundem (i. e. Jean de Morel) in commendationem Jo. Othonidis Jo. Othonis praeceptoris sui F.*

¹¹ Paris.

¹² This brother is otherwise unknown.

¹³ Duisburg, a city in the Rhine Province, Prussia, a few miles north of Düsseldorf.

¹⁴ The reference to Utenhove's leaving England enables us to assign 1566 as the date of the letter.

which he translates, "Der Säman Arepo hält mit Mühe die Räder." For the word 'Arepo,' which he takes to be a proper name, he can find no satisfactory meaning. Later, p. 215, he reports the discovery of another little tablet, inscribed with an acrostic containing several letters of the SATOR-formula, but including other letters in different order, the whole almost obliterated and scarcely legible.

These brief reports instigated a seven years' hunt for other instances in which this same acrostic was used, and led to a long and apparently fruitless discussion as to the meaning of this curious acrostic. In a later communication (*Verhandl.*, 1880, p. 276), Treichel suggests another interpretation: SATOR = Father, Nourisher, Supporter. ROTAS = Wheel of fate. Hence, "Der gütige Vater hält mit Mühe auf das verderbliche Rollen der Schicksalsräder." He still finds, however, no satisfactory explanation for the word AREPO.

Verhandl., 1880, p. 280, von Schulenburg cites examples of the use of this acrostic to cure the toothache. The letters are to be written in butter or on a piece of bread and butter,¹ which is then to be eaten, the idea being to swallow the magic words so that they may expel the sickness. Instances are given where the acrostic was used to extinguish fires. In Pomerania, Treichel (*Verhandl.*, 1881, p. 164) finds it used as a charm against fever.

Verhandl., 1881, p. 35, Adolf Erman describes a Koptic ostrakon in the Berlin Museum, No. 7821, bearing this same acrostic, and refers to Hiob Ludolf, *Ad historiam Æthiopicam commentarius*, p. 351, who discovered in an Ethiopian MS. these five words as names of the five wounds of Christ: sador aroda danad adera rodas.

Ibid., 162, Treichel refers to Frischbier, *Hexenspruch und Zauberbann*, Berlin, 1870, who gives an imperfect acrostic, apparently a corruption of the SATOR-acrostic, as follows:

¹Cf. U. Jahn, *Hexenwesen und Zauberei in Pommern*, Stettin, 1886, p. 55. Schreib mit einem Stöckchen auf ein Butterbrot folgende Worte und gieb es dem Kranken ein:

S A T O R
A R E P O
T E w e t
R o t a s

N A T O R
A U T N O
T E P U T
A U T N O
R O T U R

Ibid., 1882, p. 558, Fräulein Mestorf tells of a cup of oriental workmanship found in the island of Gotland, having engraved on it in Runic letters the SATOR-acrostic, together with the five-pointed star, or wizard pentagram ☆. The cup is said to belong to the fourteenth century.

Ibid., 1883, p. 535, H. Fritsch rearranges the letters and finds in them an invocation to Satan: Satan oro te pro arte, a te spero.

Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, xvi (1883), p. 113, W. Schwartz concludes that the double meaning of a formula like the SATOR-acrostic would serve the purpose of calling up spirits, and then when said backwards, of banishing them again. He cites numerous examples from Latin poetry, especially spells to call up the wind and lightning and evil spirits.

Verhandl., 1884, p. 66, Treichel accepts a Keltic interpretation of the formula proposed by Herr Lehrer Rabe in *Biere bei Magdeburg*. In 1886, however, Treichel (*Verhandl.*, p. 349) suggests the God Saturn for SATOR, and takes ROTAS to refer to the wheels of the sun chariot, translating, "Saturnus mühevoll die Räder (das Sonnenrad) lenkt." For AREPO he suggests derivation from Finnish *Aurinko* = "die Sonne."

Ibid., 1887, p. 69. Interpretation of Dr. Kolberg, who regards the letters as abbreviations of Latin words. The Nüremburg medal, or plate, described in *Verhandl.*, 1883, p. 354, he considers to have been originally a paten, or communion plate. On the outer circle are the words: + Deo Honorem + Et Patria + Liberationem + Mentem Sanctam + Spontaneam, and the SATOR-acrostic, which he arranges rather arbitrarily as follows:

SAT ORARE
POTENter ET OPERAre
RatiO (oder auch ReligiO) TuA Sit

and thus interprets:

Viel beten
Und kräftig arbeiten,
Das sei Deine Lebensweise (oder Religion).

