

*The Key to the Tarot* was written in 1910 by A.E. Waite, a renowned scholar of occultism and a leading member of the magical order known as the Order of the Golden Dawn. The book can be used in conjunction with any set of tarot cards, but it was written in particular to accompany the 78-card *Rider Waite Tarot® Deck*, which was designed by Pamela Colman Smith in accordance with A.E. Waite's instructions.

*The Key to the Tarot* explains the history and symbolism of the cards and gives instructions on how to use them for purposes of divination. This revised edition includes a specially commissioned foreword by

Liz Greene.

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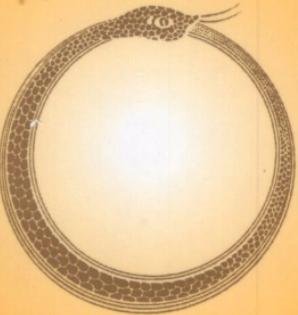
THE KEY TO THE TAROT

A.E. WAITE



THE KEY  
to the  
TAROT

*Revised and updated edition*



A.E. WAITE

FOREWORD BY LIZ GREENE

THE KEY  
*to the*  
**TAROT**  
**WHAT TAROT IS - AND**  
**HOW TO CONSULT IT**

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*Revised and updated edition*

**A.E. WAITE**  
**FOREWORD BY LIZ GREENE**



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## FOREWORD

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The sometimes disturbing and apparently inaccessible images of the Tarot cards have, over the centuries, both attracted those seeking spiritual or prophetic insight and repelled those who fear what they call the 'occult'. Yet the images of the Tarot cards are neither inaccessible nor occult, however much any particular spiritual or esoteric school might seek to mystify them. These images are archetypal, which means that they describe essential human situations and patterns which all of us experience in life at one time or another. There is nothing in the universe more mysterious than the human being; and like all the symbolic images which men and women

have created over the millennia, the Tarot cards are fundamentally a description of the human journey from birth to death.

A. E. Waite was a leading member of the magical order called the Order of the Golden Dawn. His knowledge of the Western Mystery Tradition was enormous, and the cards which were created to his design in 1910 were inevitably coloured by his lifelong involvement with Theosophy, alchemy, astrology, Kabbalah, Freemasonry, and the Grail legends of early Christian Europe. Students of these subjects have found a wealth of readily recognisable symbols and meanings in the precise imagery of his cards. Unfortunately, those who are not drawn to his particular world-view have sometimes found Waite's interpretations obscure, uncongenial and orientated towards too specific a spiritual path.

However, the Tarot itself is far older than Waite's conception of it, and its

sequence of images is rooted in the earliest myths which human beings have made about creation, human destiny and the nature of the gods. The beauty of Waite's imagery need not be obscure or uncongenial, but can be appreciated as what it is: a highly individualised garment draped over the bare bones of a universal journey which lies at the core of every human life. Those who are unfamiliar with the Western Mystery Tradition need not become scholars of alchemy and Grail lore to appreciate the depth and importance of the cards as mirrors of psychological patterns.

Understood in its broader context, the Tarot is, put simply, a series of pictorial portrayals of the archetypal human life-journey. These portrayals may be found in ancient painting and sculpture, and in the religious literature of every early civilisation. There are universal patterns at work in life, and each individual – what-

ever his or her personal circumstances – follows the age-old cycle from birth to death, not only literally but many times during life at many different levels.

The Fool who begins the cycle of the Major Arcana is not only that youthful and vaguely mediaeval figure, perched at the cliff's edge with a rose in his hand and a little dog at his heels, whom Waite describes as 'the state of the first emanation, the graces and passivity of the spirit'. The Fool is also that sudden and unexpected urge in all of us to begin anew, to leave behind the past with its stagnant and outworn attitudes, circumstances and relationships, to take the great gamble and voyage into the unknown with only hope, instinct and intuition to guide us. The Fool is present at each critical juncture when we poised between the lifeless landscape of the past and the first precarious life-renewing step leading towards the distant and as yet

unseen horizon of the future. Following this ambiguous but perhaps divinely inspired instinct to move forward, we may truly become the Holy Fool of legend, wise through faith in the future and newborn through a willingness to let go of what we have outgrown. Or we may be merely foolish and fall on our faces, growing in understanding and compassion through such 'blunders' which are as much part of the human journey as the most dazzling of achievements.

If we understand the images of the Tarot cards psychologically, the oft-debated issue of divination becomes a subtler and deeper dynamic. If it is the inner human being which is depicted by the cards, then it is inner or psychological circumstances which are reflected in the patterns shown by a spread. These may or may not be translated into outer life – and perhaps we have far more choice in the matter than we think.

Because all the cards – Major and Minor Arcana included – describe stages of the human journey on various levels, they have tendency to reflect the internal stage we have reached at the time we examine the cards. In other words, the underlying meaning of the moment – our moment – is reflected in what occurs at that moment, and the choosing of the cards is part of what is occurring. C. G. Jung described such a concurrence of inner psychological change and apparently unrelated outer circumstance as synchronicity. Events, as any responsible Tarot reader knows, can occur on many levels, and the physical level is only one option. The disruption and upheaval described by the card of the Tower, for example, may indeed manifest through material circumstances. But its deeper meaning lies in its portrayal of the collapse of old and outworn structures, and such structures can exist within us in the

form of stale and rigid mental and emotional attitudes and habit-patterns. Thus the appearance of the card of the Tower in a Tarot spread may not herald any 'fated' change imposed upon us from without. But a profound inner change may be occurring, reflecting the dismantling of beliefs, convictions and psychological defences which have kept us imprisoned in our own fears. If such a structure within us collapses, then it is we ourselves – consciously or unconsciously – who will inaugurate the external change and upheaval, in order to move outwards into a healthier, freer life.

In common with all symbolic maps of the human journey, the Tarot is therefore universally relevant and applicable, regardless of which religious or spiritual approach – if any – the practitioner adopts. We do not know the origins of the Tarot, although the cards in the form we now have them seem to have made their

first appearance in Renaissance Italy. Many different Tarot decks have been designed and printed over the ensuing five centuries, and all have something to offer the interested student. A. E. Waite's cards and interpretations have a peculiar and haunting beauty which does not require devotion to his particular spiritual orientation in order to be appreciated and utilised – hence the popularity and longevity of his work. But ultimately no single approach to the Tarot cards can cover the totality of human experience. Whether he is portrayed as a mediaeval youth, a fifteenth-century court jester, the god Dionysos, or a modern adolescent, the Fool – and all the other seventy-seven cards which accompany him – is alive and well in every one of us, offering us insight and guidance at each stage of our own individual journey through life.

LIZ GREENE, 1992

# PART I

## THE VEIL AND ITS SYMBOLS

• • •

**T**he Tarot is symbolism; it speaks no other language and offers no other signs. Given the true meaning of its emblems, they become a kind of alphabet which is capable of indefinite combinations and makes true sense in all. On the highest plane it offers a key to the mysteries, in a manner which is not arbitrary and has not been read in. But the wrong symbolical stories have been told concerning it and the wrong history has been given in every published work which so far has dealt with the subject. It has been intimated by two or three writers that, at least in respect of the meanings, this is unavoidably the case, because few are acquainted with them,

while these few hold by transmission under pledges and cannot betray their trust. The suggestion is fantastic on the surface, for there seems a certain anticlimax in the proposition that a particular interpretation of fortune-telling can be reserved for sons of the doctrine. Even so, the fact remains that a secret tradition exists regarding the Tarot, and as there is always the possibility that such minor arcana of the mysteries may be made public with a flourish of trumpets, it will be as well to go before the event and to warn those who are curious in such matters that any revelation will contain only a third part of the earth and sea and a third part of the stars of heaven in respect of the symbolism. This is for the simple reason that neither in root-matter nor in development has more been put into writing, so that much will remain to be said after any pretended unveiling. The guardians of certain temples of initiation

who keep watch over mysteries of this order have therefore no cause for alarm.

In my preface to *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, I have said what was then possible or seemed most necessary. The present work is designed to introduce a rectified set of Tarot cards and to tell the unadorned truth concerning them, so far as this is possible in the outer circles. As regards the sequence of symbols, their ultimate and highest meaning lies deeper than the common language of picture or hieroglyph. It will be understood by those who have received some part of the secret tradition. As regards the verbal meanings allocated to the more important Trump Cards, they are designed to set aside the follies and impostures of past attributions, to put those who have the gift of insight on the right track, and to take care, within the limits of my possibilities, that they are the truth so far as they go.

We shall see in due course that the history of Tarot cards is largely of a negative kind, and that, when the issues are cleared, there is in fact no history prior to the fourteenth century. The deception and self-deception regarding their origin in Egypt, India or China put a lying spirit into the mouths of the first expositors, and the later occult writers have done little more than reproduce the first false testimony in the good faith of an intelligence unawakened to the issues of research. As it so happens, all expositions have worked within a very narrow range, and owe, comparatively speaking, little to the inventive faculty. It has not so far occurred to anyone that the Tarot might perhaps have done duty and even originated as a secret symbolical language of the Albigensian sects. I am not a good judge of such matters, but it may be that every one of the Trumps Major might have answered for watermark purposes

among the Albigensians.

The Tarot cards fall into two classes. The Trumps Major, also known as the Greater Arcana, comprise twenty-two cards. The Trumps Minor, or Lesser Arcana, comprise fifty-six cards.

## **CLASS I**

### **THE TRUMPS MAJOR OR GREATER ARCANA**

. . . . .

**1. THE MAGUS, MAGICIAN OR JUGGLER.**  
The caster of the dice and mountebank.

**2. THE HIGH PRIESTESS, THE POPE JOAN  
OR FEMALE PONTIFF.** Early interpreters  
have sought to term this card the Mother,  
or Pope's Wife, which is opposed to the  
symbolism.

**3. THE EMPRESS.** She is sometimes repre-  
sented with full face, while her  
correspondence, the Emperor, is in pro-  
file. As there has been some tendency to  
ascribe a symbolical significance to this  
distinction, it seems desirable to say that  
it carries no inner meaning.

4. THE EMPEROR. He is occasionally represented as wearing, in addition to his personal insignia, the stars or ribbons of some order of chivalry. I mention this to show that the cards are a medley of old and new emblems. Those who insist upon the evidence of the one may deal, if they can, with the other. No effectual argument for the antiquity of a particular design can be drawn from the fact that it incorporates old material; but there is also none which can be based on sporadic novelties, which may signify only the unintelligent hand of an editor.

5. THE HIGH PRIEST OR HIEROPHANT. He is also called Spiritual Father, and more commonly and obviously the Pope. This card seems even to have been named the Abbot, and then its correspondence, the High Priestess, was the Abbess or Mother of the Convent. Both are arbitrary names. The insignia of the figures are papal, and

the High Priestess is and can be only the Church, to whom Pope and priests are married by the spiritual rite of ordination. I think, however, that in its primitive form the card did not represent the Roman Pontiff.

6. THE LOVERS OR MARRIAGE. This symbol has undergone many variations, as might be expected from its subject. In the eighteenth-century form, by which it first became known to the world or archaeological research, it is really a card of married life, showing father and mother, with their child placed between them; and the pagan Cupid above in the act of flying his shaft is, of course, a misapplied emblem. The Cupid is of love beginning rather than of love in its fullness, guarding the fruit thereof. The card is said to have symbolised marital fidelity; in which case the rainbow as the sign of the covenant would have been more appro-

priate. The figures are also held to have signified Truth, Honour and Love, but I suspect that this was, so to speak, the gloss of a commentator moralising. It has these, but it has other and higher aspects.

**7. THE CHARIOT.** This is represented by the extant codices as being drawn by two sphinxes, and the device accords with the symbolism, but it must not be supposed that this was its original form; the variation was invented to support a particular historical hypothesis. In the eighteenth century white horses were yoked to the chariot. It is really the King in his triumph, typifying, however, the victory which creates kingship as its natural consequence and not the vested royalty of the fourth card. M. Court de Gebelin said that it was Osiris Triumphing, the conquering sun in springtime having vanquished the obstacles of winter. We know now that Osiris rising from the

dead is not represented by such obvious symbolism. Other animals than horses have also been used to draw the chariot, as, for example, a lion and a leopard.

