

The Suit of Swords

THE suit of Swords corresponds to the Spades of ordinary playing-cards, but it is noteworthy that the divinatory meanings are by no means so unfortunate as those assigned to Spades by ordinary fortune-tellers. Just as the Cups in Tarot are not, on the whole, so fortunate as Hearts are taken to be in ordinary fortune-telling, so the Swords, as symbols of **Air** or the Life-Breath, are less adverse than Spades are usually supposed to be. Lay out the cards for study as in the preceding two lessons.

Ace of Swords

The ankh cross, similar to a Venus symbol, represents the union of positive and negative forces, and thus corresponds to VAU, the third letter of the Great Name, IHVH. The Swords are all symbols of AIR, which is alchemically the mixture of the hot and dry nature of FIRE with the cool and moist nature of WATER, but with the heat and dryness predominant over the cold and moisture. Thus AIR is more fiery than watery, and there is a closer affinity between Swords and Wands than between Swords and Cups. The Ace of Swords symbolizes Invoked Force, by way of contrast to the Natural Force typified by the Ace of Wands.

Occult title

The root of the powers of air.

Meanings

In the Knapp Tarot it is shown point downward, but this represents its evil and negative significance, for in ceremonial magic the sword in this position is used for the invocation of the evil and demonic forces. On ancient exoteric and esoteric versions of this Key the single sword often is shown with its point upward, and the point is surrounded by a radiant Crown, symbolizing the invocation of spiritual Radiance. Thus, in using this card, it is to be considered Ill-dignified if it appears with the point of the sword down, and Well-dignified if in the reverse position.

Time period

From Libra 0 to the end of Sagittarius, September 23rd to December 21st, representing the conjoined powers of Venus, Mars and Jupiter.

Keyword

Activity, particularly mental force in operation.

Two of Swords

Here also the symbolism is better when the points of the swords point upward. The combination of the trumpet with the ankh suggests the announcement of something. It is a symbol of balanced force, but the balance is like that of a dead center. At the moment no action is possible.

Time period

the first decanate of Libra, under the rulership of Venus, from September 23rd to October 2.

Meanings

Contradictory characters in the same nature: strength through suffering; pleasure after pain. Delay in the realization of objectives. It intimates a period of uncertainty, in which the Querant, through he has a sense of adequate power, does not know just what to do with it. Justice, unselfishness, and the restoration of peace.

Ill-dignified

Falsehood, sorrow; injury from another who means the Querant well, or injury by the Querant to another in the same way. It is always a symbol of tension, of want of tact, and suggests power held in abeyance, awaiting some announcement or revelation that makes decision possible.

Keyword

Indecision.

Three of Swords

The radiant Eye in the circle suggests understanding. But it is understanding gained through sorrow.

Time period

Second decanate of Libra, under the combined rulership of Saturn and Uranus, from October 3rd to October 12th.

Meanings

Sorrow, disappointment, tears. Delay, absence, separation, divorce. Disruption of friendship, interruption of cherished projects, quarrels; mischief-making acquaintances; yet sometimes the position in the layout suggests Platonic friendships and is usually a symbol of honesty and fair-dealing in money matters.

Ill-dignified

Slander; selfishness and dissipation; deceit and with respect to promises; loss in legal affairs.

Keyword

Sorrow.

Four of Swords

The scales combined with the ankh remind us that a Qabalistic name for the number 4 is *the measuring intelligence*.

Time period

The last decanate of Libra, under the rulership of Mercury, from October 13th to October 22nd.

Well-dignified

Rest from sorrow, yet after and through it; relief from anxiety; rest after illness; quietness; change for the better; success in legal affairs; association with others in Mercurial pursuits; strong mental attraction to a person of the opposite sex; activity in writing or short journeys.

Ill-dignified

Inharmony with partners; unsettled conditions in legal affairs; disorder and loss through ill-considered writings or needless short journeys; vexations through petty strifes and sarcastic speech.

Keyword

Rest.

Five of Swords

The scourge combined with the ankh is a symbol of suffering, of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Yet the pains and sufferings bring understanding, and are the result of the Querant's own Karma. The suffering is not really unjust.

Time period

The first decanate of Aquarius, under the rulership of Saturn and Uranus, from January 20th to January 29th.

Well-dignified

Decision adverse to Querant in any matter of material nature; but in spiritual questions the end of a course of action in apparent defeat which will nevertheless produce a good ultimate result. In any case a card of failure, defeat, trouble, poverty, and anxiety. The Querant is probably the subject of more or less slander.

