

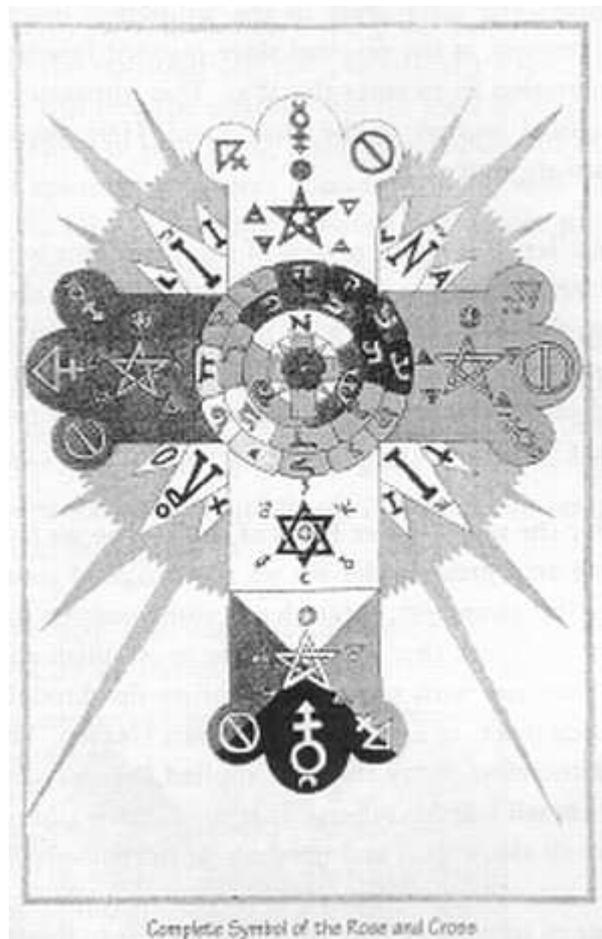
CEREMONIAL MAGIC UNVEILED

By Dion Fortune

This article first appeared in the Occult Gazette in January 1933 and has not been available for a wider audience since. It is of particular relevance in revealing D.F.'s considered opinion about The Golden Dawn as well as Aleister Crowley.

If I read the signs of the times aright, the veil of the Temple of the Mysteries is being drawn back at the present moment. There are phases in the spiritual life of mankind just as there are weather cycles extending over periods of years, and the tide which began to move during the first decade of the twentieth century is gathering head as it proceeds. The signs of the times are to be seen in the publication of certain books on magic in which the genuine secrets are given, and given in a form available for any reader with a capacity for metaphysical thoughts. Among the most important of these are Israel Regardie's two books: ***The Garden of Pomegranates*** and ***The Tree of Life***.

The Garden of Pomegranates, oddly enough, deals with the Tree of Life, the famous glyph of the Cabbalists, which is used as a card-index system in which are filed all ideas concerning man and the Universe according to certain well-understood systems of association, and which by means of the pattern of its arrangement, is used to discover the correspondences and relationships between them.



The Cabbala is increasingly being recognised as the basis of Western Occultism. Anyone who wants to appreciate esoteric philosophy as taught in that system, and more especially anyone who wants to make practical use of it, whether in magic or meditation, needs a working knowledge of the Tree of Life. Information on this decidedly recondite subject has hitherto been to seek in a number of books, some of them rare and hard to come by, and many of them confused and elusive in their wording. Mr. Regardie has given, in a lucid and concise form, and Messrs. Rider have issued at a moderate price, a most admirable handbook on the technical system of the Tree. It is lucid, comprehensive and concise, and performs a very useful service in correlating the Cabbalistic, Eastern, and Egyptian systems. It is thus possible for the student to trace out the interrelation between the two systems which are worked together in the West, the Egyptian and Cabbalistic; and for the Theosophist to recognise the classification with which he is familiar, when it is applied to the glyph of the Tree in the technical methods of Western occultism.

Mr. Regardie has the inestimable advantage of knowing the Hebrew language; in this, as an occultist, he is unique; for although most occultists working the Western tradition have enough Hebrew to transliterate the Words of Power for inscription on pentacles and talismans or for numerological work, they number no Hebrew scholars among their ranks, but are all dependent on translations; even MacGregor Mathers and Wynn Westcott did not translate from the

original Hebrew but from Latin versions, and they have saddled the Western schools with some tiresome errors of transliteration and pronunciation.