8. **STRENGTH.** The female figure is usually represented as closing the mouth of a lion. In the earlier form which is printed by Court de Gebelin, she is obviously opening it. The first alternative is better symbolically, but either is an instance of strength in its conventional understanding, and conveys the idea of mastery.

9. **THE HERMIT.** He is also the Capuchin, and in more philosophical language the Sage or Wise Old Man. He is said to be in search of that Truth which is located far off in the sequence, and of Justice which has preceded him on the way. But this is a card of attainment, as we shall see later, rather than a card of quest. It is said also that his lantern contains the light of

occult science and that his staff is a magic wand. These interpretations may be true after their own manner, but they miss all the high things to which the Greater Arcana should be allocated.

**10. THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE.** In recent years this card has received many fantastic presentations and one hypothetical reconstruction which is suggestive in its symbolism. In the eighteenth century the ascending and descending animals were really of nondescript character, one of them with a human head. At the summit was another monster with the body of an indeterminate beast, wings on shoulders and a crown on its head. It carried two wands in its claws. These are replaced in the reconstruction by a Hermanubis rising with the wheel, a sphinx seated at the summit and a typhon on the descending side.

11. JUSTICE. This card, which could have been presented in a much more archaic manner, shows that the Tarot, though it is of all reasonable antiquity, is not of time immemorial. The presentation of Justice is supposed to be one of the four cardinal virtues – Justice, Temperance, Strength and Prudence – included in the sequence of Greater Arcana; but, as it so happens, the fourth virtue is wanting, and it became necessary for the commentators to discover it at all costs. But the laws of research have never succeeded in extricating the missing Persephone under the form of Prudence. The Tarot has, therefore, its Justice, its Temperance also and its Strength, as we shall see presently, but it does not offer us any type of Prudence, though it may be admitted that in some respects the solitary Hermit, pursuing a path by the light of his lamp, suggests the way of Prudence.

**12. THE HANGED MAN.** This is the symbol which is supposed by some to represent Prudence. A male figure is suspended head downwards from a gibbet, to which he is attached by a rope about one of his ankles. His arms are bound behind him, and one leg is crossed over the other. According to another, and indeed the prevailing interpretation, he signifies sacrifice, but all current meanings attributed to this card are cartomancers' intuitions, apart from any real value on the symbolical side. The fortune-tellers of the eighteenth century who circulated Tarots depict a semi-feminine youth in a jerkin, poised erect on one foot and loosely attached to a short stake driven into the ground.

**13. DEATH.** The method of presentation is almost invariable, and embodies a bourgeois form of symbolism. The scene is the field of life, and amid ordinary rank

vegetation there are living arms and heads protruding from the ground. One of the heads is crowned, and a skeleton with a great scythe is in the act of mowing it. The alternative meanings allocated to the symbol are change and transformation. Other heads have been swept from their place previously, but it is in its current and patent meaning more especially a card of the death of kings.

**14. TEMPERANCE.** A winged female figure, usually regarded as an angel, is pouring liquid from one pitcher to another. The first thing which seems clear on the surface is that the symbol has no especial connection with Temperance, making the image a very obvious instance of a meaning behind meaning, as is often the case with the Tarot as a whole.

**15. THE DEVIL.** In the eighteenth century this card seems to have been a symbol of

merely animal immodesty. Except for a fantastic head-dress, the chief figure is entirely naked; it has bat-like wings, and the hands and feet are represented by the claws of a bird. In the right hand there is a sceptre terminating in a sign which has been thought to represent fire. The figure as a whole is not particularly evil; it has no tail, and the commentators who have said that the claws are those of a harpy have spoken at random. There is no better ground for the alternative statement that they are eagle's claws. Attached by a cord hanging from their collars to the pedestal on which the figure is mounted, are two naked human beings, male and female. These have tails, but no wings.

**16. THE TOWER STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.** Its alternative titles are: Castle of Plutus, God's House, and the Tower of Babel. This is clearly a card of confusion, and corresponds, broadly speaking, to any of

the designations except God's House, unless we are to understand that the House has been abandoned and the veil of the temple torn. It is a little surprising that the design has not so far been allocated to the destruction of Solomon's Temple, when the lightning would symbolise the fire and sword with which that building was attacked by the King of the Chaldees.

**17. THE STAR.** Otherwise Dog Star or Sirius; also called fantastically the Star of the Magi. Grouped about it are seven smaller stars, and beneath it is a naked female figure, with her left knee upon the earth and her right foot upon the water. She is in the act of pouring fluids from two vessels. A bird is perched on a tree near her; for this a butterfly on a rose has been substituted in some later cards. The Star has also been called that of Hope.

18. THE MOON. Some eighteenth-century cards show the moon on its waning side; in the debased edition of Etteilla, it is the moon at night in her fullness, set in a heaven of stars; more recently, the moon has been shown on the side of her increase. In nearly all presentations she is shining brightly, and shedding the moisture of fertilising dew in great drops. Beneath there are two towers, between which a path winds to the verge of the horizon. Two dogs, or alternatively a wolf and dog, are baying at the moon, and in the foreground there is water, through which a crayfish moves towards the land.

19. THE SUN. The sun is distinguished in older cards by chief rays that are waved and salient alternately and by secondary salient rays. It appears to shed its influence on earth not only by light and heat, but – like the moon – by drops of dew. Beneath the Dog Star there is a wall sug-

gesting an enclosure – perhaps a walled garden – where there are two children, either naked or lightly clothed, facing a pool, and gambolling, or running hand in hand. These are sometimes replaced by a spinner unwinding destinies, and otherwise by a much better symbol – a naked child mounted on a white horse and displaying a scarlet standard.

**20. JUDGEMENT.** The form of this symbol is essentially invariable, even in the Etteilla set. An angel sounds his trumpet and the dead arise. Before rejecting the transparent interpretation of the symbolism which is conveyed by the name of the card and by the picture which it presents to the eye, we should feel very sure of our ground. On the surface, at least, it is and can be only the resurrection of father, mother and child. One commentator has suggested that esoterically it is the symbol of evolution – of which it car-

ries none of the signs. Others say that it signifies renewal, which is obvious enough; that it is the triad of human life; that it is the 'generative force of the earth... and eternal life'.

**21. THE FOOL, MATE OR UNWISE MAN.** In most of the arrangements this is the cipher card, unnumbered. Court de Gebelin places it at the head of the whole series, as zero, but the real arrangement of the cards has never been proved. The Fool carries a wallet; he is looking over his shoulder and does not know that he is on the brink of a precipice, but a dog or other animal – some call it a tiger – is attacking him from behind, and he is hurried to his destruction unawares.

**22. THE WORLD, THE UNIVERSE OR TIME.** The four living creatures of the Apocalypse and Ezekiel's vision, attributed to the evangelists in Christian

symbolism, are grouped about an elliptic garland, as if it were a chain of flowers to symbolise all sentient things, and within this garland there is the figure of a woman, whose hips are covered with a light scarf, and this is all she wears. She is in the act of dancing, and has a wand in either hand. It is eloquent as an image of the swirl of the sensitive life, of joy attained in the body, of the soul's intoxication in the earthly paradise, but still guarded by the Divine Watchers, as if by the powers and the graces of the Holy Name, Tetragammaton, — **תְּהָאָן** — those four ineffable letters which are sometimes attributed to the mystical beasts. For some it is a symbol of humanity and the eternal reward of a life that has been spent well. According to P. Christian, the garland encircling the woman should be formed of roses, the kind of chain which Eliphas Lévi says is less easily broken than a chain of iron.

## CLASS II THE FOUR SUITS OR LESSER ARCANA

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**T**he four Tarot suits are: Wands or Scyptres, the antecedents of Diamonds in modern cards; Cups, corresponding to Hearts; Swords, which answer to Clubs; and, finally, Pentacles, which are the prototypes of Spades. In the old as in the new suits, there are ten numbered cards, but in the Tarot there are four court cards allocated to each suit, or a Knight in addition to King, Queen and Knave. The Knave is a page, or valet; most correctly, he is an esquire, presumably in the service of the Knight; but there are certain rare sets in which the page becomes a maid of honour, thus pairing the sexes in the tetrad of the court cards. There are naturally distinc-

tive features in respect of the several pictures: the King of Wands is not exactly the same personage as the King of Cups, even after allowance has been made for the different emblems that they bear; but the symbolism resides in their rank and in the suit to which they belong. So also the smaller cards depend on the particular meaning attaching to their numbers in connection with the particular suit.

## THE HISTORY OF THE TAROT

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**O**ur immediate next concern is to speak of the cards in their history, so that the speculations and reveries which have been perpetuated and multiplied in the schools of occult research may be disposed of once and for all.

There are several sets or sequences of ancient cards which are only in part of our concern. *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, by Papus, has some useful information in this connection, and except for the omission of dates and other archaeological evidence, it will serve the purpose of the general reader.

Among ancient cards which are mentioned in connection with the Tarot, there are firstly those of Baldini, which

are the celebrated set attributed by tradition to Andrea Mantegna, but this view is now generally rejected. Their date is supposed to be about 1470, and it is thought that there are not more than four collections extant in Europe. A copy or reproduction referred to 1485 is perhaps equally rare. A complete set contains fifty numbers, divided into five denaries or sequences of ten cards each. There seems to be no record that they were used for the purposes of a game, whether of chance or skill; they could not have lent themselves to divination or any form of fortune-telling. The first denary embodies conditions of life, as follows: (1) the Beggar, (2) the Knave, (3) the Artisan, (4) the Merchant, (5) the Noble, (6) the Knight, (7) the Doge, (8) the King, (9) the Emperor, (10) the Pope. The second contains the Muses and their divine leader: (11) Calliope, (12) Urania, (13) Terpsichore, (14) Erato, (15) Polyhymnia,

(16) Thalia, (17) Melpomene, (18) Euterpe, (19) Cho, (20) Apollo. The third combines part of the liberal arts and sciences with other departments of human learning, as follows: (21) Grammar, (22) Logic, (23) Rhetoric, (24) Geometry, (25) Arithmetic, (26) Music, (27) Poetry, (28) Philosophy, (29) Astrology, (30) Theology. The fourth denary completes the liberal arts and enumerates the virtues: (31) Astronomy, (32) Chronology, (33) Cosmology, (34) Temperance, (35) Prudence, (36) Strength, (37) Justice, (38) Charity, (39) Hope, (40) Faith. The fifth and last denary presents the system of the heavens: (41) Moon, (42) Mercury, (43) Venus, (44) Sun, (45) Mars, (46) Jupiter, (47) Saturn, (48) Eighth Sphere, (49) *Primum Mobile*, (50) First Cause.

We must set aside the fantastic attempts to extract complete Tarot sequences out of these denaries; we must resist saying, for example, that the con-

ditions of life correspond to the Trumps Major, the Muses to Pentacles, the arts and sciences to Cups, the virtues, etc., to Sceptres, and worldly affairs to Swords. This kind of thing can be done by a process of mental contortion, but it has no place in reality. At the same time, it is hardly possible that individual cards should not exhibit certain, and even striking, analogies. The Baldini King, Knight and Knave suggest the corresponding court cards of the Minor Arcana. The Emperor, Pope, Temperance, Strength, Justice, Moon and Sun are common to the Mantegna and Trumps Major of any Tarot pack. We may also connect the Beggar with the Fool, Venus with the Star, Mars with the Chariot, Saturn with the Hermit, even Jupiter, or alternatively the First Cause, with the Tarot card of the World.\* But the most salient features of the Trumps Major are wanting in the Mantegna set, and I do not believe that

the ordered sequence in the latter case gave birth, as it has been suggested, to the others. Romain Merlin maintained this view, and positively assigned the cards to the end of the fourteenth century.

