

TAROT INTERPRETATION

Lesson Nine

THE TRUE MAGIC

THE EMERALD TABLET of Hermes, quoted in Lesson 8, is one of the great classics of Ageless Wisdom. It is ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, the Egyptian Master reputed to be the founder of alchemy and magic.

Who actually wrote this masterpiece of practical occultism we do not know. The oldest versions which have come to light are in Latin, though there may have been earlier ones in Greek. Scholars generally are agreed that, in its present form, the text belongs to the early centuries of the Christian Era, not to the literature of ancient Egypt.

Two thousand years ago, authors of occult treatises did not put their own names to what they wrote. Believing themselves to be inspired by gods, or by Masters of Wisdom, they would say, "This is a work of Hermes," and so give honor to the source of their illumination. In this practice there was no taint of deception, nor any intent to invest a book with the authority of a great name. The modest geniuses of that day, free from personal vanity, sought only to indicate their sense of indebtedness to the higher powers whence their knowledge was derived.

Various traditions concerning THE EMERALD TABLET have come down to us. One says the thirteen sentences of this wonderful treatise were engraved by Hermes Trismegistus with a diamond stylus on a single large emerald. At his death, the emerald was hidden in his tomb in the Great Pyramid, where it was discovered by Alexander the Great, centuries later, and so given to the world.

This is obvious allegory. Emerald is the stone of Venus. Hermes is Mercury, the personification of human intellect. The implement used for engraving the emerald is made of diamond, a stone sacred to the sun. Thus the allegory intimates that the substance of this classic was inscribed on the subconsciousness of the human race (Venus, Key 3), as a result of man's careful observation of the laws of nature (Mercury, Key 1), exercised in acts of concentration whereby the solar force was made sharp, like an engraver's tool.

The Great Pyramid is "the tomb of Hermes" because its wonderful proportions sum up the whole body of science known to the human race in prehistoric times. The "death of Hermes" refers to the temporary loss of this ancient knowledge, or "Master's Word," during a period comparable to the Dark Ages which followed the destruction of Rome by Huns and Vandals.

Alexander the Great is not the Macedonian, but symbolizes the school of esoteric philosophy which flourished at Alexandria. Members of this occult brotherhood recovered the secrets of the Great Pyramid, and so “raised the body of the Grand Master Hermes” by bringing once more to light the hidden Hermetic Wisdom. Thus were revived the great truths which are summarized in THE EMERALD TABLET.

This priceless document, says Eliphas Levi, contains all magic in a single page. Its text, translated from an early Latin version, is already in your hands, for it was printed on the Tarot tableau you received with INTRODUCTION TO TAROT.

It contains thirteen sentences in all. Five are in the first paragraph and eight in the second. Five, the proportional height of the Great Pyramid, if its base line be taken as eight. Five, the number of adaptation of the magical pentagram and special number of Man. Eight, the number of rhythm, the number of strength, the number of mastery. Five and eight, the determining numbers of that great magical pentacle, the Vault of Brother C. R., Founder of the Rosicrucian Order. Each side of this vault was a rectangle five feet wide and eight feet high. As you proceed in your work of realizing your heart’s desire, you will learn that these two numbers, together with their sum, 13, and their difference, 3, are keys to great secrets of occultism.

The final sentence of THE EMERALD TABLET makes clear the nature of the Great Work. “I have completed what I have to tell concerning the Operation of the Sun.” For us on earth, the various transformations of the radiant energy of the sun are active agencies in the process of adaptation whereby the illumined perception of things as they are is made to supplant the deluded acceptance of the outward appearances which surround us.

Therefore is the sun placed high in the heavens behind the Fool, and the force the Magician draws from above him is that same solar energy. If you will compare Key 0 with Keys 10 and 21, you will see that the sun in Key 0 occupies the same position which, in Keys 10 and 21, is given to the eagle’s head. The eagle is a symbol of Scorpio, the sign which governs the reproductive forces of the human organism.

This sign, corresponding to Key 13, is said to rule the eighth house of the horoscope, the house of death, but also the house of inheritance and of practical occultism. The intimation here is that behind the grisly appearance of death, as it looks to the unenlightened, there is a power which is the secret force in the Great Work. This is the Astral Light of Eliphas Levi who says this great magical agent is the force which man apparently multiplies in the reproduction of his species.

Astral Light means “light of stars,” and since we know that every star is a sun, we should not suppose that this name for the One Energy designates a force other than the solar radiance. When Levi said, in 1859, that the Astral Light is diffused throughout infinity, that it is the substance of heaven and earth, that it is the First Matter of the Great Work, scientists of his

day laughed at him. Their grandchildren now put forward precisely the same doctrine, but give no credit to the French occultist who was enabled by his Tarot studies to reach a conclusion exactly the same as theirs ninety years ago.