Mr. Regardie gives a classification of the Tree and the constitution of man according to the Cabbalists, and of the correspondences between them, which is much more lucid and illuminating even than that given in McGregor Mathers' admirable introductory essay to *The Qabalah Unveiled*, for he gives the correspondences in terms of modern psychology as well as of metaphysics and the psychic states.

The sections of the book, however, which will be of chief interest to students of the occult, and which will cause bitter heartburnings in certain quarters, are his chapters on the attributions and correspondences of the Ten Holy Sephiroth and the Twenty-two Paths between them. These attributions have been among the special preserves of certain occult schools; but Mr. Regardie gives them, even to the jealously guarded secret of the correct attribution of the Tarot trumps. There will certainly be heartburnings!

Mr. Regardie does not specifically state his authorities, but it is unquestionably the system taught in the "**Order of the Golden Dawn**", founded by the late S. L. McGregor Mathers, that he is using. If I have been a Rehoboam who has scourged occult secrecy with whips, Mr. Regardie is a Jeroboam who is using scorpions!

However, he has my unqualified blessing, for what it is worth to him. There is no legitimate reason that I have ever been able to see for keeping these things secret. If they have any value as an aid to spiritual development, and I for one believe that they have the highest value, there can be no justification for withholding them from the world. The only reason of which I am aware, and one which I suspect of being a weighty one with those who have so long sat resolutely upon the lid of occult secrecy, is that for purposes of priestcraft and prestige a secret system is a useful weapon. A weighty reason, this, human nature being what it is, but not a justification in the eyes of those who have the welfare of humanity at heart.



It has always been the custom of the "**Golden Dawn**" to wrap itself in the utmost secrecy. To a certain extent this secrecy is unquestionably necessary, for many eminent people have at different times belonged to the Order, and they would not have dared to have done so if they could not have been sure of preserving the secret of their interest in matters occult. Consequently the strict secrecy concerning the names of members and the places of meeting was and always will be essential.

Secrecy is also necessary concerning initiation rites if they are to be psychologically effective; for they should have an element of surprise for the candidate; and the possession of their secrets, from which the rest of the world is excluded, builds up a group mind out of the pooled mentalities of the initiated brethren according to certain well-understood psychological laws.

Secrecy concerning practical formulae of ceremonial magic is also advisable, for if they are used indiscriminately, the virtue goes out of them. All these formulae have unwritten astral workings attached to them; if they are used in ignorance by the uninitiated, and without the astral workings, the magnetism which has been worked up in the symbols is given off and not replaced; but when they are used by the trained occultist, who performs the astral workings with power, more magnetism is worked up than is given off, and the symbols become stronger. That is why the old formulae, which have been used by generations of trained adepts, are so extraordinarily powerful.

Beyond this I do not think occult secrecy ought to go, and I am certainly not prepared to assist

it. It is not possible to keep back the tide. Save for the reservations regarding the actual rituals, the day of occult secrecy is over. Whosoever profit by the teachings ought to have them.

Mr. Regardie handles, very wisely, the section of his book dealing with the ceremonial rites, for he gives the principles without the actual formulae. The only formula he gives in full is that of the Banishing Ritual of the Lesser Pentagram. I was at first inclined to quarrel with him for giving this, for one feels instinctively that a formula which is messed about by all and sundry will not long retain its value for anybody. But on second thoughts I am inclined to acquit him. It is this formula which is given to the student immediately on initiation, long before he is taught any practical working, in order that he may be in a position to protect himself in case of astral trouble. If Mr. Regardie is justified in drawing back the veil at all, then he is, undoubtedly, justified in providing the necessary protection against anything untoward that may come through that veil. The Lesser Pentagram is of the nature of a fire extinguisher, and it is very necessary to have some such device handy, when one adventures into such highly charged levels of the Unseen as are contacted by the methods he describes.

Now what is going to be the outcome of this general disclosure of the secrets of the Mysteries?

As in most drastic happenings, the results will be mixed; but it is my belief that the good will far outweigh the evil. That some folk will burn their fingers experimenting with that which they do not understand I have no doubt, but on the whole the gain to serious students will be inestimable. Mr. Regardie has done his work admirably, both in the spirit and in the letter. ***The Tree of Life*** is a book which it would be difficult to praise too highly; it is going to be one of the classics of occultism.