If it be agreed that, except accidentally and sporadically, the Baldin emblematic or allegorical pictures have only a shadowy and occasional connection with Tarot cards, and whatever their most probable date, that they can have supplied no originating motive, it follows that we are still seeking not only an origin in place and time for the symbols with

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\* *The beggar is practically naked, and the analogy is constituted by the presence of two dogs, one of which seems to be flying at his legs. The Mars card depicts a sword-bearing warrior in a canopied chariot, to which, however, no horses are attached. Of course, if the Baldini cards belong to the close of the fifteenth century, there is no question at issue, as the Tarot was known in Europe long before that period.*

which we are concerned, but a specific case of their manifestation on the continent of Europe to serve as a point of departure, whether backwards or forwards. Now it is well known that in the year 1393 the painter Charles Gringonneur – who for no reason that I can trace has been termed an occultist and Kabalist by one English writer – designed and illuminated some kind of cards for the diversion of Charles VI of France when he was in mental ill-health, and the question arises whether anything can be ascertained of their nature. The only available answer is that at Paris, in the Bibliothèque du Roi, there are seventeen cards drawn and illuminated on paper. They are very beautiful, antique and priceless; the figures have a background of gold, and are framed in a silver border; but they are accompanied by no inscription and no number. It is certain, however, that they include the following

Tarot Trumps Major: Fool, Emperor, Pope, Lovers, Wheel of Fortune, Temperance, Strength, Justice, Moon, Sun, Chariot, Hermit, Hanged Man, Death, Tower and Judgement. There are also four Tarot cards at the Musée Carrer, Venice, and five others, making nine in all. They include two pages or Knaves, three Kings and two Queens, thus illustrating the Minor Arcana. These collections have all been identified with the set produced by Gringonneur, but the ascription was disputed as far back as the year 1848, and it is not apparently put forward at the present day, even by those who are anxious to make evident the antiquity of the Tarot. It is held that they are all of Italian and some at least certainly of Venetian origin. We have here our point of departure in respect of place at least. It has also been stated with authority that Venetian Tarots are the old and true form, which is the parent of all others; but I infer that

complete sets of the Major or Minor Arcana belong to much later periods. The pack consisted of seventy-eight cards.

Notwithstanding the preference shown towards the Venetian Tarot, it is acknowledged that some portions of a Minchiate or Florentine set must be allocated to the period between 1413 and 1418. These were once in the possession of Countess Gonzaga, at Milan. A complete Minchiate pack contained ninety-seven cards, and in spite of these vestiges it is regarded, speaking generally, as a later development. There were forty-one Trumps Major, the additional numbers being borrowed or reflected from the Baldini emblematic set. In the court cards of the Minor Arcana, the Knights were monsters of the centaur type, while the Knaves were sometimes warriors and sometimes serving-men. Another distinction dwelt upon is the prevalence of Christian mediæval ideas and the utter absence of any

Oriental suggestion. The question, however, remains whether there are Eastern traces in any Tarot cards.

We come now to the Bolognese Tarot, sometimes referred to that of Venice and having the Trumps Major complete, but numbers twenty and twenty-one are reversed. In the Minor Arcana the two, three, four and five of the small cards are omitted, with the result that there are sixty-two cards in all. The termination of the Trumps Major in the representation of the Last Judgement is curious, and a little arresting as a point of symbolism; but this is all that it seems necessary to remark about the pack of Bologna, except that it is said to have been invented – or, as a Tarot, more correctly, modified – about the beginning of the fifteenth century by an exiled Prince of Pisa resident in the city. The purpose for which they were used is made evident by the fact that, in 1423, St Bernardin of Siena

preached against playing cards and other forms of gambling. Forty years later the importation of cards into England was forbidden, the time being that of King Edward IV. It is the first certain record of the subject in this country.

In conclusion, I observe that there has been a tendency among experts to think that the Trumps Major were not originally connected with the numbered suits. I do not wish to offer a personal view; I am not an expert in the history of games of chance, and I hate the vulgar speculation of divinatory devices; but I venture, under all reserves, to intimate that if later research should justify the leaning, then – except for the good old art of fortunetelling and its tamperings with so-called destiny – it will be so much the better for the Greater Arcana.

The first writer who made known the fact of the cards was the archaeologist Court de Gebelin, who, just prior to the

French Revolution, occupied several years in the publication of his *Monde Primitif*, which extended to nine quarto volumes. He was a learned man of his epoch, a high-grade Mason, a member of the historical Lodge of the Philalethes, and a virtuoso with a profound and life-long interest in the debate on universal antiquities before a science of the subject existed. Even today his memorials and dissertations, collected under the title which I have quoted, are worth possessing. By an accident of things he became acquainted with the Tarot when it was quite unknown in Paris, and at once conceived that it was the remnants of an Egyptian book. He made enquiries concerning it and learnt that it was in circulation over a considerable part of Europe – Spain, Italy, Germany and the South of France. It was in use as a game of chance or skill like ordinary playing cards; he learnt too how the game was

played. But it was in use also for the higher purpose of divination or fortunetelling, and with the help of a learned friend he discovered the significance attributed to the cards and the method of arrangement adopted for this purpose. In a word, he made a distinct contribution to our knowledge, and he is still a source of reference – but it is on the question of fact only, and not on the beloved hypothesis that the Tarot contains pure Egyptian doctrine.

The Tarot is, of course, allegorical – that is to say, it is symbolism – but allegory and symbol are catholic, of all countries, nations and times; they are not more Egyptian than Mexican; they are of Europe and Cathay, of Tibet beyond the Himalayas and of the London gutters. As allegory and symbol, the cards correspond to many types of ideas and things; they are universal and not particular.

There is no evidence for the Egyptian

origin of Tarot cards. Looking in other directions, a Chinese person once referred to an ancient Chinese inscription, subdivided into seventy-seven sections, to suggest that cards of some kind were invented in China about the year AD 1120. India had also its tablets, whether cards or otherwise, and these too have suggested certain slender similarities. But the existence, for example, of ten suits or styles, of twelve numbers each, and representing the avatars of Vishnu as a fish, tortoise, boar, lion, monkey, hatchet, umbrella or bow, as a goat, a boodh, and as a horse, are not going to help us to the origin of our own Trumps Major, nor do crowns and harps – nor even the presence of possible coins as an equivalent of Pentacles – do much to elucidate the Lesser Arcana. If every language and people in every time and place possessed their cards – if with these also they philosophised, divined and gam-

bled – the fact would be interesting enough, but unless they were Tarot cards, they would illustrate only the universal tendency of humankind to be pursuing the same things in more or less the same way.

Therefore I must end this subject by repeating that it has no history prior to the fourteenth century, when the first rumours were heard concerning cards. This would be early enough, if they were only intended for people to try their luck at gambling or at seeing the future; if they contain the deep intimations of secret doctrine, then the fourteenth century is again early enough, or at least in this respect we are getting as much as we can.



## PART II

## THE DOCTRINE BEHIND THE VEIL

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**T**he Tarot embodies symbolical presentations of universal ideas, behind which lie all the implicits of the human mind, and it is in this sense that they contain secret doctrine, which is the realisation by the few of truths imbedded in the consciousness of all, though they have not passed into express recognition by ordinary people. The theory is that this doctrine has always existed – that is to say, has been the subject of reflection on the part of an elect minority; that it has been perpetuated in secrecy from one to another and has been recorded in secret literatures, like those of alchemy and Kabalism; that it is contained also in instituted mysteries such as

Rosicrucianism and Craft Masonry. Behind the secret doctrine it is held that there is an experience or practice which justifies the doctrine. It is obvious that in a small handbook like the present one I can only state the claims, which, however, have been discussed at length in several of my other writings. It should be remembered that some considerable part of the imputed secret doctrine surrounding the Tarot has been presented in the pictorial emblems of alchemy, so that the imputed *Book of Thoth*\* is in no sense a solitary device of this emblematic kind.

Now, alchemy had two branches, as I have explained fully elsewhere, and the pictorial emblems which I have mentioned are common to both divisions. Its material side is represented in the strange symbolism of the *Mutius Liber*, printed in the great folios of Mangetus. There the process for the performance of the great

work of transmutation is depicted in fourteen copperplate engravings, which exhibit the different stages of the matter in the various chemical vessels. Above these vessels there are mythological, planetary, solar and lunar symbols, as if the powers and virtues which preside over the development and perfection of the metallic kingdom were intervening actively to assist the two operators who are toiling below. The operators – curiously enough – are male and female. The spiritual side of alchemy is set forth in the much stranger emblems of the *Book of Lambspring*.<sup>+</sup>

It contains the mystery of what is called the mystical or arch-natural elixir:

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\* Court de Gebelin's title for the Tarot, based on his theory that the Tarot originated in ancient Egypt.

<sup>+</sup> See the Occult Review, Vol 8, 1908.

the marriage of the soul and the spirit in the body of the adept philosopher and the transmutation of the body as the physical result of this marriage. I have never met with more curious intimations than in this one little work. Both tracts are very much later in time than the latest date that could be assigned to the general distribution of Tarot cards in Europe by the most drastic form of criticism. They belong respectively to the end of the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries. I do not suggest that the Tarot set the example of expressing secret doctrine in pictures and that it was followed by Hermetic writers; but it is noticeable that it is perhaps the earliest example of this art.

It is also the most catholic, because it is not, by attribution or otherwise, a derivative of any one school or literature of occultism; it is not of alchemy or Kabalism or astrology or ceremonial

magic; but, as I have said, it is the presentation of universal ideas by means of universal types, and it is in the combination of these types – if anywhere – that it presents secret doctrine.

That combination may reside in the numbered sequence of its series or in the way they are assembled by shuffling, cutting and dealing, as in the ordinary games of chance played with cards. Two writers have adopted the first view without prejudice to the second. Mr MacGregor Mathers, who once published a pamphlet on the Tarot, which was in the main devoted to fortune-telling, suggested that the twenty-two Trumps Major could be constructed, following their numerical order, into what he called a 'connected sentence'. It was, in fact, the heads of a moral thesis on the human will, its enlightenment by science, represented by the Magician, its manifestation by action – a significance attributed to the

High Priestess – its realisation (the Empress) in deeds of mercy and good works, which qualities were allocated to the Emperor. He spoke also in the familiar conventional manner of prudence, fortitude, sacrifice, hope and ultimate happiness. But if this were the message of the cards, it is certain that there would be no excuse for publishing them today or taking the pains to elucidate them at some length. In his *Tarot of the Bohemians*, a work written with zeal and enthusiasm, and with a great deal of thought and research within its particular lines, Dr Papus has given a singularly elaborate scheme of the Trumps Major. It depends, like that of Mr Mathers, on their numerical sequence, but exhibits their interrelation in the Divine World, the Macrocosm and Microcosm. In this manner we obtain a spiritual history of man, or of the soul coming out from the Eternal, passing into the darkness of the

material body, and returning to the height. I think that the author was here upon the right track, and his views are proportionately informing, but his method – in some respects – confuses the issues and the modes and planes of being.

The Trumps Major have also been treated in the alternative method which I have mentioned, and Grand Orient, in his *Manual of Cartomancy*, has, under the guise of a mode of transcendental divination, really offered the result of certain illustrative readings of the cards when arranged as the result of a fortuitous combination by the means of shuffling and dealing. The use of divinatory methods, with whatever intention and for whatever purpose, carries with it two suggestions. It may be thought that the deeper meanings are imputed rather than real, but this is disposed of by the fact of certain cards, like the Magician, the High Priestess, the Wheel of Fortune, the Hanged Man, the

Tower and several others, which do not correspond to positions in life, arts, sciences, virtues, or the other subjects contained in the denaries of the Baldini emblematic figures. They also prove that obvious and natural moralities cannot explain the sequence. Such cards offer a different message; and although the state in which I have left the Tarot in respect of its historical side is so much the more difficult as it is so much the more open, these cards indicate the real subject-matter with which we are concerned. They show also that the Trumps Major at least have been adapted to fortune-telling rather than belonging to it. The common divinatory meanings which will be given in Part III are largely arbitrary attributions, or the product of secondary and uninstructed intuition; or, at the very most, they belong to the subject on a lower plane, apart from the original intention. If the roots of Tarot were in

fortune-telling, we should have to look in very strange places for the motive which devised it – to witchcraft and the Black Sabbath, rather than to the secret doctrine.

