

From Madame H. P. Blavatsky
To her correspondents

An open letter such a few can write

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BEING daily in receipt of numerous letters — written with the view of obtaining advice as to the best method of receiving information respecting Occultism, and the direct relation it bears to modern Spiritualism, and not having sufficient time at my disposal to answer these requests, I now propose to facilitate the mutual labour of myself and correspondents, by naming herein a few of the principal works treating upon *magiism*, and the mysteries of such modern Hermetists.

To this I feel bound to add, respecting what I have stated before, to wit: that would-be aspirants must not lure themselves with the idea of any possibility of their becoming practical Occultists by mere book-knowledge. The works of the Hermetic Philosophers were never intended for the masses, as Mr. Charles Sotheran,¹ one of the most learned members of the Society *Rosae Crucis*, in a late essay, thus observes: “Gabriele Rossetti in his *Disquisitions on the Antipapal spirit, which produced the Reformation*, shows that the art of speaking and writing in a language which bears a double interpretation, is of very great antiquity; that it was in practice among the priests of Egypt, brought from thence by the Manichees, whence it passed to the Templars and Albigenses, spread over Europe, and brought about the Reformation.”

The ablest book that was ever written on Symbols and Mystic Orders, is most certainly Hargrave Jennings’ *The Rosicrucians*, and yet it has been repeatedly called “obscure trash” in my presence, and that too, by individuals who were most decidedly well-versed in the rites and mysteries of modern Freemasonry. Persons who lack even the latter knowledge, can easily infer from this, what would be the amount of information they might derive from still more obscure and mystical works than the latter; for if we compare Hargrave Jennings’ book with some of the mediaeval treatises and ancient works of the most noted Alchemists and Magi, we might find the latter as much more obscure than the former — as regards language — as a pupil in celestial Philosophy would the Book of the Heavens, if he should examine a far distant star with the naked eye, rather than with the help of a powerful telescope.

¹ [See the Bio-Bibliographical Index for information concerning him. — *Compiler*.]



Far from me, though, the idea of disparaging in anyone the laudable impulse to search ardently after Truth, however arid and ungrateful the task may appear at first sight; for my own principle has ever been to make the Light of Truth, the beacon of my life. The words uttered by Christ eighteen centuries ago: “Believe and you will understand,” can be applied in the present case, and repeating them with but a slight modification, I may well say: “Study and you will believe.”

But to particularize one or another Book on Occultism, to those who are anxious to begin their studies in the hidden mysteries of nature is something, the responsibility of which, I am not prepared to assume. What may be clear to one who is intuitional, if read in the same book by another person, might prove meaningless. Unless one is prepared to devote to it his whole life, the superficial knowledge of Occult Sciences will lead him surely to become the target for millions of ignorant scoffers to aim their blunderbusses, loaded with ridicule and chaff, against. Besides this, it is in more than one way dangerous to select this science as a mere pastime. One must bear forever in mind the impressive fable of Oedipus, and beware of the same consequences. Oedipus unriddled but one-half of the enigma offered him by the Sphinx, and caused its death; the other half of the mystery avenged the death of the symbolic monster, and forced the King of Thebes to prefer blindness and exile in his despair, rather than face what he did not feel himself pure enough to encounter. He unriddled the man, the form, and had forgotten God — the idea.

If a man would follow in the steps of Hermetic Philosophers, he must prepare himself beforehand for martyrdom. He must give up personal pride and all selfish purposes, and be ready for everlasting encounters with friends and foes. He must part, once for all, with every remembrance of his earlier ideas, on all and on everything. Existing religions, knowledge, science must rebecome a blank book for him, as in the days of his babyhood, for if he wants to succeed he must learn a new alphabet on the lap of Mother Nature, every letter of which will afford a new insight to him, every syllable and word an unexpected revelation. The two hitherto irreconcilable foes, science and theology — the Montecchi and Capuletti of the nineteenth century — will ally themselves with the ignorant masses, against the modern Occultist. If we have outgrown the age of stakes, we are in the heyday, *per contra*, of slander, the venom of the press, and all these mephitic *venticelli* of calumny, so vividly expressed by the immortal Don Basilio.² To Science, it will be the duty, arid and sterile as a matter of course — of the Cabalist to prove that from the beginning of time there was but one positive Science — Occultism; that it was the mysterious lever of all intellectual forces, the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil of the Allegorical Paradise, from whose gigantic trunk sprang in every direction boughs, branches and twigs, the former shooting forth straight enough at first, the latter, deviating with every inch of growth, assuming more and more fantastical appearances, till at last one after the other, lost its vital juice, got deformed, and, drying up, finally broke off, scattering the ground afar with heaps of rubbish. To Theology, the Occultist of the future will have to demonstrate, that the Gods of the Mythologies, the Elohim of Israel as well as the religious, theological mysteries of Christianity, to begin with the Trinity, sprang from the sanctuaries of Memphis and Thebes; that their mother Eve is but the spiritual-