This he takes to be an ancient rule of the Benedictines.

Ibid., 74. F. Lieberman reports that this same acrostic appears on the margin of an Oxford ms. Bodl. Digby 53, belonging approximately to the year 1200.

Reinhold Köhler discusses the acrostic at some length in *Verhandl.*, 1881, p. 301, and especially in *Kleinere Schriften*, 3, p. 564. In the latter article he has collected many examples which show the early origin of the formula and its widespread use. He finds it scratched on the marble above the chapel of St. Laurent in Rochemaure, France; in Cirencester, England; on the mosaic pavement of a church in Pieve Terzagni, end of eleventh century; in an Oxford Latin ms. of the thirteenth century; in a Greek ms. of the Bibl. Natle. of Paris; in a Munich ms. marginal, handwriting of the fifteenth century, referred to by J. du Choul, in his work entitled *De varia quercus historia*, Lugduni, 1555, p. 25, who says it was used by the ancient Gauls as a febrifuge; used to awaken love or to obtain favor; in the Romanus-büchlein (Scheible's *Kloster*, 3, 492) used to extinguish fires and to protect cattle against witchcraft; to protect against the bite of a mad dog; used by the natives of the northern provinces of Brazil to protect against and heal snake bite.

Köhler does not attempt to interpret the meanings of the words, but concludes that with the exception of AREPO, which has not been satisfactorily explained, they are all well known Latin words.

To these examples may be added the following, collected from various mss., and so far as I know unpublished hitherto:

Bibl. Bodl. ms. e Mus, 243, fol. 31 (seventeenth cent.).

Request to obtain

Write thes words in parchment wth y^e bloude of a culver & beare it in thy left hande & aske what yⁿ wilt & yⁿ shalt have it / fiat.

s	a	t	o	r
a	r	e	h	o
t	e	n	e	t
o	f	e	r	a
r	o	t	a	s

B. M. MS, Addit. 15236 :

Ad habendum vel si vis habere amorem domini tui Scribe hec nomina sanguine albe columbe + sator + arepo + tenz + opera + rotas + & intinge in aqua benedicta & pone per xii dies super altaram. Suspende circa collum & quidquid ab eo petieris dabit tibi.

Bibl. Bodl. ms. e Mus. 243, fol. 15 :
deliverance to cause.

Ligentur ad ventrem mulieris ista verba + maria peperit Christum² + Anna mariam + Elizabeth + Johannem Celina remigium + sator + arepo + tenet + opera + rotas +

Paris ms. Bibl. Natle. 2045, fol. 23b (a paper ms., xv cent.):

Pour tantost avoir enfant escrivez ce qui ensuit en saint [= ceinture] en parchment & metz sur la ventre a la femme & tantost avra enfant sy dieu plait + maria peperit Xpm + anna mariam + Elizabeth Johannem + & plus + sator + arepo + Tenet + opera + Rotas + Item si elle ne peut avoir enfant quoy ly enfant . . . mort . . . a la femme . . a boyre ysope si . . .

On margin vacat propter fidem.

Paris ms. Bibl. Natle. Latin 6837, fol. 46 (xiv cent.):

Ad parturam mulieris. Puleium tritum cum aqua bibit. Item scribe hoc & liga sub umbilico ejus. In nomine patris & filii & spiritus sancti impero tibi ut exeas & videas lumen. Sancta maria peperit xpm & sancta elizabeth peperit iohannem. Panditur interea domus omnipotentis olimphi. Sator + arepo + tenet + opera + rotas + Deus ultionum dominus. deus ultionum libere egit.