The two classes of significance which are attached to the Tarot in the upper and lower worlds, and the fact that no occult or other writer has attempted to assign anything but a divinatory meaning to the Minor Arcana, also justify the hypothesis that the two series do not belong to one another. It is possible that their marriage was effected first in the Tarot of Bologna by the Prince of Pisa whom I have mentioned in Part I. It is said that his device obtained for him public recognition and reward from the city of his adoption, which would scarcely have been possible, even in those fantastic days, for the production of a Tarot which only omitted a few of the small cards; but as we are dealing with a question of fact which has to

be accounted for somehow, it is conceivable that a sensation might have been created by a combination of the minor and gambling cards with the philosophical set, and the adaptation of both to a game of chance. Afterwards it would have been further adapted to that other game of chance which is called fortune-telling. It should be understood here that I am not denying the possibility of divination, but I take exception as a mystic to the dedications which bring people into these paths as if they had any relation to the Mystic Quest.

The Tarot cards which accompany this *Key to the Tarot* have been drawn and coloured by Miss Pamela Colman Smith, and will, I think, be regarded as very striking and beautiful, in both their design and execution. As they differ in many important respects from other packs, it remains for me to justify their variations so far as the symbolism is concerned. For

these variations I alone am responsible. In respect of the Major Arcana, they are sure to prompt criticism among students, actual and imputed. I wish therefore to say, within the reserves of courtesy, that I care nothing at all for any view that may find expression. There is a secret tradition concerning the Tarot, as well as a secret doctrine contained therein; I have followed some part of it without exceeding the limits which are drawn about matters of this kind and belong to the laws of honour. This tradition has two parts, and as one of them has passed into writing, it seems to follow that it may be betrayed at any moment, which will not signify, because the second, as I have intimated, has not so passed at present and is held by very few indeed. I ask, therefore, to be distinguished from a few writers in recent times who have thought fit to hint that they could say a good deal more if they liked, for we do not speak

the same language; but also from anyone who, now or hereafter, may say that she or he will tell all, because they have only the accidents and not the essentials necessary for such disclosure. If I have followed on my part the counsel of Robert Burns, by keeping something to myself which I 'scarcely tell to any', I have said as much as I can; it is the truth after its own manner, and as much as can be expected or required in those outer circles where the qualifications of special research cannot be expected.

In regard to the Minor Arcana, they are the first in modern but not in all times to be accompanied by pictures, in addition to what is called the 'pips' – that is to say, the devices belonging to the numbers of the various suits. These pictures respond to the divinatory meanings, which have been drawn from many sources. To sum up, therefore, the present division of this key is devoted to the Trumps Major; it

elucidates their symbols in respect of the higher intention and with reference to the designs in the pack. The third division will give the divinatory significance in respect of the seventy-eight Tarot cards, also with reference to the designs of the Minor Arcana. It will give the methods of use for those who require them. What follows should be taken, for purposes of comparison, in connection with the general description of the old Tarot Trumps in Part I. There it will be seen that the zero card of the Fool is allocated, as it always is, to the place which makes it equivalent to the number twenty-one. The arrangement is ridiculous on the surface, which does not matter much, but it is also wrong on the symbolism, and this is not helped when it is made to replace the twenty-second point of the sequence. Etteilla recognised the difficulties of both attributions but he only made bad worse by allocating the Fool to the place which

is usually occupied by the Ace of Pentacles as the last of the whole Tarot series. The rearrangement has been followed by Papus recently in *Le Tarot Divinatoire*, where the confusion is of no consequence, as the findings of fortune-telling depend upon fortuitous positions and not upon essential place in the general sequence of cards. I have seen yet another allocation of the zero symbol, which no doubt obtains in certain cases, but it fails on the highest planes and is not relevant to our present requirements.

## THE TRUMPS MAJOR

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1. THE MAGICIAN. A youthful figure in a magician's robe has the face of divine Apollo, with a confident smile and shining eyes. Above his head is the mysterious sign of the Holy Spirit, the sign of life, like an endless cord, forming the figure 8 in a horizontal position  $\infty$ . About his waist is a serpent cineture, the serpent appearing to devour its own tail. This is familiar to most as a conventional symbol of eternity, but here it indicates more especially the eternity of attainment in the spirit. In the Magician's right hand is a wand raised towards heaven, while the left hand is pointing to the earth. This dual sign is known in very high grades of the instituted mysteries; it

is the course of grace, virtue and light, drawn from things above and derived to things below. The suggestion throughout is therefore the possession and communication of the powers and gifts of the spirit. On the table before the Magician are the symbols of the four Tarot suits, signifying the elements of natural life, which lie like counters before the adept, and he adapts them as he wills. Beneath are roses and lilies, changed into garden flowers, to show the culture of aspiration. This card signifies the divine motive in man, reflecting God, the will in the liberation attending his union with that which is above. It is also the unity of individual being on all planes.

**2. THE HIGH PRIESTESS.** She has the lunar crescent at her feet, a horned diadem on her head, with a globe set in the middle, and a large solar cross on her breast. The scroll in her hands is

inscribed with the word *Tora*, signifying the Greater Law, the Secret Law and the second sense of the Word. It is partly covered by her mantle, to show that some things are implied and some spoken. She is seated between the white and black pillars – J and B – of the mystic Temple, and the veil of the Temple is behind her: it is embroidered with palms and pomegranates. Her robes are flowing and gauzy, her mantle suggests light – a shimmering radiance. She has been called Occult Science on the threshold of the Sanctuary of Isis, but she is really the Secret Church, the House which is of God and man. She represents also the Second Marriage of the Prince who is no longer of this world; she is the spiritual Bride and Mother, the daughter of the stars and the Higher Garden of Eden. She is the Queen of the borrowed light, but this is the light of all. She is the moon nourished by the milk of the Supernal Mother.

3. THE EMPRESS. A stately figure, seated, she has rich robes and a royal aspect, as of a daughter of heaven and earth. The diadem is of twelve stars, gathered in a cluster. The symbol of Venus is on the shield which rests near her. A field of corn is ripening in front of her, and beyond there a waterfall. On top of the sceptre which she holds is the globe of this world. She is the lower Garden of Eden, the earthly paradise, all that is symbolised by the visible house of man. She is not the Queen of Heaven, but she is still the refuge of sinners, the fruitful mother of thousands. There are also certain aspects in which she has been correctly described as desire and its wings, as the woman clothed with the sun, as the world in its glory and the veil of the Holy of Holies; but she is not, I think, the soul that has attained wings, unless all the symbolism is counted up another and unusual way. She is above all

things universal fecundity and the outer sense of the Word. This is obvious, because there is no direct message which has been given to man like that which is borne by woman; but she does not herself carry its interpretation.

4. THE EMPEROR. He has a form of the ankh cross for his sceptre and a globe in his left hand. He is a crowned monarch – commanding and stately, seated on a throne, the arms of which are fronted by rams' heads. He is executive and realisation, the power of this world, here clothed with the highest of its natural attributes. He is sometimes represented as seated on a cubic stone, which, however, confuses some of the issues. He is the virile power, to which the Empress responds, and in this sense it is he who seeks to remove the Veil of Isis; yet she remains *virgo intacta*.

5. THE HIEROPHANT. He wears the triple crown and is seated between two pillars, but they are not those of the Temple which are guarded by the High Priestess. In his left hand he holds a sceptre terminating in the triple cross, and with his right hand he gives the well-known ecclesiastical sign which is called that of esotericism, distinguishing between the manifest and concealed part of doctrine. It is noticeable in this connection that the High Priestess makes no sign. At his feet are the crossed keys, and two priestly ministers in albs kneel before him. He has been usually called the Pope, which is a particular application of the more general office that he symbolises. He is the ruling power of external religion, as the High Priestess is the prevailing genius of the esoteric, withdrawn power.

6. THE LOVERS. The sun shines in the zenith, and beneath is a great winged fig-

ure with arms extended, pouring down influences. In the foreground are two human figures, male and female, unveiled before each other, as if Adam and Eve when they first occupied the paradise of the earthly body. Behind the man is the Tree of Life, bearing twelve fruits, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is behind the woman; the serpent is twining round it. The figures suggest youth, virginity, innocence, and love before it is contaminated by material desire. This is in all simplicity the card of human love, here shown as part of the way, the truth and the life. It replaces the old card of marriage, which I have described previously (*see p.22*), and the later images which depicted man between vice and virtue. In a very high sense, it is a mystery of the covenant and Sabbath.

**7. THE CHARIOT.** An erect and princely figure carries a drawn sword and corre-

sponds, broadly speaking, to the traditional description which I have given in Part I (see p.23). On the shoulders of the victorious hero are supposed to be the *Urim* and *Thummim*. He has led captivity captive; he is conquest on all planes – in the mind, in science, in progress, in all trials of initiation. He has thus replied to the sphinx, and it is for this reason that I have accepted the variation of Éliphas Lévi; two sphinxes thus draw his chariot. He is above all things triumph in the mind.

**8. STRENGTH.** A woman, over whose head there broods the same symbol of life which we have seen in the card of the Hierophant, is closing the jaws of a lion. The only point in which this design differs from the conventional presentations is that she has already subdued the lion, which is being led by a chain of flowers. For reasons which satisfy myself, this

card has been interchanged with that of Justice, which is usually numbered eight. As the variation carries nothing with it which will signify to the reader, there is no cause for explanation. Strength, in one of its most exalted aspects, is connected with the mystery of union; the virtue, of course, operates in all planes, and hence draws on all in its symbolism. It connects also with innocence, and with the strength which resides in contemplation.

9. THE HERMIT. The variation in this card is only that the lamp is not enveloped partially in the mantle of its bearer, who blends the idea of the Ancient of Days with the Light of the World. It is a star which shines in the lantern. I have said that this is a card of attainment (see p. 24), and to extend this idea, the figure is seen holding up his beacon on a high place. Therefore the Hermit is not, as Court de Gebelin explained, a wise man

in search of truth and justice; nor is he, as a later explanation proposes, an especial example of experience. His beacon intimates that 'where I am you also may be'.

**10. THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE.** The wheel stands for the perpetual motion of a fluidic universe and for the flux of human life. The sphinx is the balance contained in this constant motion. The transliteration of *Taro* as *Rota* is inscribed on the wheel, counterchanged with the letters of the Divine Name - to show that Providence is implied through all. This is the Divine intention within, and the Divine intention without is exemplified by the four living creatures. Sometimes the sphinx is represented seated on a pedestal above, which defrauds the symbolism by stultifying the essential idea of stability amid movement.

11. JUSTICE. As this card follows the traditional symbolism and carries above all its obvious meanings, there is nothing to say regarding it outside the few considerations in Part I (see p.26).

12. THE HANGED MAN. The gallows from which he is suspended forms a tan cross, while the figure – from the position of the legs – forms a fylfot cross. There is a halo about the head of the seeming martyr. It should be noted first that the tree of sacrifice is living wood, with leaves growing from it; secondly that the face expresses deep entrancement, not suffering; thirdly that the figure, as a whole, suggests life in suspension, but life and not death. It is a card of profound significance, but all the significance is veiled. It has been called falsely a card of martyrdom, a card of prudence, a card of the Great Work, a card of duty; but we may exhaust all published interpretations and find only

variety. I will say very simply on my own part that it expresses the relation, in one of its aspects, between the Divine and the Universe.

13. DEATH. The veil and mask of life is perpetuated in change, transformation and passage from lower to higher, and is more fitly represented in the rectified Tarot by one of the apocalyptic visions than by the crude notion of the reaping skeleton. Behind it lies the whole world of ascent in the spirit. The mysterious horseman moves slowly, bearing a black banner emblazoned with the Mystic Rose, which signifies life. Between two pillars on the verge of the horizon there shines the sun of immortality. The horseman carries no visible weapon, but king and child and maiden fall before him, and a prelate with clasped hands awaits his end.