² [A calumniating niggardly bigot in de Beaumarchais' *Barber of Seville* and *Marriage of Figaro*. — Compiler.]



ized Psyche of old, both of them paying a like penalty for their curiosity, descending to Hades or Hell, the latter to bring back to earth the famous Pandora's box — the former, to search out and crush the head of the serpent — symbol of time and evil; the crime of both expiated by the Pagan Prometheus and the Christian Lucifer; the first, delivered by Hercules — the second conquered by the Saviour.

Furthermore, the Occultist will have to prove to the Christian Theology, publicly, what many of its priesthood are well aware of in secret — namely, that their God on earth was a Cabalist, the meek representative of a tremendous Power, which, if misapplied, might shake the world to its foundations; and that, of all their evangelical symbols, there is not one but can be traced up to its parent fount. For instance, their Incarnated Verbum or *Logos* was worshipped at His birth by the three Magi, led on by the star, and received from them the gold, the frankincense and myrrh, the whole of which is simply an excerpt from the Cabala our modern theologians despise, and the representation of another and still more mysterious “Ternary,”³ embodying allegorically in its emblems, the highest secrets of the Cabala.

A clergy, whose main object ever has been to make of their Divine Cross the gallows of Truth, and Freedom, could not do otherwise than try and bury in oblivion the origin of that same cross, which, in the most primitive symbols of the Egyptians' magic, represents the key to Heaven. Their anathemas are powerless in our days, the multitude is wiser; but the greatest danger awaits us just in that latter direction, if we do not succeed in making the masses remain at least neutral — till they come to know better — in this forthcoming conflict between Truth, Superstition and Pre-sumption; or, to express it in other terms, Occult Spiritualism, Theology and Science. We have to fear neither the miniature thunderbolts of the clergy, nor the unwarranted negations of Science. But Public Opinion, this invisible, intangible, omnipresent, despotic tyrant; this thousand-headed Hydra — the more dangerous for being composed of individual mediocrities — is not an enemy to be scorned by any would-be Occultist, courageous as he may be. Many of the far more innocent Spiritualists have left their sheepskins in the clutches of this ever-hungry, roaring lion — for he is the most dangerous of our three classes of enemies. What will be the fate, in such a case, of an unfortunate Occultist, if he once succeeds in demonstrating the close relationship existing between the two? The masses of people, though they do not generally appreciate the science of truth, or have real knowledge, on the other hand are unerringly directed by mere instinct; they have intuitionally — if I may be allowed to express myself — the sense of what is formidable in its genuine strength. People will never conspire except against *real* Power. In their blind ignorance, the Mysteries and the Unknown have been, and ever will be, objects of terror for them. Civilization may progress, human nature will remain the same throughout all ages. Occultists, beware!

Let it be understood, then, that I address myself but to the truly courageous and persevering. Besides the danger expressed above, the difficulties to becoming a practical Occultist in this country, are next to insurmountable. Barrier upon barrier, obstacles in every form and shape will present themselves to the student; for the Keys

³ The Ternarius or Ternary, the Symbol of perfection in antiquity, and the Star, the Cabalistic sign of the Micro-cosm.



of the Golden Gate leading to the Infinite Truth, lie buried deep, and the gate itself is enclosed in a mist which clears up only before the ardent rays of implicit Faith. Faith alone, one grain of which as large as a mustard-seed, according to the words of Christ, can lift a mountain, is able to find out how simple becomes the Cabala to the initiate, once that he has succeeded in conquering the first abstruse difficulties. The dogma of it is logical, easy and absolute. The necessary union of ideas and signs; the trinity of words, letters, numbers, and theorems; the religion of it can be compressed into a few words: "It is the Infinite condensed in the hand of an infant," says Éliphas Lévi. Ten ciphers, 22 alphabetical letters, one triangle, a square and a circle. Such are the elements of the Cabala, from whose mysterious bosom sprang all the religions of the past and present; which endowed all the Free Masonic associations with their symbols and secrets, which alone can reconcile human reason with God and Faith, Power with Freedom, Science with Mystery, and which has alone the keys of the present, past and future.