When the secrets of the Mysteries are given forth in this manner and with this spirit, I, for one, decline to believe that they are either betrayed or profaned, but rather that the author is duly accredited to speak on behalf of Those who can bind or loose, irrespective of tradition or, oaths of secrecy. It is a curious fact that this is the third book of its kind to become available at the present moment. I see from an article in the November number of this magazine that Foyle's are issuing Crowley's ***Magick*** in a cheap edition, thus rendering it available for the general student, who has probably never heard of, or could not afford to purchase, the privately printed edition which appeared in Paris a couple of years ago. The third person of this unholy trinity of revealers of the Mysteries is my humble self, who has been doing much the same thing as Mr. Regardie in a series of articles on the Cabbala which has been running in my own magazine, ***The Inner Light***.

I know that I undertook this work under a strong inner compulsion that this teaching must now be given out to the world; that it was the will of Those who held the keys that the door should be set open in these matters, and that we were about to enter on an entirely new phase of occult activity. So far as I can see, ceremonial magic is coming out into the open, as witness even the futile operations of Mr. Harry Price on the Brocken, concerning which I had something to say in a previous issue of the Occult Review. One does not see sporadic manifestations of the same thing springing up here and there in entire independence; they come from a common source. This source I believe to be one of those high spring tides in things spiritual which, from time to time, visit our earth. For any organisation to try and close the sluice-gates against it by oaths of secrecy, is to keep back the Atlantic with a broom.

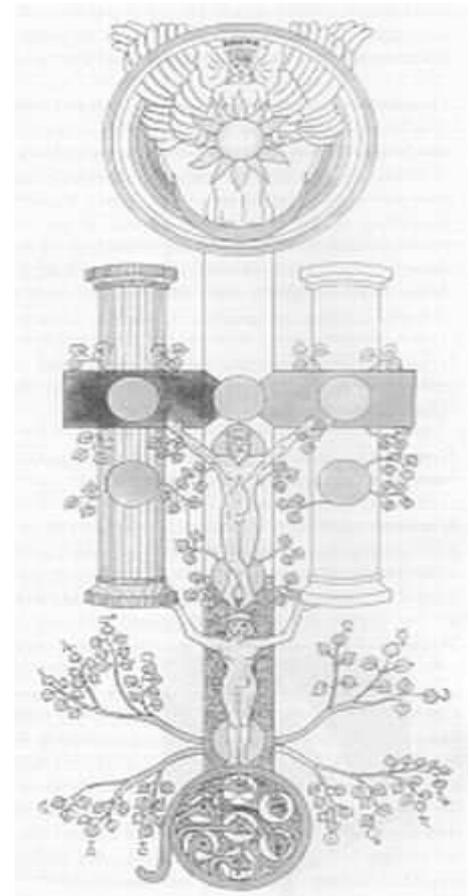
It is, therefore, important for those who have knowledge of the subject to recognise the change which has taken place in the occult field, lest that field be abandoned to the operations of quacks. Now that so much has been said by both Regardie and Crowley, it is necessary to say a little more, and so elucidate the whole situation. It must be obvious to anyone who compares

them that *The Garden of Pomegranates* and *Tree of Life*, by Regardie; *Magick*, by Crowley; and *The Mystical Qabalah*, by myself, are all dealing with the same system, and the question naturally arises, who has cribbed from which? The answer to this is very simple; the system dealt with is not the private property of any one of us, but is that which I have frequently referred to in my writings as the Western Esoteric Tradition. I have always been guarded in my references to this matter, because I took some pretty stringent initiation oaths, and I do not care for the responsibility of breaking those oaths; but, as previously noted, I have never pretended ignorance of, or misled any one concerning matters that others had taken the responsibility of making public. I have never had a taste for priestcraft, whatever other sins as chela or guru may justly be ascribed to me. Mr. Regardie's revelation frees my hands considerably further, for it does not appear to me that there is very much he has left unsaid. I expect that the pontiffs of the mysteries will tell their neophytes that his books are inaccurate and incomplete; but I think they will find, after they have served ten years for Leah and another ten for Rachel, as I was made to do, that they are neither inaccurate nor incomplete, and a very great deal better put together than the official knowledge papers and side lectures.