Ill-dignified

The troubles are intensified, and are probably more definitely the result of the Querant's own failings; particularly, in this instance, does the Five of Swords suggest loss through the Querant's own avarice.

Keyword

Defeat.

Six of Swords

The two ankhs balanced suggest balanced force, as do the two triangles of swords.

Time period

Second decanate of Aquarius, under the rulership of Mercury, between January 30th and February 8th.

Well-dignified

Success after a period of trouble or anxiety; difficulties overcome; change of scene, possibly a journey by water; something mysterious effects a change of circumstances for the better; success earned by the Querant's laborious efforts.

Ill-dignified

Sudden changes; circumstances dominate the Querant; he is in danger of being over-confident or conceited; too much effort expended for small results.

Keyword

Patience.

Seven of Swords

A rose is combined with the ankh, but it has many thorns. The rose is a Venusian symbol, and in Qabalah No. 7 is sometimes called the Sphere of Venus.

Time period

Third decanate of Aquarius, under rulership of Venus, from February 9th to February 18th.

Well-dignified

Partial success; the Querant is a little too easy-going, or does not draw on his reserve force sufficiently; has good opportunities, but may not make the most of them; given to compromise too easily.

Ill-dignified

Love of ease and display cause loss; the Querant suffers from the insolence of others, and may be insolent himself; danger of the betrayal of confidences.

Keyword

Instability.

Eight of Swords

The twined serpents around the vertical line of the ankh refer to the attribution of the Sphere of Mercury to the number 8, for they make a caduceus, or wand of Mercury, out of the ankh.

Time period

First decanate of Gemini, from May 21st to May 30th, under the rulership of Mercury.

Meanings

Force wasted in petty affairs; too much talk; too much ill-directed action; the state of being terribly busy without accomplishing much; over-careful about details. This card is also to be regarded as portending a crisis in affairs, and probably much talk, correspondence, and moving about.

Ill-dignified

Signifies ill-natured gossip, malice and pettiness. Too much concern with personalities, and disagreements with brothers and sisters.

Keyword

Mediocrity.

Nine of Swords

The crescent on the ankh refers to the Qabalistic attribution of the number 9 to the Sphere of the Moon.

Time period

The second decanate of Gemini, under the rulership of Venus, from May 31st to June 9th.

Meanings

Faithfulness, obedience, unselfishness, patience; fortunate news about legal affairs or partnerships, especially if the outcome has been delayed or in doubt; aid or gain through relatives, short journeys, or writings, but not until the Querant has passed through a period of more or less uncertainty and worry; ultimate good fortune resulting from a series of events which present unfavorable appearances at first.

Ill-dignified

Despair, cruelty, unfaithfulness; want, loss, misery; bad outcome of legal affairs, disagreements with relatives, unfortunate journeys.

Keyword

Worry.

Ten of Swords

The lower part of the ankh, like an arrow, pierces a serpent. This is similar to the Seal of Cagliostro, and signifies the ultimate victory over an evil or adverse force.

Time period

Third decanate of Gemini, under the rulership of Saturn and Uranus, from June 9th to June 20th.

Meanings

in spiritual matters, the end of delusion; the overthrow of limiting conditions; breakup of limitations. In material affairs, sudden and unexpected changes, not necessarily unfortunate in the long run, but disappointing when experienced. Interference from others, and loss through indiscretion in writing or signing contracts.

Ill-dignified

Complete failure, desolation, ruin.

Keyword

Destruction.

King of Swords

In the circle of the ankh is the letter YOD, as in the other Kings. This card refers primarily to the exercise of will-force on the astral plane. It symbolizes *will to action*.

Time period

From the beginning of the last decanate of Virgo to the end of the second decanate of Libra, or from September 13th to October 2nd, under the combined rulerships of Venus in Taurus, Venus in Libra, and Saturn-Uranus in Aquarius.

Meanings

A man of strong and powerful imagination; hard worker, and having authority; keen in understanding law, and capable of excellent co-operation; yet somewhat distrustful and suspicious, therefore hard to

convince. At the same time he sometimes surprises his friends by sudden changes of attitude, although he is usually over-cautious and analytical. Very observant.

Well-dignified

He is friendly to the Querant, and will co-operate with him.

Ill-dignified

He is inimical, harsh, malicious and plotting; obstinate, and wholly unreliable.

Appearance

Dark hair and dark eyes.

