

The True Magic

The Emerald Tablet of Hermes, quoted in Lesson I, is one of the most important classics of Ageless Wisdom. It is ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, the Egyptian Master who is reputed to be the founder of alchemy and magic. Who actually wrote this masterpiece of practical occultism, we do not know. The oldest versions which have come to light are in Latin, though there may have been earlier ones in Greek. Scholars generally are agreed that in its present form the text belongs to the early centuries of the Christian era, and not to the literature of ancient Egypt.

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

Various traditions concerning the Emerald Tablet have come down to us. One of the most interesting is to the effect that the thirteen sentences of this wonderful treatise were engraved by Hermes Trismegistus with a stylus of diamond upon a single large emerald. At his death the emerald was hidden in his tomb, in the Great Pyramid, where it was discovered centuries later by Alexander the Great, and so given to the world.

This is obvious allegory. Emerald is the stone of Venus. Hermes is Mercury, the personification of human intellect. The implement used for engraving the emerald is made of a diamond, a stone sacred to the Sun. Thus the allegory intimates that the substance of this classic was inscribed upon the sub-consciousness of the human race (Venus: Key 3 in Tarot), as a result of man’s careful observation of the laws of nature (Mercury: Key 1), resulting in acts of concentration whereby the solar force was made sharp, like an engraver’s stylus.

The Great Pyramid is the “tomb of Hermes” because it’s wonderful proportions sum up the whole body of science known to the human race in prehistoric times. The “death of Hermes” refers to the temporary loss of this ancient knowledge, or “Master’s Word,” during a period comparable to the Dark Ages which followed the destruction of Rome by the Huns and Vandals. “Alexander the Great” is not the Macedonian, but symbolizes the school of esoteric philosophy which flourished at Alexandria. Members of this occult school recovered the secrets of the Great Pyramid, and so “raised the body of the Grand Master Hermes,” by bringing once more to light the hidden Hermetic Wisdom. Thus were revived the great truths which are summarized in the *Emerald Tablet*. This priceless document, says Eliphas Levi, contains all magic in a single page. Its text, translated from an early Latin version, is as follows:

The Emerald Tablet of Hermes

13 Sentences

1. True, without falsehood, certain and most true, that which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is as that which is above, for the performance of the miracles of the One Thing.
2. And as all things are from One, by the mediation of One, so all things have their birth from this One Thing by adaptation.
3. The Sun is its father, the Moon its mother, the Wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the Earth.
4. This is the father of all perfection, or consummation of the whole world.
5. Its power is integrating, if it be turned into earth.
6. Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, suavely, and with great ingenuity.
7. It ascends from earth to heaven and descends again to earth, and receives the power of the superiors and of the inferiors.
8. So thou hast the glory of the whole world; therefore let all obscurity flee before thee.

9. This is the strong force of all forces, overcoming every subtle and penetrating every solid thing.
10. So the world was created.
11. Hence were all wonderful adaptations, of which this is the manner.
12. Therefore am I called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three parts of the philosophy of the whole world.
13. What I have to tell is completed, concerning the Operation of the Sun.

The Emerald Tablet

True, without falsehood, certain and most true: that which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is as that which is above, for the performance of the miracles of the One-Thing. As all things are from one, by the mediation of one, so all things have their birth from this One-Thing by adaptation. The Sun is its father, the Moon its mother, the wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the earth. This is the father of all perfection, or consummation of the whole world. Its power is integrating, if it be turned into earth.

Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, suavely, and with great ingenuity. It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends to earth again, and receives the strength of the superiors and of the inferiors. So thou hast the glory of the world, therefore let all obscurity flee before thee. This is the strong force of all forces, overcoming every subtle, and penetrating every solid thing. So the world was created. Hence were all wonderful adaptations, of which this is the manner. Therefore am I called Thrice-Great Hermes, having the three parts of the philosophy of the whole world. I have completed what I have to tell concerning the Operation of the Sun.

Thirteen sentences in all, of which five are in the first paragraph, and eight in the second. Five, the proportional height of vertical axis of the Great Pyramid, if its base line be taken as eight. Five, the number of adaptation, the number of the magical Pentagram, the number of Man.

Eight, the number of rhythm, the number of strength, the number of mastery and dominion. Five and eight, the determining numbers of that great magical pentacle, the Vault of Brother C.R., Founder of the Rosicrucian Order. Each side of this vault was a rectangle five feet wide and eight feet long. As you proceed in your work of realizing your heart's desire, you will see that these two numbers, together with their sum, 13, and their difference, 3, are keys to the great secrets of occultism.

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

Therefore is the Sun placed high in the heavens behind the Fool, and the force that the Magician draws down from above and directs upon the garden below him is that same solar energy. If you will compare Key 0 with Keys 10 and 21, you will see that the Sun in Key 0 occupies the same position in that design which is given to the eagle's head in Keys 10 and 21. The eagle is a symbol for the zodiacal sign Scorpio, which is the sign governing the reproductive forces of the human organism. This sign, corresponding to Key 13, is said to rule the eighth house of the horoscope, the house of death, but also the house of inheritance and practical occultism. The intimation here is that behind the grisly appearance of death, as it looks to the unenlightened, there is a power which is the secret force in the Great Work. This is the Astral Light of Eliphas Levi, who tells us that this great magical agent is the force which man apparently multiplies in the propagation of his species.

