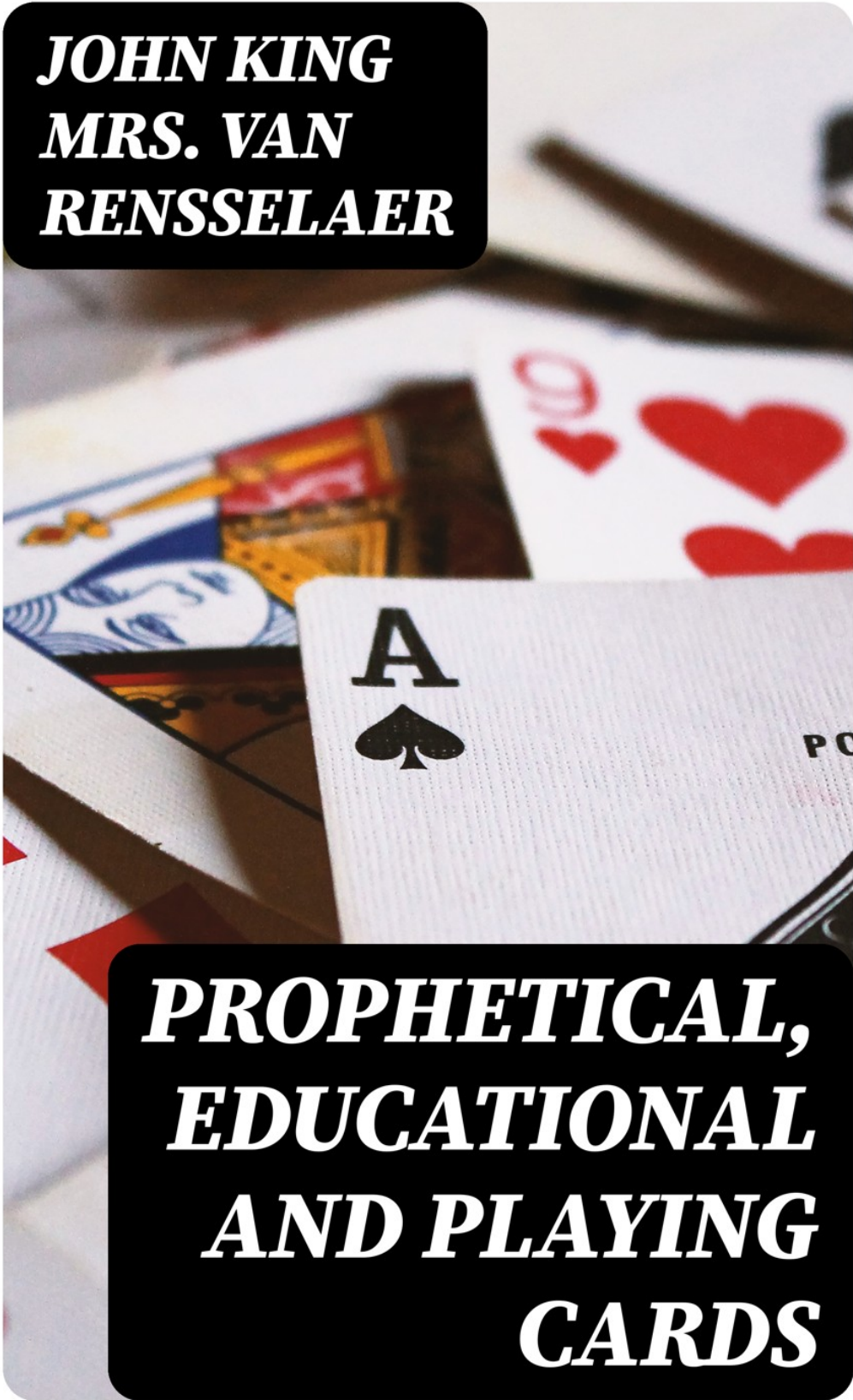




***JOHN KING
MRS. VAN
RENSSELAER***

***PROPHETICAL,
EDUCATIONAL
AND PLAYING
CARDS***

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John King Mrs. Van Rensselaer

Prophetical, Educational and Playing Cards

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FOREWORD

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If an apology is needed for writing again on the subject of playing cards, the excuse may be offered that new lights have been turned on the subject, so that there is fresh information to lay before the public, derived from a close and exhaustive study of the European libraries and museums, as well as of the pictures on the Playing Cards themselves or prints found in those repositories, and also in the collection owned by the writer; for these speak their histories to those who regard their symbols with appreciative knowledge, since they had an immense significance when originally adopted.