14. TEMPERANCE. A winged angel, with

the sign of the sun upon its forehead and on its breast the square and triangle of the septenary. Although some regard this angel as feminine (*see p. 28*), it is neither male nor female. It is held to be pouring the essences of life from chalice to chalice. It has one foot upon the earth and one upon water, so illustrating the nature of the essences. A direct path goes up to certain heights on the verge of the horizon, and above there is a great light, through which a crown is seen vaguely. Here is some part of the secret of eternal life, as it is possible to man in his incarnation.

**15. THE DEVIL.** The design is an accommodation, mean or harmony, between several motives mentioned in Part I (*see p. 28*). The Horned Goat of Mendes, with wings like those of a bat, is standing on an altar. At the pit of the stomach there is the sign of Mercury. The right hand is

upraised and extended, reversing the blessing which is given by the Hierophant in the fifth card. In the left hand there is a great flaming torch, inverted towards the earth. A reversed pentagram is on the forehead. There is a ring in front of the altar, from which two chains are carried to the necks of two figures, male and female. These are analogous with those of the fifth card, as if Adam and Eve after the Fall. This is the chain and fatality of the material life.

**16. THE TOWER.** Occult explanations attached to this card are meagre and mostly disconcerting. It is idle to indicate that it depicts ruin in all its aspects, because this is self-evident. It is also said that it contains the first allusion to a material building, but I do not think that the Tower is more or less material than the pillars which we have met with in two previous cases. Nothing suggests to me

that this is the Fall of Adam, but there is more in favour of the claim that it signifies the materialisation of the spiritual letter. P. Christian imagines that it is the downfall of the mind seeking to penetrate the mystery of God. I agree rather with Grand Orient that it is the ruin of the house of life, when evil has prevailed in it, and above all that it is the rending of the house of doctrine. It illustrates also in the most comprehensive way the old truth that 'unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it'.

**17. THE STAR.** A great, radiant star of eight rays is surrounded by seven lesser stars – also of eight rays. The female figure in the foreground is entirely naked. Her left knee is on the land and her right foot upon the water. She pours water of life from two great ewers, irrigating sea and land. Behind her is rising ground and on the right a shrub or tree, where a bird

alights. The figure expresses eternal youth and beauty. The star is *l'étoile flamboyante*, which appears in Masonic symbolism. That which the figure communicates to the living scene is the substance of the heavens and the elements. It has been said truly that the mottoes of this card are 'waters of life freely' and 'gifts of the spirit'.

**18. THE MOON.** The distinction between this card and some of the conventional types is that the moon is increasing on what is called the side of mercy, to the right of the observer. It has sixteen chief and sixteen secondary rays. The card represents life of the imagination apart from life of the spirit. The path between the towers is the issue into the unknown. The dog and wolf are the fears of the natural mind in the presence of that place of exit, when there is only reflected light to guide it.

19. THE SUN. A naked child, mounted on a white horse, displays a red standard (*see also p. 31*). It is the destiny of the supernatural East and the great and holy light which goes before the endless procession of humanity, coming out from the walled garden of the sensitive life and passing on the journey home. The card signifies, therefore, the transit from the manifest light of this world, represented by the glorious sun of earth, to the light of the world to come, which goes before aspiration and is typified by the heart of a child.

20. JUDGEMENT. I have said that this symbol is essentially invariable in all Tarot sets, or at least the variations do not alter its character (*see p. 32*). The great angel is here encircled by clouds, but he blows his bannered trumpet, and the cross as usual is displayed on the banner. The dead are rising from their tombs

— a woman on the right, a man on the left, and between them their child, whose back is turned. But in this card there are more than three who are restored. It should be noted that all the figures are one in the wonder, adoration and ecstasy expressed by their attitudes. It is the card which registers the accomplishment of the great work of transformation in answer to the summons of the supernal — a summons that is heard and answered from within.

**ZERO = 0. THE FOOL.** With a light step, as if earth and its trammels had little power to restrain him, a young man in gorgeous clothing pauses at the brink of a precipice among the great heights of the world; he surveys the blue distance before him — its expanse of sky rather than the prospect below. His act of eager walking is still indicated, though he is stationary at the given moment; his dog is

still bounding. The edge which opens on the depth has no terror; it is as if angels were waiting to uphold him, if it came about that he leapt from the height. His face is full of intelligence and expectant dreams. He has a rose in one hand and in the other a costly wand, from which a curiously embroidered wallet hangs over his right shoulder. He is a prince of the other world on his travels through this one – all amid the morning glory, in the keen air. The sun, which shines behind him, knows whence he came, whither he is going and how he will return by another path after many days. He is the soul in search of experience. Many symbols of the instituted mysteries are summarised in this card, which reverses, under high warrants, all the confusions that have preceded it.

**21. THE WORLD.** As this final message of the Major Trumps is unchanged – and

indeed unchangeable – in respect of its design, it has been sufficiently described already (see p. 33). It represents the perfection and end of the Cosmos, the secret which is within it, the rapture of the universe when it understands itself in God. It is also the state of the soul in the consciousness of Divine Vision. But these meanings are without prejudice to that which I have said concerning it on the material side.

I have not attempted to present the symbolism in what is called the three worlds – that of Divinity, of the Macrocosm and the Microcosm. I have taken the cards on the high plane of their more direct significance to man, who – in material life – is on the quest of eternal things. I have not attempted to rectify the position of the cards in their relation to one another – the zero therefore appears after number twenty – but I have taken care to number the World or Universe as

twenty-one.

In conclusion as to this Part, I will give these further indications regarding the Fool, which is the most speaking of all the symbols. It signifies the journey outward, the state of the first emanation, the graces and passivity of the spirit. The Fool's wallet is inscribed with dim signs, to show that many subconscious memories are stored up in the soul.

# PART III

## THE OUTER METHOD OF THE ORACLES

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**I**n respect of their usual presentation, the bridge between the Greater and Lesser Arcana is supplied by the court cards – King, Queen, Knight and Squire or Page – but their utter distinction from the Trumps Major is shown by their conventional character. Let the reader compare them with symbols like the Fool, the High Priestess, the Hierophant, or – almost without exception – with any in the previous sequence, and he will see my meaning. There is no especial idea connected on the surface with the ordinary court cards; they are a bridge of conventions which form a transition to the simple pretexts of the counters or denaries of the numbers fol-

lowing. It looks as if we had passed away from the region of higher meanings illustrated by living pictures. There was a period, however, when the numbered cards were also pictures, but such devices were sporadic inventions of particular artists and were either emblematic designs, distinct from what is understood by symbolism, or illustrations, shall we say, of manners, customs and periods. They were adornments which did nothing to raise the significance of the Lesser Arcana to the plane of the Trumps Major; moreover, such variations are exceedingly few.

I recognise that the Trumps Major belong to the divine dealings of philosophy, but all that applies to fortune-telling, since it has never yet been translated into another language; my approach will give to the fortune-teller, and if necessary even to the gambler, the information they need, and it will set apart for their proper

business those things that are of another order. It is only necessary to add that the difference between the fifty-six Lesser Arcana and ordinary playing cards is not only essentially slight because the substitution of Cups for Hearts, and so on, constitutes a merely accidental variation, but because the presence of a Knight in each of the four suits was characteristic at one time of many ordinary packs, when this figure usually replaced the Queen. In the rectified Tarot which accompanies the present handbook, all numbered cards of the Lesser Arcana – the Aces only excepted – are presented with figures or pictures to illustrate the divinatory meaning attached to them.

# THE LESSER ARCANA OR THE THE FOUR SUITS OF TAROT CARDS

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**T**hese will now be described according to their respective classes by the pictures belonging to each, and a harmony of their meanings provided from all sources.

## WANDS

**KING.** The physical and emotional nature to which this card is attributed is dark, ardent, lithe, animated, impassioned, noble. The King holds up a flowering wand and wears, like his three correspondences in the remaining suits, what is called a cap of maintenance beneath his crown. He connects with the symbol of the lion, which is emblazoned on the back of his throne. *Divinatory Meanings:*

Dark man, friendly, countryman, generally married, honest and conscientious. *Reversed*: Good, but severe; austere, yet tolerant.

**QUEEN.** The wands throughout this suit are always in leaf, as it is a suit of life and animation. Emotionally and otherwise, the Queen's personality corresponds to that of the King, but is more magnetic. *Divinatory Meanings*: A dark woman, countrywoman, friendly, chaste, loving, honourable. If the card beside her signifies a man, she is well disposed towards him; if a woman, she is interested in the Querent. Also, love of money. *Reversed*: Good, economical, obliging, serviceable. Signifies also opposition, jealousy, even deceit and infidelity.

**KNIGHT.** He is shown as if upon a journey, armed with a short wand, and although wearing armour is not on a warlike

errand. He is passing mounds or pyramids. *Divinatory Meanings*: Departure, absence, flight, emigration. A dark young man, friendly. Change of residence. *Reversed*: Rupture, division, interruption, discord.

**PAGE.** In a scene similar to the former, a young man stands in the act of proclamation. He is unknown but faithful, and his tidings are strange. *Divinatory Meanings*: Dark young man, faithful, a lover, an envoy, a postman. Beside a man, he will bear favourable testimony concerning him. A dangerous rival, if followed by the Page of Cups. He has the chief qualities of his suit. *Reversed*: Anecdotes, announcements, evil news. Also indecision and the instability which accompanies it.

**TEN.** A man oppressed by the weight of the ten staves which he is carrying.

*Divinatory Meanings:* A card of many significances, and some of the readings cannot be harmonised. I set aside that which connects it with honour and good faith. It is oppression simply, but it is also fortune, gain, any kind of success of these things. It is also a card of false-seeming, disguise, perfidy. The place which the figure is approaching may suffer from the rods that he carries. Success is stultified if the Nine of Swords follows, and if it is a question of a lawsuit, there will be certain loss. *Reversed:* Contrarieties, difficulties, intrigues, and their analogies.

**NINE.** The figure leans upon his staff and has an expectant look, as if awaiting an enemy. Behind are eight other staves standing erect, in orderly disposition, like a palisade. *Divinatory Meanings:* The card signifies strength in opposition. If attacked, he will meet the onslaught boldly. With this main significance there

are all its possible adjuncts – delay, suspension, adjournment. *Reversed*: Obstacles, adversity, calamity.

**EIGHT.** The card represents motion through the immovable – a flight of wands through an open country. *Divinatory Meanings*: Activity in undertakings, the path of such activity, swiftness, as that of an express messenger; great haste, great hope, speed towards an end which promises happiness; generally, that which is on the move; also the arrows of love. *Reversed*: Arrows of jealousy, internal dispute, stingings of conscience, quarrels.

**SEVEN.** A young man on a craggy mountain top brandishes a staff; six other staves are raised towards him from below. *Divinatory Meanings*: It is a card of valour, for, on the surface, six are attacking one, who has, however, the vantage position. On the intellectual plane, it signifies

discussion, wordy strife; in business – negotiations, war of trade, barter, competition. It is also a card of success, for the combatant is on the top and his enemies may be unable to reach him. *Reversed:* Perplexity, embarrassments, anxiety.

SIX. A laurelled horseman bears a staff adorned with a laurel crown; footmen with staves are at his side. *Divinatory Meanings:* The card has been so designed that it can convey several meanings: on the surface, it is a victor triumphing, but it is also great news, such as might be carried in state by the king's courier; it is expectation crowned with its own desire, the crown of hope, and so on. *Reversed:* Apprehension, fear, as of a victorious enemy at the gate, treachery, disloyalty, as of gates being opened to the enemy.

FIVE. A posse of youths are brandishing

staves, as if in sport or strife. It is a card of mimic warfare. *Divinatory Meanings*: Imitation, as, for example, sham fight, the strenuous competition and struggle of the search after riches and fortune. Hence some attributions say that it is a card of gold, gain, opulence. *Reversed*: Litigation, disputes, trickery, contradiction.

**FOUR.** From the four great staves planted in the foreground there is a great garland suspended; two female figures hold up nosegays; at their side is a bridge over a moat, leading to an old manorial house. *Divinatory Meanings*: They are for once almost on the surface – country life, repose, concord, harmony, prosperity, peace, and the perfected work of these. *Reversed*: The meaning remains unaltered; it is prosperity, increase, felicity, beauty, embellishment.