The first difficulty for the aspirant lies in the utter impossibility of his comprehending, as I said before, the meaning of the best books written by Hermetic Philosophers. The latter who mainly lived in the mediaeval ages, prompted on the one hand by their duty towards their brethren, and by their desire to impart to them and their successors only, the glorious truths, and on the other very naturally desirous to avoid the clutches of the blood-thirsty Christian Inquisition, enveloped themselves more than ever in mystery. They invented new signs and hieroglyphs, renovated the ancient symbolical language of the high-priests of antiquity, who had used it as a sacred barrier between their holy rites and the ignorance of the profane and created a veritable Cabalistic slang. This latter, which continually blinded the false neophyte, attracted towards the science only by his greediness for wealth and power which he would have surely misused were he to succeed, is a living, eloquent, clear language; but it is and can become such, only to the true disciple of Hermes.

But were it even otherwise, and could books on Occultism, written in a plain and precise language, be obtained, in order to get initiated in the Cabala, it would not be sufficient to understand and meditate on certain authors. Galatinus and Pico della Mirandola, Paracelsus and Robertus de Fluctibus do not furnish one with the key to the practical mysteries. They simply state what can be done and why it is done; but they do not tell one *how* to do it. More than one philosopher who has by heart the whole of the Hermetic literature, and who has devoted to the study of it upwards of thirty or forty years of his life, fails when he believes he is about reaching the final result. One must understand the Hebrew authors, such as *Sepher Yetzirah*, for instance; learn by heart the great book of the *Zohar* in its original tongue; master the *Kabbalah Denudata*, from the Collection of 1684 (Paris);⁴ follow up the Cabalistic Pneumatics at first, and then throw oneself headlong into the turbid waters of that mysterious unintelligible ocean, called the *Talmud*,⁵ this compilation of "absurd

⁴ [This is the work of Baron Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-89), the first volume of which was published at Sulzbach, 1677-78, and the second at Frankfurt, 1684. It contains several treatises of the *Zohar* translated into Latin and published together with the Hebrew text. — *Compiler*.]

⁵ Immanuel Deutsch found it otherwise, and in his celebrated *Quarterly Review Essay* eulogizes the *Talmud* as the repository of vast stores of information for the philosophical student, placing it in certain respects above even the Old Testament itself. — ED., *Spiritual Scientist*.



monstrosities” according to some blind profanes, the final key to all the Hermetists in its dogmatic and allegorical signs.

Were I to name two of the books, which contain the most of the occult information which was derived and utilized by the greatest Cabalists of the mediaeval ages — Paracelsus was one of them — I might astonish many of my correspondents “craving for knowledge,” and they might let it pass unnoticed. Adepts more learned than I will nevertheless endorse the truths of my assertion. For prudence sake I prefer quoting from a book, written by one of our greatest modern Occultists.

“Among the sacred books of the Christians,” says Éliphas Lévi, “there exist two works, which, strange to say, the Infallible Church does not even pretend to understand and never tried to explain: the *Prophecy of Ezekiel* and the *Apocalypse*; two Cabalistic treatises, reserved, without doubt, for the commentaries of the Magi Kings; books closed with the seven seals to the faithful Christian; but perfectly clear to the Infidel initiated in the Occult Sciences.”

Thus, the works on Occultism were not, I repeat, written for the masses, but for those of the Brethren who make the solution of the mysteries of the Cabala the principal object of their lives, and who are supposed to have conquered the first abstruse difficulties of the Alpha of Hermetic Philosophy.

To fervent and persevering candidates for the above science, I have to offer but one word of advice, “Try and become.” One single journey to the Orient, made in the proper spirit, and the possible emergencies arising from the meeting of what may seem no more than the chance acquaintances and adventures of any traveller, may quite as likely as not throw wide open to the zealous student, the heretofore closed doors of the final mysteries. I will go farther and say that such a journey, performed with the omnipresent idea of the one object, and with the help of a fervent will, is sure to produce more rapid, better, and far more practical results, than the most diligent study of Occultism in books — even though one were to devote to it dozens of years. In the name of Truth,

Yours,

H.P. BLAVATSKY.