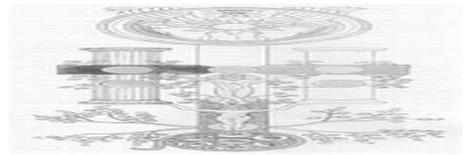
Now concerning the nature of these mysterious mysteries; as I have already explained, I am wrapped up in oaths of secrecy like a cat in a fly-paper, but I do not feel that this debars me from quoting the published works of other writers. When Mrs. McGregor Mathers, in her introduction to the second edition of her husband's translation of *The Qabalah Denudata* refers, in explicit terms, to the mystery school he founded, and intimates that admission may be obtained thereto by applying to her, care of her publishers, and when she publishes a pamphlet for propaganda purposes in the United States which is even more explicit, who am I that I should plead ignorance of the existence of such an Order? And when W. B. Yeats says, in his autobiography, that the Order founded by Mr. Mathers was called the "**Golden Dawn**", am I to pretend that I do not know what the mysterious initials G. D. stand for? Am I also to pretend, in view of what he has to say of his experiences while he was a member, and of the confirmatory remarks of George Moore in his autobiographical book, *Ave atque Vale*, that I do not know that the "**Golden Dawn**" concerns itself with ceremonial magic? Does my initiation oath require me to deny these matters or to profess my ignorance of them? If so, it requires me to tell lies.

The "**Golden Dawn**" is alleged to owe its origin to the discovery by Mathers of a set of mysterious cipher manuscripts; these manuscripts exist, for I have talked with trustworthy persons who have seen them; but as they were in cipher, they were not able to bear testimony concerning their contents. In these manuscripts Mathers is supposed to have found the outline of the "**Golden Dawn**" rituals and the system of correspondences which is the key to its teaching, including the correct attribution of the Tarot trumps on the Tree of Life, which enables them to be linked Lip with the astrological signs, a secret that students have long sought to discover. It is this system which Crowley uses in his *Equinox*, **777**, *Book Four*, and his recently published *Magick*; which Regardie uses in both his books, and which I am using in my *Mystical Qabalah*, now appearing serially in my own magazine. We have none of us cribbed from each other, but have all drawn upon the Mathers' manuscripts.

I personally drew direct, because I possess these manuscripts; but I did not take the responsibility of publishing them, or any of their contents, but worked from Crowley's **777**, as I acknowledged in my articles, using my



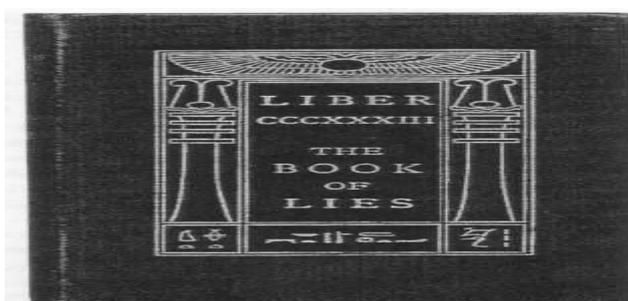
knowledge of the Mathers manuscript for counter-checking purposes. I may say that I found Crowley's books to be accurate. He himself does not acknowledge his sources in his recently published *Magick*, but in his *Equinox*, now out of print, he expressly declares that he is making public the "**Golden Dawn**" system as commanded by the Secret Chiefs. Regardie himself acknowledges his indebtedness to the published works of Mathers, Wynn Westcott and Crowley; but as Mathers and Wynn Westcott never put any of these correspondences into their published works, and Regardie could not have been in direct touch with the G. D. or he would have known it was not defunct, I conclude he has drawn his information from Crowley's "**A.A.**", which is simply the G. D. system under another name or so it appears to me to be from what its founder says about it.

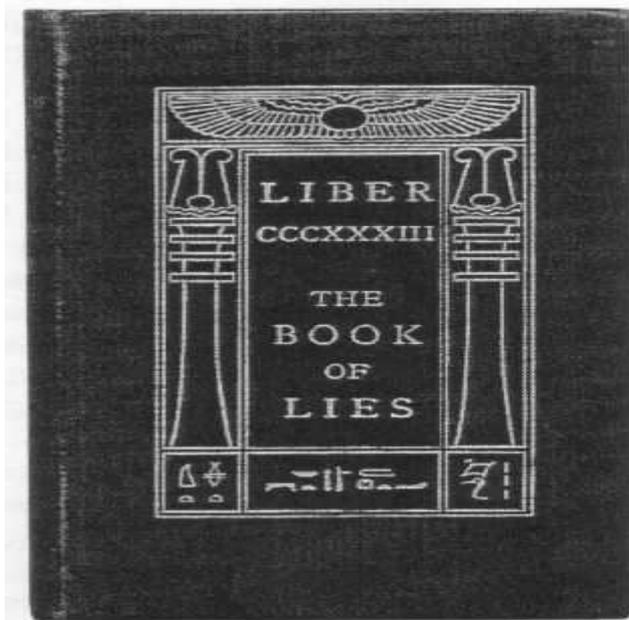


Thus I think we may claim to have traced out this system of correspondences and its antecedents: Crowley and I drew direct from Mathers "Golden Dawn", and Regardie drew from Crowley's "A. A."