**THREE.** A calm, stately figure, with his

back turned, looks from a cliff's edge at ships passing over the sea. Three staves are planted in the ground and he leans slightly on one of them. *Divinatory Meanings:* He symbolises established strength, enterprise, effort, trade, commerce, discovery; those are his ships, bearing his merchandise, which are sailing over the sea. *Reversed:* The end of troubles, suspension or end of adversity, toil and disappointment.

Two. A tall man looks from a battlemented roof over sea and shore; he holds a globe in his right hand and a staff in his left rests on the battlement; another is fixed in a ring. The Rose and Cross and Lily should be noticed on the left side. *Divinatory Meanings:* Between the alternative readings there is no marriage possible: on the one hand, riches, fortune, magnificence; on the other, physical suffering, disease, chagrin, sadness,

mortification. The design gives one suggestion: here is a lord overlooking his dominion and alternately contemplating a globe; it looks like the malady, the mortification, the sadness of Alexander amid the grandeur of this world's wealth. *Reversed*: Surprise, wonder, enchantment, emotion, trouble, fear.

ACE. A hand coming out of a cloud grasps a stout wand or club. *Divinatory Meanings*: Creation, invention, enterprise, the powers which result in these; principle, beginning, source; birth, family, origin; the beginning of enterprises; according to another account, money, fortune, inheritance. *Reversed*: Fall, decadence, ruin, perdition, to perish; also – not unclouded joy.

## CUPS

**KING.** He holds a short sceptre in his left hand and a great cup in his right; his throne is set upon the sea; on one side a ship is riding and on the other a dolphin is leaping. The sign of the Cup naturally refers to water, which appears in all the court cards. *Divinatory Meanings:* Fair man, man of business, law or divinity; responsible, disposed to oblige the Querent; also equity, art and science, including those who profess science, law and art; creative intelligence. *Reversed:* Dishonest, double-dealing man; roguery, exactation, injustice, vice, scandal.

**QUEEN.** She is beautiful, fair, dreamy, as one who sees vision in a cup. *Divinatory Meanings:* Good, fair woman; honest, devoted woman, who will do service to the Querent; loving intelligence, and hence the gift of vision; success, happiness, pleasure; also wisdom, virtue.

*Reversed:* The accounts vary: good woman; otherwise, distinguished woman but one not to be trusted; perverse woman; vice, dishonour, depravity.

**KNIGHT.** Graceful, but not warlike; riding quietly, wearing a winged helmet, referring to the higher graces of the imagination which sometimes characterise this card. *Divinatory Meanings:* Arrival, approach – sometimes that of a messenger; advances, proposition, demeanour, invitation, incitement. *Reversed:* Trickery, artifice, subtlety, swindling, duplicity, fraud.

**PAGE.** A fair, pleasing, rather effeminate page, with a studious and intent face, contemplates a fish rising from a cup to look at him. *Divinatory Meanings:* Fair young man, one impelled to render service and with whom the Querent will be connected; a studious youth; news, mes-

sage; application, reflection, meditation; also these things directed to business. *Reversed:* Taste, inclination, attachment, seduction, deception, artifice.

**TEN.** Appearance of cups in a rainbow; it is contemplated in wonder and ecstasy by a man and woman below, evidently husband and wife. His right arm is about her; his left raised upwards; she raises her right arm. The two children dancing near them have not observed the miracle but are happy in their own way. There is a home scene beyond. *Divinatory Meanings:* Contentment, repose of the entire heart; the perfection of that state; if with several picture-cards, a person who is taking charge of the Querent's interests; also the town, village or country inhabited by the Querent. *Reversed:* Repose of the false heart, indignation, violence.

**NINE.** A comfortable character is feasting to his heart's content, and an ample supply of refreshing wine is on the arched counter behind him. *Divinatory Meanings:* Concord, contentment, physical well-being; also victory, success, advantage; satisfaction for the Querent or person for whom the consultation is made. *Reversed:* Truth, loyalty, liberty; but the readings vary and include mistakes and imperfections.

**EIGHT.** A dejected man is deserting the cups of his happiness, enterprise, undertaking or previous concern. *Divinatory Meanings:* The card speaks for itself on the surface, but other readings are entirely antithetical, giving joy, mildness, timidity, honour, modesty. *Reversed:* Great joy, happiness, feasting.

**SEVEN.** Strange chalices of vision. *Divinatory Meanings:* Fairy favours,

images of reflection, sentiment, imagination, things seen in the glass of contemplation; some attainment in these degrees but nothing permanent or substantial is suggested. *Reversed*: Desire, will, determination, project.

SIX. Children in an old garden, their cups filled with flowers. *Divinatory Meanings*: A card of the past and of memories, looking back, as – for example – on childhood; happiness, enjoyment, but coming rather from the past; things that have vanished. Another reading reverses this, giving new relations, new knowledge, new environment, and then the children are playing in a newly entered precinct. *Reversed*: The future, renewal, that which will come to pass presently.

FIVE. A dark, cloaked figure, looking sideways at three prone cups; two others stand upright behind him; a bridge is in

the background, leading to a small keep or holding. *Divinatory Meanings:* It is a card of loss, but something remains over; three have been taken, but two are left; it is a card of inheritance, patrimony, transmission, but not corresponding to expectations; with some it is a card of marriage, but not without bitterness or frustration. *Reversed:* News, alliances, affinity, consanguinity, ancestry, return, false projects.

**FOUR.** A young man is seated under a tree and contemplates three cups set on the grass before him; an arm coming out of a cloud offers him another cup. Even so, his expression is one of discontent with his environment. *Divinatory Meanings:* Weariness, disgust, aversion, imaginary vexations, as if the wine of this world had caused satiety only; another wine, as if a fairy gift, is now offered him, but he sees no consolation in this. This is

also a card of blended pleasure. *Reversed*: Novelty, presage, new instruction, new relations.

THREE. Maidens in a garden ground with cups uplifted, as if pledging one another. *Divinatory Meanings*: The conclusion of any matter in plenty, perfection and merriment; happy outcome, victory, fulfilment, solace, healing. *Reversed*: Expedition, dispatch, achievement, end.

Two. A youth and maiden are pledging one another, and above their cups rises the caduceus of Hermes, between the great wings of which there appears a lion's head. It is a variant of a sign which is found in some old examples of this card. Some curious meanings are attached to it. *Divinatory Meanings*: Love, passion, friendship, affinity, union, concord, sympathy, the interrelation of the sexes, and – as a suggestion apart

from all offices of divination – that desire which is not in nature, but by which nature is sanctified.

**ACE.** The water is beneath and on it are water-lilies; the hand comes out of the cloud, holding in its palm the cup, from which four streams are pouring; a dove, bearing in its bill a cross-marked host, descends to place the wafer in the cup; the dew of water is falling on all sides. It is an intimation of that which may lie behind the Lesser Arcana. *Divinatory Meanings:* House of the true heart, joy, content, abode, nourishment, abundance, fertility, holy table, happiness. *Reversed:* House of the false heart, mutation, instability, revolution.

**SWORDS**

**KING.** He sits in judgement, holding the unsheathed sign of his suit. *Divinatory Meanings:* Whatever arises out of the idea of judgement and all its connections – power, command, authority, militant intelligence, law, offices of the crown, and so on. *Reversed:* Cruelty, perversity, barbarity, perfidy, evil intention.

**QUEEN.** Her right hand raises the weapon vertically and the hilt rests on an arm of her royal chair; the left hand is extended, the arm raised; her face is severe, chastened, and suggests familiarity with sorrow. *Divinatory Meanings:* Widowhood, female sadness and embarrassment, absence, sterility, mourning, privation, separation. *Reversed:* Malice, bigotry, artifice, prudery, deceit.

**KNIGHT.** In full course, as if scattering his enemies. *Divinatory Meanings:* Skill,

bravery, capacity, defence, address, enmity, wrath, war, destruction, opposition, resistance, ruin. *Reversed*: Imprudence, incapacity, extravagance.

**PAGE.** A lithe, active figure holds a sword upright in both hands, while in the act of swift walking. *Divinatory Meanings*: Authority, overseeing, secret service, vigilance, spying, examination, and the qualities belonging to these activities. *Reversed*: More evil side of these qualities; what is unforeseen, unprepared state; sickness is also intimated.

**TEN.** A prostrate figure, pierced by all the swords belonging to the card. *Divinatory Meanings*: Whatever is intimated by the design; also pain, affliction, tears, sadness, desolation. *Reversed*: Advantage, profit, success, favour, but none of these are permanent; also power and authority.

**NINE.** One seated on her couch in lamentation, with the swords over her. *Divinatory Meanings:* Death, failure, miscarriage, delay, deception, disappointment, despair. *Reversed:* Imprisonment, suspicion, doubt, reasonable fear, shame.

**EIGHT.** A woman, bound and hoodwinked, with the swords of the card about her. *Divinatory Meanings:* Bad news, violent chagrin, crisis, censure, power in trammels, conflict, calumny; also sickness. *Reversed:* Disquiet, difficulty, opposition, accident, treachery; what is unforeseen; fatality.

**SEVEN.** A man in the act of carrying away five swords rapidly; the two others of the card remain stuck in the ground. A camp close at hand. *Divinatory Meanings:* Design, attempt, wish, hope, confidence; also quarrelling, a plan that may fail, annoyance. *Reversed:* Good advice, coun-

sel, instruction, slander, babbling.

**SIX.** A ferryman carrying passengers in his punt to the further shore. *Divinatory Meanings:* Journey by water, route, way, envoy, commissioner, expedient. *Reversed:* Declaration, confession, publicity; one account says that it is a proposal of love.

**FIVE.** A disdainful man looks after two retreating and dejected figures. Their two swords lie upon the ground. He carries two others on his left shoulder, and a third sword is in his right hand, point to earth. He is the master in possession of the field. *Divinatory Meanings:* Degradation, destruction, reversal, infamy, dishonour, loss. *Reversed:* The same; burial and obsequies.

**FOUR.** The effigy of a knight in the attitude of prayer, at full length upon his

tomb. *Divinatory Meanings*: Vigilance, retreat, solitude, hermit's repose, exile, tomb and coffin. *Reversed*: Wise administration, circumspection, economy, avarice, precaution, testament.

**THREE.** Three swords piercing a heart; cloud and rain behind. *Divinatory Meanings*: Removal, absence, delay, division, rupture, dispersion, and all that the design signifies naturally. *Reversed*: Mental alienation, error, loss, distraction, disorder, confusion.

**TWO.** A hoodwinked figure balances two swords upon her shoulders. *Divinatory Meanings*: Conformity and the equipoise which it suggests, courage, friendship, concord in a state of arms, affection, intimacy. *Reversed*: Imposture, falsehood, duplicity, disloyalty.

**ACE.** A hand comes out of a cloud, grasp-

ing a sword, the point of which is encircled by a crown. *Divinatory Meanings:* Triumph, the excessive degree in everything, conquest, triumph of force. It is a card of great force, in love as well as in hatred. *Reversed:* The same, but the results are disastrous; another account says conception, childbirth, augmentation, multiplicity.

### PENTACLES

KING. The figure calls for no special description; the face is rather dark, suggesting also courage, but somewhat lethargic in tendency. The bull's head should be noted as a recurrent symbol on his throne. The sign of this suit is represented throughout as engraved or blazoned with the pentagram, typifying the correspondence of the four elements in human nature and that by which they may be governed. *Divinatory Meanings*: Valour, realising intelligence, business and normal intellectual aptitude, sometimes mathematical gifts and attainments of this kind; success in these paths. *Reversed*: Vice, weakness, ugliness, perversity, corruption, peril.

QUEEN. The face suggests that of a dark woman, whose qualities might be summed up in the idea of greatness of soul; she has also the serious cast of intel-

ligence; she contemplates her symbol and may see worlds in it. *Divinatory Meanings*: Opulence, generosity, magnificence, security, liberty. *Reversed*: Evil, suspicion, suspense, fear, mistrust.