It is twenty years since *The Devil's Picture Book* was published and it is now out of print. The writer has been frequently called upon to furnish papers on the subject, so that it has been kept fresh in mind. At the time that the first book was issued it was the only one that had been printed in the United States devoted entirely to the history of cards not necessarily connected with games. Since then little has been published on the subject, and the information given in the present volume has been largely derived from the writer's own observations and studies.

A collection of Playing Cards, begun at that time with a solitary pack brought as a curiosity by a traveler from Algiers, that bore the ancient pips of Swords, Staves, Money and Cups, has now grown to hundreds of specimens culled from many different countries. Comparing these with each other, and studying all obtainable histories on the subject,

leads to the conclusion that the writers of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were correct when they stated that no historical record existed before the middle of the fourteenth century of *games played with cards*. But each and all of the writers on Playing Cards agree that there were cards and that they seem to have been used for fortune-telling before 1350, and also that there was a baffling resemblance between the traditions of the cards and what was recorded of the Egyptian mysteries connected with the worship of Thoth Hermes.

It therefore followed that the history and traditions peculiar to the ceremonies connected with that personage should be studied in order to trace Playing Cards to their birthplace and find for them an origin, without weakly stopping at the fourteenth century, and declaring that cards came out of space, as many authors have done.

The heraldic devices of Mercury, which are the emblems of what has always been called, by historians, "The Book of Thoth Hermes Trismegistus," are in themselves mute proof of the connection of the Tarots (as they are now called) with the cult of Mercury. These cards are the oldest ones known, and the symbols are retained in Italian Tarots of to-day, so it may be allowed that when Playing Cards are studied as the leaves of the book of a cult, not as a game, their own pictures relate the story that has lain dormant for many hundreds of years. They only required to have a key in order to be intelligible to any one interested in the subject, and this has been furnished by recognizing the four attributes of Mercury in the card pips, which had escaped the notice of students until the present time, as well as the attributes of

the picture part of the pack called the Atouts, which are those of Egyptian gods.

The popular notion that cards were invented for the amusement of a crazy French king is quite disproved by the historical records of the Tarots of the fourteenth century and the packs that survive. There are some beautiful specimens in Mr. Pierpont Morgan's collection, the emblems and devices of which are identical with records of the ancient Tarots, and these cards are very much older than the French packs.

Although the gap between the old cards and the worship of Mercury in Etruria is still to be bridged through accurate historical data, the inferential connection is too strong to be ignored and the rules of the games played with the cards intended for prophesying or fortune-telling, as well as the tradition connected with the Tarots themselves offer connecting links with the cult of Mercury that cannot afford to be disregarded, as has been done hitherto.

Mr. Stuart Culin, in his introduction to "Korean Games," says: "Investigation has been hitherto comparatively unproductive of results from the fact that most students have failed to perceive the true significance of games in primitive culture, regarding them primarily as pastimes." But he traces many of the games which are common to all children all over the world to a "sacred and divinatory origin, a theory that finds confirmation in their traditional associations, such as the use of cards in fortune-telling."

That Playing Cards are derived from the mysteries of ancient days will prove to be such a novel idea to many persons that the well-worn expression: "It can't be true, I

never heard it before," will be hurled at the author. But such critics are begged to pause, to consider the subject carefully, and to marshal convincing proofs to the contrary before dipping caustic-tipped pens into the inkwells of ignorance, doubt and disbelief.

Court de Gebelin, over a hundred years ago, was scoffed at and called a dreamer by the writers who followed him and wrote on the subject of Playing Cards; yet these same gentlemen with strange accord, while failing to advance any proofs of de Gebelin's inconsistencies or ignorant deductions, contradicted themselves by agreeing with his bold statement that the Tarots were the survival of the cult of Mercury or Thoth Hermes.