The next point we have to solve in unravelling our mystery is the relationship of the different characters in this drama to each other. Crowley and Mathers quarrelled. Exactly why, I do not know; incompatibility of temperament was probably the fundamental cause, whatever the actual occasion of their break may have been. Crowley then started the publication of his magazine, *The Equinox*, which came out twice yearly for five years in England and made a fresh start in America after the War with one volume, but never got any further. These eleven volumes are highly prized by the more advanced students of occultism, and the complete set is hard to come by and commands high prices. Some of the contents, however, have been reprinted in *Magick*, together with a certain amount of new material.

In this magazine Crowley deliberately gave away all that he possessed of Mathers' secrets, including some of his rituals, and tore Mathers' character to shreds. I have never met either of the persons concerned in this dispute, but it appears to me that the abuse Crowley heaps on Mathers in the pages of his magazine is far more likely to reflect on himself than it is upon Mathers. In his criticisms of the manner in which Mathers conducted his organisation he is, I think, upon surer ground, for I found exactly the same problems confronting me when I myself joined it some years after he left. Practical teaching from official sources was conspicuous by its absence, and unless one was lucky enough to have a personal friend among its members with a gift of exposition, one was left high and dry. One was put through the ceremonies, given the bare bones of the system in the knowledge lectures and a few commentaries on them called side lectures, for the most part of very inferior quality, and left to one's own devices. The glory had departed in the days when I knew the Order, for most of its original members were dead or withdrawn; it had suffered severely during the war, and was manned mainly by widows and grey-bearded ancients; and the widows of its founders were somewhat in the position of the widow of a certain famous artist when she was asked if meant to carry on her husband's business. The cloak of Elijah did not necessarily descend on Mrs. Elishah. Nevertheless, anyone with any psychic perceptions at all could not fail to realise that there was power in the ceremonies and formulae; and anyone who made a study of them also speedily found out that in the system of correspondences taught in the G. D. they had got something of inestimable value.





Frater Perdurabo's Book of Lies



Frater Perdurabo on the Deosai Plateaux
End of his first Himalayan Expedition
(Aleister Crowley pictures himself on a donkey in his Book of Lies 1913)

These correspondences which were scattered through the knowledge papers of the G. D. in extricable confusion, for Mathers seemed to have a peculiar gift for putting his teaching in the most inassimilable form possible (perhaps due to too much reading of Rabbinical literature), were sorted out and assembled in readily available form by Crowley and published in his book **777**. This book is now out of print, but the more important of its contents are reprinted in the fourth volume of *Magick*. It is this book which I made use of for my *Mystical Qabalah* and I imagine that Regardie also used it for his *Garden of Pomegranates*.

He has drawn very extensively upon Crowley's writings for his inspiration and information, and so much controversy has centred around the personality of that extraordinary man, that it is only fair to Mr. Regardie to quote a passage in which he explains his attitude in the matter.

He says, on page 40, of *The Tree of Life*: "It will be noted that I have quoted freely from Aleister Crowley, and it is imperative clearly to define my attitude towards this man of genius.... It is a pity, as I see it, that the public should be robbed of that superlative freshness and originality which are his, and deprived of those aspects of his teaching which are fine, ennobling and enduring, simply because of a certain proportion of his literary output which is certainly banal, petty, unimportant, and, no doubt, very reprehensible. The personalities and private lives of these individuals concern me not at all, and I do not feel disposed to discuss them."

This, in my opinion, is the right attitude to adopt in the matter. I do not think any educated person will dispute the statement that a man's literary work should be judged impartially as literature, and that his character should not weigh in the balance, either for or against. Ovid and Byron both had to leave their country for their country's good, but that does not prevent their writings being reckoned as great literature. In a hundred years' time, when the controversies concerning his personality have died down, Crowley will be recognised, quite apart from his occult work, as a great English writer of both prose and poetry. The man whose work finds inclusion in *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse* can meet the jeers of even such an eminent critic as G. K. Chesterton on a level. Although Crowley's writings are marred by the grossest ribaldry and the foulest personal abuse, they are the works of a man of genius and a writer of magnificent English, and it is a great loss to occult literature that they are not available for the

general reader. There could be no more valuable contribution to the occult movement than a collected edition of the works of this very great writer, edited and annotated by some such sympathetic hand as that of Mr. Regardie, and with the personalities cut out,

To speak any word in mitigation of the general condemnation of Crowley is a thankless task, for panic-stricken people immediately conclude that one is in league with the devil. Nevertheless Mr. Regardie has had the courage to do this, and I should like to add my voice to his. To make use of a man's work without acknowledgment is no better than picking pockets.