**KNIGHT.** He rides a slow, enduring, heavy horse, to which his own appearance corresponds. *Divinatory Meanings*: Utility, serviceableness, interest, responsibility, rectitude. *Reversed*: Inertia, idleness, repose of that kind, stagnation; also placidity, discouragement, carelessness.

**PAGE.** A youthful figure looks intently at the pentacle which hovers over his raised hands. *Divinatory Meanings*: Application, study, scholarship, reflection; another reading says news, messages and the bringer of these; also rule, management. *Reversed*: Prodigality, dissipation, liberality, luxury; unfavourable news.

TEN. A man and woman beneath an archway which gives entrance to a house and domain. *Divinatory Meanings:* Gain, riches; family matters, archives, extraction, the abode of a family. *Reversed:* Chance, fatality, loss, robbery, games of hazard; sometimes gift, dowry, pension.

NINE. A woman, with a bird upon her wrist, stands amid many grape vines in the garden of a great house. *Divinatory Meanings:* Prudence, safety, success, accomplishment, certitude, discernment. *Reversed:* Roguery, deception, voided project, bad faith.

EIGHT. An artist in stone at work. *Divinatory Meanings:* Work, employment, commission, craftsmanship, skill in craft and business. *Reversed:* Voided ambition, vanity, cupidity, exactation, usury.

SEVEN. A young man, leaning on his staff, looks intently at seven pentacles attached to a clump of greenery on his right; one would say that these were his treasures and that his heart was there. *Divinatory Meanings:* These are exceedingly contradictory: in the main, it is a card of money, business, barter; but one reading gives altercation, quarrel; and another innocence, ingenuity, purgation.

SIX. A man dressed as a merchant weighs money in a pair of scales and distributes it to the needy and distressed. *Divinatory Meanings:* Presents, gifts, gratification; another account says attention, vigilance; now is the accepted time, present prosperity, and so on. *Reversed:* Desire, cupidity, envy, jealousy, illusion.

FIVE. Two mendicants in a snowstorm pass a lighted casement. *Divinatory Meanings:* It foretells material trouble

above all, whether in the form illustrated – that is, destitution – or otherwise. For some cartomancers, it is a card of love and lovers – wife, husband, friend, mistress; also concordance, affinities. These alternatives cannot be harmonised. *Reversed*: Disorder, chaos, ruin, discord, profligacy.

**FOUR.** A crowned figure, with a pentacle over his crown, clasps another with hands and arms; two pentacles are under his feet *Divinatory Meanings*: The surety of possession, cleaving to that which one has, gifts, legacy, inheritance. *Reversed*: Suspense, delay, opposition.

**THREE.** A sculptor at his work in a monastery. *Divinatory Meanings*: Vocation, trade, skilled labour; usually, however, regarded as a card of nobility, aristocracy, renown, glory. *Reversed*: Mediocrity in work and otherwise, pueril-

ity, pettiness, weakness.

Two. A young man in the act of dancing has a pentacle in either hand, and they are joined by that endless cord which is like the number 8 reversed. *Divinatory Meanings*: On the one hand it is represented as a card of gaiety, recreation and its connections, which is the subject of the design; but it is read also as news and messages in writing, as obstacles, agitation, trouble, embroilment. *Reversed*: Enforced gaiety, simulated enjoyment, literal sense, handwriting, composition, letters of exchange.

ACE. A hand – coming, as usual, out of a cloud – holds up a pentacle. *Divinatory Meanings*: Perfect contentment, felicity, ecstasy; also speedy intelligence; gold. *Reversed*: The evil side of wealth, bad intelligence; also great riches.

These are the divinatory meanings of the Lesser Arcana. The records of the art of divination are the records of findings in the past based upon experience; as such, they are a guide to memory, and those who can master the elements may give interpretations on their basis. It is an official and automatic working. On the other hand, those who have gifts of intuition, of second sight, of clairvoyance – call it as we choose and may – will supplement the experience of the past by the findings of their own faculty, and will speak of that which they have seen in the pretexts of the oracles. It remains to give, also briefly, the divinatory significance allocated by the same art to the Trumps Major.

## THE GREATER ARCANAE AND THEIR DIVINATORY MEANINGS

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1. THE MAGICIAN. Skill, diplomacy, address; sickness, pain, loss, disaster, self-confidence, will; the Querent, if male. *Reversed*: Physician, Magus, mental disease, disgrace, disquiet.
2. THE HIGH PRIESTESS. Secrets, mystery, the future as yet unrevealed; the woman who interests the Querent, if male; the Querent, if female; silence, tenacity; wisdom, science. *Reversed*: Passion, moral or physical ardour, conceit, surface knowledge.
3. THE EMPRESS. Fruitfulness, action, initiative, length of days; the unknown, clandestine; also difficulty, doubt, igno-

rance. *Reversed*: Light, truth, the unravelling of involved matters, public rejoicings; according to another reading, vacillation.

**4. THE EMPEROR.** Stability, power, protection; a great person; aid, reason, conviction. *Reversed*: Benevolence, compassion, credit; also confusion to enemies, obstruction, immaturity.

**5. THE HIEROPHANT.** Marriage, alliance, captivity, servitude; by another account, mercy and goodness; inspiration; the man to whom the Querent has recourse. *Reversed*: Society, good understanding, concord, over-kindness, weakness.

**6. THE LOVERS.** Attraction, love, beauty, trials overcome. *Reversed*: Failure, foolish designs.

**7. THE CHARIOT.** Succour, providence;

also war, triumph, presumption, vengeance, trouble. *Reversed*: Riot, quarrel, dispute, litigation, defeat.

8. **STRENGTH.** Power, energy, action, courage, magnanimity. *Reversed*: Despotism, abuse of power, weakness, discord.

9. **THE HERMIT.** Prudence; also and especially treason, dissimulation, roguery, corruption. *Reversed*: Concealment, disguise, policy, fear, unreasoned caution.

10. **WHEEL OF FORTUNE.** Destiny, fortune, success, luck, happiness. *Reversed*: Increase, abundance, superfluity.

11. **JUSTICE.** Equity, rightness, probity, executive. *Reversed*: Law in all departments, bigotry, bias, excessive severity.

12. **THE HANGED MAN.** Wisdom, circum-

spection, discernment, trials, sacrifice, intuition, divination, prophecy. *Reversed*: Selfishness, the crowd, body politic.

**13. DEATH.** End, mortality, destruction, corruption. *Reversed*: Inertia, sleep, lethargy, petrifaction, somnambulism.

**14. TEMPERANCE.** Economy, moderation, frugality, management, accommodation. *Reversed*: Things connected with churches, religions, sects, the priesthood; also disunion, unfortunate combinations, competing interests.

**15. THE DEVIL.** Ravage, violence, vehemence, extraordinary efforts, force, fatality; that which is predestined but not for this reason evil. *Reversed*: Evil, fatality, weakness, pettiness, blindness.

**16. THE TOWER.** Misery, distress, indigence, adversity, calamity, disgrace,

deception, ruin. *Reversed*: According to one account, the same in a lesser degree; also oppression, imprisonment, tyranny.

**17. THE STAR.** Loss, theft, privation, abandonment; another reading says hope and bright prospects. *Reversed*: Arrogance, haughtiness, impotence.

**18. THE MOON.** Hidden enemies, danger, calumny, darkness, terror, deception, error. *Reversed*: Instability, inconstancy, silence, lesser degrees of deception and error.

**19. THE SUN.** Material happiness, fortunate marriage, contentment. *Reversed*: The same in a lesser sense.

**20. JUDGEMENT.** Change of position, renewal, outcome. *Reversed*: pusillanimity, simplicity; also deliberation, decision, sentence.

**ZERO. THE FOOL.** Folly, mania, extravagance, intoxication, delirium, frenzy, bewrayment. *Reversed:* Negligence, absence, distribution, carelessness, apathy, nullity, vanity.

**21. THE WORLD.** Assured success, voyage, route, emigration, flight, change of place. *Reversed:* Inertia, fixity, stagnation, permanence.

It will be seen that, except where there is an irresistible suggestion conveyed by the surface meaning, that which is extracted from the Trumps Major by the divinatory art is at once artificial and arbitrary, as it seems to me, in the highest degree. But of one order are the mysteries of light and of another are those of fantasy. The allocation of a fortune-telling aspect to these cards is the story of a prolonged impertinence.

## **SOME ADDITIONAL MEANINGS OF THE LESSER ARCANA**

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### **WANDS**

**KING.** Generally favourable; may signify a good marriage. *Reversed:* Advice that should be followed.

**QUEEN.** A good harvest, which may be taken in several senses. *Reversed:* Goodwill towards the Queen, without the opportunity to exercise it.

**KNIGHT.** A bad card, according to some readings; alienation. *Reversed:* For a woman, marriage probably frustrated.

**PAGE.** Young man of family in search of young lady. *Reversed:* Bad news.

TEN. Difficulties and contradictions, if near a good card.

NINE. Generally speaking, a bad card.

EIGHT. Domestic disputes for a married person.

SEVEN. A dark child.

SIX. Servants may lose the confidence of their masters; a young lady may be betrayed by a friend. *Reversed*: Fulfilment of deferred hope.

FIVE. Success in financial speculation. *Reversed*: Quarrels may be turned to advantage.

FOUR. Unexpected good fortune. *Reversed*: A married woman will have beautiful children.

**THREE.** A very good card: collaboration will favour enterprise.

**Two.** A young lady may expect trivial disappointments.

**ACE.** Calamities of all kinds. *Reversed:* A sign of birth.

### **CUPS**

**KING.** Beware of ill-will on the part of a man of position. *Reversed:* Loss.

**QUEEN.** Sometimes denotes a woman of equivocal character. *Reversed:* A rich marriage.

**KNIGHT.** A visit from a friend, who will bring unexpected money to the Querent.

**PAGE.** Good augury. *Reversed:* Obstacles of all kinds.

TEN. For a male Querent, a good marriage and beyond his expectations.  
*Reversed:* Sorrow.

NINE. Of good augury for military men.  
*Reversed:* Good business.

EIGHT. Marriage with a fair woman.

SEVEN. Fair child; idea, design, movement.  
*Reversed:* Success, if accompanied by the Three of Cups.

SIX. Pleasant memories.  
*Reversed:* Inheritance to fall in quickly.

FIVE. Generally favourable; a happy marriage.  
*Reversed:* Return of some relative who has not been seen for long.

FOUR. Contrarieties.

THREE. Unexpected advancement for a

military man. *Reversed*: Consolation.

Two. Favourable in things of pleasure and business, as well as love.

ACE. Inflexible will, unalterable law.

### SWORDS

KING. A lawyer, senator, doctor. *Reversed*: A bad man.

QUEEN. A widow. *Reversed*: A bad woman.

KNIGHT. A soldier, man of arms, satellite, stipendiary; heroic action predicted for soldier. *Reversed*: Dispute with an imbecile person; for a woman, struggle with a rival, who will be conquered.

PAGE. An indiscreet person will pry into the Querent's secrets.

TEN. Followed by Ace and King, impris-

onment; for a girl or wife, treason on the part of friends.

**NINE.** An ecclesiastic, a priest; generally, a card of bad omen.

**EIGHT.** For a woman, scandal spread in her respect. *Reversed:* Departure of a relative.

**SEVEN.** Dark girl; a good card; it promises a country life after a competence has been secured. *Reversed:* Good advice, probably neglected.

**SIX.** Unfavourable issue of a lawsuit, if this card is reversed.

**FIVE.** An attack on the fortune of the Querent.

**FOUR.** A bad card, but if reversed a certain success may be expected by wise

administration of affairs.

**THREE.** If reversed, a meeting with one whom the Querent has compromised; also a nun.

**Two.** Gifts for a lady, influential protection for a man in search of help.

**ACE.** Great prosperity or great misery. *Reversed:* Marriage broken off, for a woman, through her own imprudence.

### PENTACLES

**KING.** A rather dark man, a merchant, master, professor. *Reversed:* An old and vicious man.

**QUEEN.** Dark woman; presents from a rich relative; rich and happy marriage for a young man. *Reversed:* An illness.

**KNIGHT.** A useful man; useful discoveries.

*Reversed:* A brave man out of employment.