Astral Light means "light of stars," and since we know that every star is a sun, we should not suppose that this occult name for the One Energy designates any force other than the radiance of the sun. When Levi said, in 1859, that the Astral Light is diffused throughout infinity, that it is the substance of heaven and earth, that it is the First Matter of the Great Work, the scientists of his day laughed at him. Their grandchildren now put forward precisely the same doctrine, but give no credit to the French occultist who was enabled by his Tarot studies to arrive at a conclusion precisely the same as theirs, more than eighty years ago. Levi also said that

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

The uplifted wand in the Magician's right hand points to that corner of Key 1 which in Keys 10 and 21 is occupied by the head of a man. This is the symbol of the zodiacal sign Aquarius. The force the Magician draws down from super-conscious levels of the Life-Power's activity is conditioned by his enlightened perception of the nature and possibilities of man. In this Aquarian Age we are realizing that every human being is an embodiment, here and now, of the power which produces and governs the universe.

In astrology the sign Aquarius rules the eleventh house of the horoscope, the house of friends, and the house of hopes, desires, and aspirations. As we begin to understand that man really is, as the Psalmist said, 'but little lower than God,' we shall see that our hopes rest upon a firm foundation. And as we see, too, that the One-Thing is embodied in every human being, we shall also realize that its perfect expression here on earth must result in an era of friendship and brotherhood which will supplant the 'civilization' of the Age of Pisces, with its fierce competitions, its fear-born wars, and its follies of racial and national hatreds.

Thus, in the garden of the Magician, grow the lilies of right knowledge. A cross-section of their flowers will show the six-pointed star, or Shield of David. Now, the name David means 'love,' or 'the Beloved,' and the Shield of David therefore means the protection of love. The lilies are also symbols of science, and of the great cosmic expressions of the Life-Power, because the six-pointed star is also connected with the circle of the signs of the zodiac. The Magician cultivates lilies because right use of the consciousness he represents will enable us to perceive that beneath all the superficial conflicts of forces presented to us by sensation, there is actually at work a hidden law of relationship and order which can be no better designated than by calling it the Law of Love. To know the truth is to be free, because that knowledge shows us, beyond peradventure, that all the forces of creation are working with every true lover of humanity.

Side by side with the lilies grow red roses. They are symbols of love, too, because they are the flowers of Venus. But they are also sacred to Iacchus, the central figure of the Dionysian mysteries, and the classical story tells us that they are likewise dedicated to the god of silence, Harpocrates, the younger Horus. Desire, love, secrecy, silence, beauty – all these are represented by the rose. Furthermore, the cross-section of their flower shows a five-pointed star, the magical Pentagram, symbol of man. Thus the roses are symbols of human love, in contrast to the lilies, which may be taken as types of the great principle of Divine Love which runs throughout the scheme of cosmic law.

In other forms of symbolism, too, the number 6 stands for universal love, and the number 5 for its human expressions. This, indeed, is the true significance of the cross of six squares (pattern of the cube) to which is affixed a five-petalled rose. When human desires and affections are perfectly related to the cosmic pattern, when man loves as God loves, and loves what God loves, then man's life is the perfect expression of universal laws. Every detail of the day's experience then becomes a conscious expression of the divine working, the perfect Operation of the Heavenly Sun. This is the true magic, and its adepts can transform everything in their surroundings into the heavenly image.

Note well that the roses are five in number, and that their many petals indicated cultivation and development. The true magic aims at actual expression within the physical plane. Remember what was said in Lesson 1. The physical plane is that field of the Life-Power's activity which is within range of the human senses. The true magic brings the resistless energy of the Astral Light to bear upon the cultivation of man's desire-nature. Cultivation implies improvement, development, adaptation. As we perfect and purify our desires, working silently and secretly with them to make them ever more true and beautiful, we come nearer and nearer to the definite, external manifestation of the truth and beauty of the One Reality.

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

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

For the Emerald Tablet tells us plainly that the One-Things' power is integrating, if it be turned into earth. So, too, in the Apocalypse, the Heavenly Jerusalem, a wonderful symbol of perfected human consciousness, comes down from heaven to earth. And all over the world men have been praying for two thousand years, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." In this New Age, many shall see the fulfillment of these promises. You shall be numbered among them, if you but make your personal, waking consciousness the transparent vehicle of the superconscious Life-Power.

All this week, then, use the Magician as your key to the meaning of the day's activities. During your regular practice period, look at Key 1 attentively for five minutes. Then recite the Pattern on the Trestle Board. Finish your practice period by reading the Emerald Tablet aloud. By the end of the week you should be able to recall most of it, but if the words do not come easily to mind, make no effort whatever to memorize it in the ordinary way.

Again and again, during the changing scenes of the day, call the picture of the Magician to mind. He is yourself, separating the subtle from the gross, the meaning from the superficial sensations. You are like him, for every thought and action of your day is actually, without any figure of speech whatever, a transformation of the hidden force of the One-Thing into some special manifestation within the range of your senses. Furthermore, the conscious life manifesting through you is continually transforming the conditions of your environment. Watch closely, therefore, until you begin to see clearly that even now that cosmic magic is really at work through every moment of your waking existence.