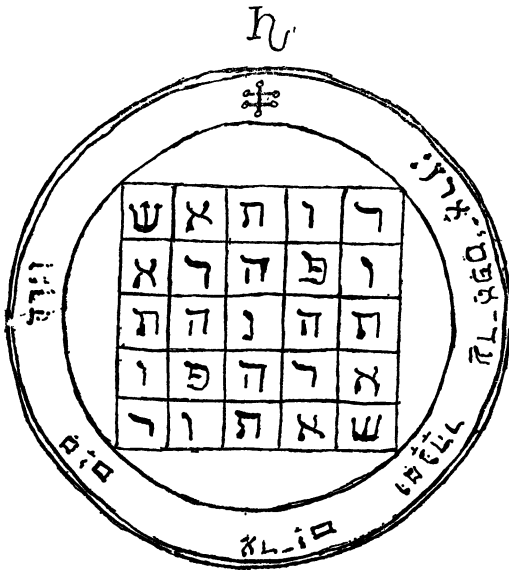
Ms. C. C. C. 41, fol. 329 (new numbering) margin:

Creator & sanctificator pater & filius & spiritus sanctus qui es uera trinitas & unitas precamus te domine clementissime pater ut elemosina ista fiat misericordia tua ut accepta sit tibi pro anime [above line *vel a*] famuli tui ut sit bene dictio super omnia dona ista per + sator arepo tenet opera rotas. Deus qui ab initio fecisti hominem & dedisti ei in adiutorium similem sibi ut crescere

²In F. Heinrich, *Ein Mittelenglisches Medicinbuch*, Halle, 1896, p. 43, the SATOR-acrostic is added, as here, to the "Maria peperit Christum, etc." Instead of "Celina remigium," however, we find "sancta Cecilia peperit remigium."

[above line *vel nt*] & multiplicare [above line *vel nt*] da super terram huic famulam tuam .N. ut prospere & sine dolore parturit.

The most satisfactory explanation I have been able to discover for this perplexing acrostic is that given by S. Liddell MacGregor Mathers, *The Key of Solomon (Clavicula Salomonis)*, translated and edited from B. M. MS. Lansdowne 1202, London, 1889, p. 59, fig. 12.



“Figure 12. The Second Pentacle of Saturn. This Pentacle is of great value against adversities ; and of especial use in repressing the pride of the Spirits.

“Editor’s Note. This is the celebrated

S A T O R
A R E P O
T E N E T
O P E R A
R O T A S

the most perfect existing form of double acrostic, as far as the arrangement of the letters is concerned ; it is repeatedly mentioned in the records of mediæval Magic ; and, save to very few, its derivation from the present Pentacle has been unknown. It will be seen at a glance that it is a square of five, giving twenty-five letters, which added to unity, gives twenty-six, the numerical value of IHVH. The Hebrew versicle surrounding it is taken from Psalm lxii, 8, ‘His dominion

shall be also from one sea to the other, and from the flood to the world’s end.’ This passage consists also of exactly twenty-five letters, and its total numerical value (considering the final letters with increased numbers), added to that of the name Elohim, is exactly equal to the total numerical value of the twenty-five letters in the Square.”

Ibid., page 53. “For obtaining grace and love, write down the following words : SATOR, AREPO, TENET, OPERA, ROTAS, IAH, IAH, IAH, KETHER, CHOKMAH, BINAH, GED-ULAH, GEBURAH, TIPHERETH, NET-ZACH, HOD, YESOD, MALKUTH, ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, SHADRACH, MESHACH, ABEDNEGO, be ye all present in my aid and for whatsoever I shall desire to obtain.

“Which words being properly written as above, thou shalt also find thy desire brought to pass.”

Ibid., p. 56. “Concerning the Holy Pentacles or Medals.

“The Medals or Pentacles, which we make for the purpose of striking terror into the Spirits and reducing them to obedience, have besides wonderful and excellent virtue.

“They are also of great virtue and efficacy against all perils of Earth, of Air, of Water, and of Fire, against poison which hath been drunk, against all kinds of infirmities and necessities, against binding and sortilege, and sorcery, against all terror and fear, and wheresoever thou shalt find thyself, if armed with them, thou shalt be in safety all the days of thy life.”

See also S. L. MacGregor Mathers, *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin, the Mage, as delivered by Abraham the Jew unto his son Lamech, A. D. 1458. Translated from the Original Hebrew into the French and now rendered from the latter language into English. From a unique and valuable MS. in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, at Paris.* London, 1898.

P. xxix of the Introduction :

For obtaining love of a maiden (Pentacle of Venus).