**PAGE.** A dark youth; a young officer or soldier; a child.

**TEN.** Represents a house or dwelling, and derives its value from other cards.

**NINE.** Prompt fulfilment of what is presaged by neighbouring cards.

**EIGHT.** A young man in business who has relations with the Querent; a dark girl.

*Reversed:* The Querent will be compromised in a matter of money-lending.

**SEVEN.** Improved position for a lady's future husband.

**SIX.** The present must not be relied on.

*Reversed:* A check on the Querent's ambition.

**FIVE.** If reversed, troubles in love.

**FOUR.** For a bachelor, pleasant news from a lady.

**THREE.** If for a man, celebrity for his eldest son. *Reversed:* Depends on the neighbouring cards.

**Two.** Troubles are more imaginary than real. *Reversed:* Bad omen, ignorance, injustice.

**ACE.** The most favourable of all cards. *Reversed:* A share in the finding of treasure.

It will be observed that these additional meanings are very often in disagreement with those previously given; there is no canon of criticism in matters of this kind. I suppose that in proportion as any system descends from generalities to details,

it becomes naturally the more precarious; and in the records of professional fortune-telling, it offers more of the dregs and less of the subject. At the same time, divinations based on intuition and second sight are of little practical value unless they come down from the region of universals to that of particulars; but in proportion as this gift is present in a particular case, the specific meanings recorded by past cartomancers will be disregarded in favour of the personal appreciation of card values. It seems necessary to add the following speculative readings (see *p. 138*).

## THE RECURRENCE OF CARDS IN DEALING

### IN THE NATURAL POSITION

4 KINGS = great honour;

3 KINGS = consultation;

2 KINGS = minor counsel.

4 QUEENS = great debate;

3 QUEENS = deception by women;

2 QUEENS = sincere friends.

4 KNIGHTS = serious matters;

3 KNIGHTS = lively debate;

2 KNIGHTS = intimacy.

4 PAGES = dangerous illness;

3 PAGES = dispute;

2 PAGES = disquiet.

4 TENS = condemnation;

3 TENS = new condition;

2 TENS = change.

4 NINES = a good friend;

3 NINES = success;

2 NINES = receipt.

4 EIGHTS = reverse;

3 EIGHTS = marriage;

2 EIGHTS = new knowledge.

4 SEVENS = intrigue;

3 SEVENS = infinity;

2 SEVENS = news.

4 SIXES = abundance;

3 SIXES = success;

2 SIXES = irritability.

4 FIVES = regularity;

3 FIVES = determination;

2 FIVES = vigils.

4 FOOURS = journey near at hand;  
3 FOOURS = a subject of reflection;  
2 FOOURS = insomnia.

4 THREES = progress;  
3 THREES = unity;  
2 THREES = calm.

4 TWOS = contention;  
3 TWOS = security;  
2 TWOS = accord.

4 ACES = favourable chance;  
3 ACES = small success;  
2 ACES = trickery.

### REVERSED

4 KINGS = celebrity;  
3 KINGS = commerce;  
2 KINGS = projects.

4 QUEENS = bad company;

3 QUEENS = gluttony;

2 QUEENS = work.

4 KNIGHTS = alliance;

3 KNIGHTS = a duel or personal encounter;

2 KNIGHTS = susceptibility.

4 PAGES = privation;

3 PAGES = idleness;

2 PAGES = society.

4 TENS = event, happening;

3 TENS = disappointment;

2 TENS = expectation justified.

4 NINES = usury;

3 NINES = imprudence;

2 NINES = a small profit.

4 EIGHTS = error;

3 EIGHTS = a spectacle;

2 EIGHTS = misfortune.

4 SEVENS = quarrellers;

3 SEVENS = joy;

2 SEVENS = women of no repute.

4 SIXES = care;

3 SIXES = satisfaction;

2 SIXES = downfall.

4 FIVES = order;

3 FIVES = hesitation;

2 FIVES = reverse.

4 FOOURS = walks abroad;

3 FOOURS = disquiet;

2 FOOURS = dispute.

4 THREES = great success;

3 THREES = serenity;

2 THREES = safety.

4 TWOS = reconciliation;

3 TWOS = apprehension;

2 TWOS = mistrust.

4 ACES = dishonour;

3 ACES = debauchery;

2 ACES = enemies.

We come now to the final and practical part of this division of our subject: the way to consult and obtain oracles by means of Tarot cards. The methods are rather numerous, and some of them are exceedingly involved. I offer in the first place a short process which has been used privately for many years past in England, Scotland and Ireland. I do not think that it has been published – certainly not in connection with Tarot cards; I believe that it will serve all purposes, but I will add – by way of variation – in the second place what used to be known in France as the Oracles of Julia Orsini.

## THE ART OF TAROT DIVINATION

• • •

**C**ups are assumed to represent people with light-brown hair and of fair complexion; Wands those having yellow or red hair and blue eyes; Swords correspond to persons with dark-brown hair and possibly grey, hazel or even blue eyes; Pentacles answer to very dark people. The procedure is as follows:

**SELECT THE SIGNIFICATOR** of the person or thing about whom or which the enquiry is made; it is that card which, in the operator's judgement or experience, is the most representative, and is not, therefore, of necessity the Magician or High Priestess mentioned in the official divinatory meanings. Place the Significator

in the middle. Let the operator and Querent shuffle and cut three times each.

**TURN UP THE FIRST CARD;** cover the Significator with it, and say: That covers him. This is the person or thing's general environment at the time, the influence with which he is actuated all through.

**TURN UP THE SECOND CARD;** put it across him horizontally, and say: This is his obstacles. If it is a favourable card, it will be something good in itself, but not productive of good in the particular connection.

**TURN UP THE THIRD CARD;** place it above the head of the Significator, and say: This crowns him. It represents (a) the best that he can arrive at, or (b) his ideal in the matter; (c) what he wants to make his own; (d) but it is not his own at present.

**TURN UP THE FOURTH CARD;** place it below the feet of the Significator, and say: This is beneath him. It is his own – that which he has to work with and can use.

**TURN UP THE FIFTH CARD;** place it on the side that the Significator is looking away from, and say: This is behind him. It is the current from which he is passing away, and it may be the past of the matter.

**TURN UP THE SIXTH CARD;** place it on the side that the Significator is facing, and say: This is before him. It is the current that is coming into action and will operate in the specific matter.

Your cards are now disposed in the form of a cross. The next four are turned up in succession and placed on your right hand underneath one another.

THE FIRST signifies himself, his attitude and relation to the matter.

THE SECOND signifies his house, his environment in the affair; the influence, people and events about him.

THE THIRD signifies his hopes and fears.

THE FOURTH represents what will come.

It is on this card that you concentrate your intuitive powers, your experience and your memory in respect of the official divinatory meanings attached thereto. It should include whatever you may have divined from the other cards on the table, including the Significator itself and concerning him or it, not excepting such lights upon higher significance as might fall like sparks from heaven if the card which serves for the oracle, the card for reading, should hap-

pen to be a Trump Major.

So basing your calculations, if you obtain a decisive judgement, the operation is over, and you have only to formulate the result.

But it may so happen that you do not derive a full light and a sure result. There is then another process. Take this last card to serve as the new Significator, repeat the whole operation, when all the cards dealt and arranged round it are read to develop an explanation.

In conclusion, as regards the question of complexions, their allocation to the suits need not be taken conventionally. You can go by the temperament of a person: one who is exceedingly dark may be very energetic, and would be better represented by a Sword card than a Pentacle. On the other hand, a very fair person who is indolent and lethargic should be allocated to Cups rather than to Wands.

Great facility may be obtained by this method in a comparatively short time, allowance being always made for the gifts of the operator – that is to say, his faculty of insight, latent or developed – and it has the special advantage of being free from all complications.

## **AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF READING THE TAROT CARDS**

**SHUFFLE THE CARDS** and turn them about in shuffling, so that some will be right side up and some reversed. Let them be cut by the Querent with his left hand. Deal out the first forty-two cards in six packets of seven cards each, face upwards.

**TAKE UP THE FIRST PACKET;** lay out the cards on the table from right to left; superpose the second packet and then the packets which remain. You will thus have seven new packets of six cards each.

**TAKE THE FIRST CARD OF EACH,** shuffle and lay out from right to left, making one line of seven cards.

THEN TAKE UP TWO CARDS from each and lay them out in two lines under the others.

TAKE UP THE REMAINING twenty-one cards of the packets and lay them out in three lines after the same manner.

You will thus have six horizontal lines, one beneath another.

READ AND EXPLAIN THE CARDS, still working from right to left throughout, it being understood that the card which is held to represent the Querent has been selected after the forty-two have been laid out on the table. The Querent in this method is the Magician for the male and High Priestess for the female sex. If the required card in either case is not found among those laid out on the table, it must be sought among the remaining thirty-six cards, which have not been dealt, and

should be placed at the top of the six horizontal lines. On the other hand, if it is among them, it is also taken out and replaced by one of the thirty-six drawn at hazard. Note that in either case thirty-five cards thus remain undealt.

With further reference to the reading, it should be remembered that all official and conventional meanings may and should be varied according to particular circumstances: the condition, the time of life, the sex of the Querent or person for whom the consultation is made. Furthermore, all meanings are subject to the force of their synonyms and natural analogies. Where intuition fails, or is absent or undeveloped, this counsel – which depends only on intellectual observation, experience and ordinary foresight, or ordinary power of interpretation – can to some extent take its place. By the hypothesis, comparative precision then becomes largely a matter of practice.

When the reading is over, according to this scheme, it may happen – as in the previous method – that something remains doubtful, or it may be desired to carry the question further, which is done in the next chapter.

## THE METHOD OF READING BY MEANS OF THIRTY-FIVE CARDS

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THESE ARE THE UNDEALT CARDS which remain over. The others are set aside in a heap, with the Querent, face upwards, on the top. The thirty-five cards are shuffled and cut as before. Divide them by dealing into six packets.

PACKET 1 contains *Seven Cards*, and stands for the house, the environment, and so on.

PACKET 2 contains *Six Cards*, and stands for the person or subject of consultation.

PACKET 3 contains *Five Cards*, and stands for what is passing outside, events, persons, etc.

PACKET 4 contains *Four Cards*, and stands for a surprise, the unexpected, etc.

PACKET 5 contains *Two Cards*, and stands for consolation as it may moderate all that is unfavourable in the preceding packets.

PACKET 6 contains *Eleven Cards*; it is that which must be consulted to elucidate the enigmatic oracles of the others; it has no importance otherwise.

TAKE UP THESE PACKETS successively and arrange the cards which they contain in six unequal lines. Read them from right to left as before.

It should be stated in conclusion as to this divinatory part that there is no method of interpreting Tarot cards which is not applicable to ordinary playing cards, but the additional court cards, and

above all the Trumps Major, are held to increase the elements and values of the oracles.

And now in conclusion as to the whole matter, I have left for these last words – as if by way of epilogue – one further and final point. It is the sense in which I regard the Trumps Major as containing secret doctrine. I do not here mean that I am acquainted with orders and fraternities in which such doctrine reposes and is there found to be part of higher Tarot knowledge. I do not mean that such doctrine, being so preserved and transmitted, can be constructed as imbedded independently in the Trumps Major. I do not mean that it is something apart from the Tarot. Associations exist which have special knowledge of both kinds; some of it is deduced from the Tarot and some apart from it; in either case, it is the same in the root-matter. But there are also things

in reserve which are not in orders or societies, but are transmitted after another manner. Apart from all inheritance of this kind, let anyone who is a mystic consider separately and in combination the Magician, the Fool, the High Priestess, the Hierophant, the Empress, the Emperor, the Hanged Man and the Tower. Let him then consider the card called Judgement. They contain the legend of the soul. The other Trumps Major are the details and – as one might say – the accidents. Perhaps such a person will begin to understand what lies far behind these symbols, by whoever first invented and however preserved. If he does, he will see also why I have concerned myself with the subject, even at the risk of writing about divination by cards.

A CONCISE  
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