As the "**Golden Dawn**" "**The A.A.**" and my own "**Inner Light**" must appear to the uninformed observer to be more or less mixed up together, I feel it is advisable to disentangle them. The deeper issues of occultism are evidently going to come out into the open in the near future; therefore a clearing of the ground is imperative.

It may be as well to explain my own position in relation to the "Golden Dawn". I joined the southern branch of the Scottish section of it, since disbanded, in 1919, and transferred from there to the section of it of which Mrs. McGregor Mathers was the head, and which claimed the only orthodoxy. She nearly turned me out for writing *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*, on the grounds that I was betraying the inner teaching of the Order, but it was pointed out to her that I had not then got the degree in which that teaching was given, and I was pardoned. She suspended me for some months for writing *Sane Occultism*, and finally turned me out because certain symbols had not appeared in my aura a perfectly unanswerable charge. However, I transferred again to yet another section of the Order, where, for the first time, I saw justice done to what is, in my opinion, a very great system, and continued my studies without interruption.

The Fraternity of the Inner Light" was founded by me in agreement with Mrs. Mathers, to be an Outer Court to the "**Golden Dawn**" system. All went well at first, and I was in high favour; but presently I fell from grace; why I never knew. No specific charges were ever made against me, save that of not having the proper symbols in my aura. Finally I was turned out without reason assigned, save the ridiculous one above. My experiences, when I persisted in using the Order system, I have related in *Psychic Self-Defence*. Unpleasant as those experiences were, the fact remains that Mrs. Mathers' rejection of me did not close the gates of the Order to me on either the outer or the inner planes.

I personally believe that the Temples of the Mysteries are not houses made with hands, but are eternal in the heavens. I no more believe McGregor Mathers' story of meeting mysterious adepts in the Bois de Boulogne than I believe Leadbeater's stories of the Masters and their marble seats. There is not only folly, but fraud in confusing the planes, and representing that which was experienced subjectively as having actually happened in the world of matter.

I have given my life to occultism since I was a young girl, and everything I have seen and experienced, on both the inner and the outer planes, points away from any centralised human organisation. I have seen the most extravagant claims made on behalf of some such Great White Lodge or Temple of the Illuminati, especially by certain American enterprises, for I refuse to call them occult orders; but I have never seen them substantiated. In fact, those who are loudest in their claims give out teaching which would disgrace a patent medicine circular. By their fruits ye shall know them and the fruits of these self-styled adepts are bilious concoctions.

The eternal temple in the heavens, however, is another matter and innumerable witnesses, of every age and faith, have borne witness to its existence; but they all declare that it is reached in vision, and not by any journey into the wilderness, however remote. It is to this eternal temple, and the Masters who rule therein, that I personally look for my inspiration and my authority to initiate. Whatever system I use is a means to an end and nothing more. I value tradition, however, because I find it to possess a psychic efficacy which is lacking in original systems,

however theoretically correct or aesthetically beautiful they may be.

It is my belief that Mathers got the keys to his system from the mysterious manuscripts, and that these connect up with the genuine European tradition whose symbol is the Rose on the Cross, and concerning which so little is known. I cannot prove this statement on the physical plane, because I have never been allowed a sight of those manuscripts or any opportunity to test the statements that are current in the Order concerning its origin; but from the psychic experiences I have had in connection with the "Golden Dawn" I have formed the above opinion, for what my opinion may be worth, and I may say that I have had a fairly wide range of experience in practical occultism.

It seems to me that whoever can work the system of the "Golden Dawn" in such a manner as to pick up the contacts of the Secret Chiefs need not pay very much attention to the "Trespassers will be prosecuted" boards put up on the physical plane by persons who are not altogether disinterested. The system, when worked by competent persons, is effectual, whether they are chartered or not. But even the "Golden Dawn" system, when worked by incompetent persons, is ineffectual, as I know to my cost.

It is not advisable however, for persons with no experience of practical occultism to make their first experiments with no other guidance than that of a book. Preliminary training is necessary; also a guide with a rope in case of difficulties. But those who have already passed through the Outer Court and stand waiting at the Door Between the Pylons will find, in Mr. Regardie's books, the keys they need. I, for one, wish them Godspeed on their Journey; and may they find the Stone of the wise; the Summum Bonum; true wisdom; perfect happiness.