Queen of Swords

The vesica combined with the ankh refers to the letter Heh. This card refers to mental and creative activity in the astral plane. It is the power of mental imagery directing subtle astral forces.

Time period

From the beginning of the third decanate of Capricorn to the end of the second decanate of Aquarius, January 10th to February 8th, under the combined rulerships of Mercury, Saturn Uranus, and Venus.

Meanings

A woman of some authority, outwardly agreeable and complaisant, but inwardly ambitious and subtle. Keen perceptions, good observer, self-confident. Accurate in superficial details. Graceful, fond of dancing.

Well-dignified

Friendly.

Ill-dignified

Deceitful, sly, cruel.

Appearance

Light-brown hair. Gray eyes.

Warrior of Swords

The smaller ankh combined with the large one refers to the letter VAU of IHVH. This card represents the astral forces at work in the astral plane itself.

Time period

From the beginning of the third decanate of Taurus to the end of the second decanate of Gemini, May 11th to June 9th, under the rulerships of Saturn, Mercury and Venus.

Meanings

A youngish man, with some talent for governing, rather materialistic, though with some artistic appreciation, active, clever, fond of travel, dexterous, and skilful in management.

Well-dignified

Favorable to the enterprises of the Querant.

Ill-dignified

He is inimical, domineering, inclined to overvalue small things, tyrannical and crafty.

Appearance

Dark hair and dark eyes.

Servant of Swords

The cube surrounding the vertical line of the ankh refers to the letter Heh at the end of IHVH. This card refers to the astral influences at work on the physical plane, and affecting the physical body.

Time period

From the beginning of the sign Libra to the end of Sagittarius, September 23rd to December 21st, combining the rulerships of Venus, Mars and Jupiter.

Meanings

A young person of either sex. Artistic, active, generous. Capable of weighing evidence, more or less interested in occult matters, and naturally aspiring. Graceful, subtle in all material things, somewhat interested in philosophy or religion.

Ill-dignified

Frivolous, cunning and prodigal.

Appearance

Light-brown hair and blue eyes.

Practice Work

For this week add to the consideration of the cards of the Sword suit to the Wands and Cups that appear in the divination. Read them with especial reference to the types of activity bearing on the Querant's problem. From them, also, may be gained some hints as to the subtler forces playing upon the Querant and those other persons who are involved in his problem, for the Sword suit always refers to the influences of the astral plane.

You will notice that the 2, 3, and 4 of a suit always refer to the decanates of the cardinal sign of the element to which the suit corresponds. The 5, 6 and 7 always refer to the three decanates of the fixed sign of that element. The 8, 9 and 10 always refer to the three decanates of the mutable and common sign.

Kings have their principal influence in the cardinal sign of the element to which the suit corresponds. Queens refer to the fixed sign of that element. Warriors refer to the mutable or common sign. Thus there is an affinity between Kings and the 2, 3 or 4 of a suit; between the Queen and the 5, 6 or 7; and between the Warrior and the 8, 9, and 10. In the more extended system of divination to be taken up in detail in later lessons, all this has a direct bearing upon the judgement of the dignity of the cards.

Aces and Servants or Pages are related to the cardinal sign of the element to which the suit is referred. The Aces represent the causal aspect of the element. The Pages or Servants represent persons and conditions which bring the force of that element into manifestation externally. Their influence extends during the whole quarter of the year which is under their influence.

In divining, the less you say about why you make certain statements, as a rule, the better. Always say whatever you are impelled to say, even though in so doing you may be departing a little from the strict significance of the card that is your starting-point for the statement. Remember that you help

your Querant to the degree that you get in touch with his subconsciousness, and to the degree that you keep open the channel leading to your own superconsciousness. If a person or a scene comes into your mental field of vision very definitely, do not hesitate to describe that person or scene. But to keep yourself from wandering off into mere personal fantasy, check your vision as you go along. You will find that if you make a statement with just a suggestion of a rising inflection, the Querant will usually respond with some word of assent or denial. Ask as few questions as you can, but watch carefully the expression of the Querant's face, especially his eyes and lips. Divination will lead to the unfoldment of clairvoyance, if you happen to be gifted in that direction. But successful divination demands that you exercise to the full your powers of observation, so as to keep yourself on the right track. But be careful that you do not so completely identify yourself with your Querant that you lose your own detached attitude toward his problem. It is his problem, not yours, and if you are to help him, you must not share his emotional bias, for that is just what usually clouds his judgement, and you cannot help him if your own judgement is overshadowed by the same cloud.