- S A L O M = Peace
- A R E P O = He distils
- L E M E L = unto fulness
- O P E R A = upon the dry ground
- M O L A S = in quick motion.

On page 219 of this same volume appears the following interpretation of the SATOR-acrostic :

S A T O R = The Creator
 A R E P O = slow moving
 T E N E T = maintains
 O P E R A = his creations
 R O T A S = as vortices.

Tuchmann, *Mélusine*, 9 (1898), p. 37, asserts that magic squares were unknown in Europe before the fourteenth century, after which they spread rapidly. The numbers composing the squares might easily be converted into letters of the Arabic alphabet, which according to the example of the Hebrew and Greek characters, might have a numerical value independent of their vocal signification. These letters form, then, artificial words, which at first sight convey no meaning, but which, interpreted according to the method known among the Arabians as the 'science of letters,' represent sometimes abbreviations of the names of the prophets or of other holy personages.

Through the kindness of Professor Paul Haupt, of Johns Hopkins, I have just had an opportunity to read an article by E. J. Pilcher, on "Two Kabbalistic Planetary Charms," in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, Vol. XXVIII, Part 3, pages 110-118, March, 1906. After explaining the principle of the Magic Square, Mr. Pilcher proceeds to describe two talismans, one of Jupiter, the other of Venus, both being silver disks with holes or suspension loops for hanging about the neck, and both engraved with magic squares filled in with numbers and pseudo-Hebrew characters. The talisman of Jupiter is an inch and a half in diameter, and the Kabbalist declares of it: "If this Magical Square be engraved upon a sheet of silver representing Jupiter in a powerful and dominant conjunction, then it will give riches, favour, love, peace, and harmony with mankind. It will reconcile enemies. It will ensure honours, dignities, and government position." The talisman of Venus, which is two inches and an eighth in diameter, has the following wonderful properties: "This Magic Square engraved upon a sheet of silver representing Venus in a lucky conjunction, procures harmony, terminates discords, and obtains female favours. It assists conception, prevents sterility, and gives conjugal strength. It delivers from sorcery, makes peace between husband and wife, and causes all kinds of animals to be produced in abundance. Placed in a dovecot, it causes the pigeons to multiply freely. It is good against

melancholy sicknesses; and is strengthening. Carried upon the person, it makes travellers lucky."

Mr. Pilcher further describes seven other planetary charms, which are in the Mediæval Room of the British Museum, and also gives a brief description of a pewter medal, belonging to Mr. W. L. Nash, to whom also belong the talismans of Jupiter and Venus described above. This medal contains various talismanic inscriptions: an interlaced star of eight points, and astronomical hieroglyphs of the seven planets, together with Greek and Hebrew names for the Deity.

Such planetary charms, according to Mr. Pilcher, were especially common in the seventeenth century. "The belief [in them] was shared by the ablest and most learned men of the period. Johann Reuchlin in the sixteenth century and Atanasius Kircher in the seventeenth devoted much time and labour to expounding the abstruse teachings of the Kabbalah; and they were eagerly followed by a crowd of lesser luminaries."³ The Kabbalah itself was at first a body of theosophic doctrine originated by the Jews of Spain in the thirteenth century on the lines of Neo-Platonism; but the mysticism of the early Kabbalists speedily developed a system of magic, that gradually absorbed all the half-forgotten fancies of Greek sorcery and astrology. Thus Kabbalism became the principal repertory of magical ideas; and all the forms of modern occultism, whatever their names may be, have derived their material from the Kabbalah; although the debt is not always acknowledged."

This SATOR-acrostic, then, is clearly related to the Jewish Kabbalah, but at the same time, in its relation to the magic square, in which letters and words are reduced to numbers with definite fixed values, its origin may be traced back through the Pythagorean philosophy to ancient Babylon.⁴

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³ Compare, for example, Pico de Mirandola and his "nine hundred theses," and see article on Kabbalah in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

⁴ Cf. the Abraxas and the Pentagram, and see in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* the articles on "Magic" (E. B. Tyler) and on "Kabbalah" (C. D. Ginsburg). In the latter article it is stated that the hermeneutical canons for obtaining the heavenly mysteries,—by means of permutations, combinations, and arrangements of whole words or of the initial or final letters of a word according to their numerical values, etc.,—are much older than the Kabbalah itself.