Eliphas Levi said also that exoteric scientists would, sooner or later, confirm his doctrine, and that their discovery of Astral Light would effect a complete revolution of physics and chemistry. This has now come to pass, and we are well on our way to the fulfillment of the French adept's other prophecy—that this revolution in scientific thought would lead to a revival of the transcendent magic of the Chaldeans.

The uplifted wand in the Magician's right hand points to that corner of Key 1 which, in Keys 10 and 21, is occupied by the head of a man. This man is a symbol for the sign Aquarius. The force the Magician draws down from superconscious levels is conditioned by his clear perception of the true nature and possibilities of man. In this, the dawning Aquarian Age, we are beginning to realize that every human being is an embodiment, here and now, of the power which produces and governs the universe.

In astrology, Aquarius rules the eleventh house of the horoscope, the house of friends, and the house of hopes, desires and aspirations. As we begin to understand that man is truly "but little lower than God," we shall see that our hopes rest on a firm foundation. As we see, also, that the One Thing is embodied in every human being, we shall realize that its perfect expression on earth must needs result in an era of universal friendship and brotherhood. This will supplant the pitifully inadequate "civilization" of the Piscean Age, with its fierce competitions, its fear-born wars, and its follies of racial and national discrimination and hatred.

Thus, in the garden of the Magician, grow the lilies of right knowledge. A cross-section of their flowers will show a six-pointed star, or Shield of David. Now, the name David means "love," or "the beloved." Thus the Shield of David signifies "the protection of love."

Lilies are also symbols of science, and of the great cosmic expressions of the Life-power, because the six-pointed star is connected also with the circle of the signs of the zodiac. The Magician cultivates lilies because right use of the consciousness he represents will enable us to perceive that, beneath all the superficial conflicts of forces presented to us by sensation, there is actually at work a hidden law of relationship and order which can be no better designated than by calling it the Law of Love. To know the truth is to be free, because that knowledge shows us, beyond peradventure, that all the forces of creation are working with every true lover of humanity.

Side by side with the lilies grow red roses. They are symbols of love because they are the flowers of Venus. Yet they are sacred also to Iacchus, the central figure of the Dionysian Mysteries, and they are likewise dedicated to the god of silence, Harpocrates, the younger Horus. Desire, love, secrecy, beauty and silence are represented by the symbol of the rose.

Furthermore, a cross-section of its flower shows a five-pointed star, the magical pentagram, symbol of man. Thus the roses in Key 1 stand for human love, in contrast to the lilies, which may be taken as types of the great principle of Divine Love which pervades the scheme of cosmic law.

In other forms of symbolism, too, the number 6 stands for universal love, and the number 5 for its human expressions. This, indeed, is the true significance of the cross of six squares (pattern of the cube) to which is affixed a five petalled rose. This is believed by many to be the true and ancient form of the Rosy Cross.

When human desire and affections are perfectly related to the cosmic pattern, when man loves as God loves, then man's life is the perfect expression of universal laws. Every detail of his day's experience then becomes a conscious expression of the Divine Working, the perfect Operation of the Heavenly Sun. **This is the true magic.**

The true magic aims at actual expression within the limits of the physical plane. Remember what was said in Lesson 8. The physical plane is that field of the Life-power's activity which is within range of the human senses.

These senses are symbolized by the number of roses in the garden—five. They are, moreover, many-petalled to indicate cultivation and development. They also represent man's desire nature.

The true magic brings the irresistible energy of the Astral Light to bear upon the cultivation of man's desire nature. Cultivation implies improvement, development, adaptation. As we perfect and purify our desires, working silently and secretly with them to make them ever more true and beautiful, we come nearer and nearer to the definite, external manifestation of the truth and beauty of the One Reality.

Ageless Wisdom does not offer you a way of escape from this world into some other. It puts in your hands the means of witnessing the transmutation and transformation of **this** world. As your vision clears, as you become more and more definitely aware of the significance of your life, you will actually **see** the true world which is hidden from the majority of mankind by clouds of ignorance.

You will find yourself in a different world, it is true; and wherever you are, that new world will be. Yet it will be made of the same four elements symbolized on the Magician's table by the wand, the cup, the sword and the pentacle. It will be a physical world, a world of things and creatures, a world swept by clean, invigorating winds, and lighted by the sun and moon and stars, its streams and lakes and oceans sweet and pure, its very substance transmuted by the power of your realization.

THE EMERALD TABLET tells us plainly that the One Thing's power is integrating, **if it be turned into earth**. So, too, in the Apocalypse, the Heavenly Jerusalem, a wonderful symbol of perfected human consciousness, **comes down from heaven to earth**. All over the world men have been praying, for generations, "Thy kingdom come." In this New Age, many shall see this come to pass.