The nineteen-hundred-year-old crusade against cards, as wicked tools of wicked persons, dates from the struggle of the early Christians against idolatry, and this has been transmitted for generations, although there are few persons who can trace their prejudices to the true origin. Nor do they realize how often Divine commands to consult the occult were laid upon the Israelites without carefully perusing the books of Moses.

It may be as well to sum up in a few words the various proofs that the Playing Cards we now use are descended from the ancient mysteries. First, Arrows, and their successors, Straws, Sceptres or Rods. Cups, Swords and Money have always been used in connection with prophesying. Second, the emblems of Swords, Sceptres (or Stylus), Cups and Money have always represented Mercury, Thoth and Nebo as their emblems or attributes. Third, the worship of Thoth was introduced into Italy by the priests of

that cult, as is proved historically by the remains of their Temple at Puozzoli, as well as the Temple there to Mercury, near which place the Tarots are still found in common use in their original form, displaying pictures of the Egyptian deities. Fourth, the Egyptians or Gypsies are the fortune-tellers of Europe and always use cards for the purpose. Fifth, the name given originally to the Tarots or prophetic cards that bear the ancient emblems was Nabi, Naypes or "Prophets," which name is retained for playing cards in many parts of the world.

Thanks are due to the custodians of various museums who have displayed their collection of cards, and in particular to the artist, Mr. Burton Donnel Hughes, who kindly and skillfully designed the beautifully symbolic cover for this book.

M. K. VAN RENSSLAER.
New York, 1912.

CHAPTER I

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PROPHETICAL AND OTHER CARDS

Playing cards may be classified under three distinct heads. First, are those intended for divining purposes; these have descended from an ancient religious cult that would be entirely forgotten were it not for the traditional ceremonies connected with consulting this oracle, or "The Tablets of Fate," that are known as Tarots, and which are still used for fortune-telling in southern Europe, Asia and Africa.

The second division embraces cards used for gambling as well as for educational purposes, which have a short and easily studied history covering the time of their invention and the amusements for which they were intended. These date no further back than the end of the fourteenth century in northern Europe.

The third division includes the cards used for amusement or gambling, commonly known as playing cards, which are found in common use all over the world, although the designs on them vary with the location, and those familiar in France, England and the United States are unknown in Spain, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Persia, China or Japan, since each of these countries has playing cards peculiar to the nation and quite unknown to the others.

The French and German packs were invented solely for amusement or gambling purposes, while the Tarots, with their typical and heraldic designs, transmitted from early days, are now only to be found entire in Italy, other countries having adopted one portion or the other of the

original set as more convenient for games. This separation renders the decks useless for divining purposes; whereas, when intact they are distinctly prophetic or fortune-telling cards, that are derived from ancient mysteries, not only bearing the emblems of the three prophetic gods, but also those of the chief divinities of ancient days.

In some countries, such as Persia, only the emblematic or picture part of the pack, called by the Italians Atouts, is used; but the greater part of the world ignores these entirely and is ignorant that such cards exist, recognising only the pip or suit part of the pack, but in almost every quarter of the globe four suits composing a pack are known, although the symbols on them vary widely.

The oldest emblems are those of the Tarots that are still those most commonly known. These are Swords, Rods, Money and Cups, which are the pips familiar in Italy as well as Spain, Algiers, South America, Cuba, Mexico, Porto Rico, the Philippine Islands and wherever the Spanish language is used, for the Spaniards, when conquering the world, carried their favorite toys with them, introducing them to the natives who accepted the novelty with avidity and used them for games, just as the Spaniards had adopted them from the Italians.

The standard pack has ten pip and four court cards, or fifty-six in all, which are headed by a King, a Queen, a Cavalier and a Knave, and these cards all have names given to them according to the country where they are used. Cards for all parts of the world are made in Paris and local preferences are closely followed, although most countries manufacture their own cards, and a considerable revenue is

gained by taxing the product as well as the import of cards. But while the ancient emblems are now commonly used in the countries mentioned, the important part of the ancient pack has been discarded. This comprised twenty-one picture cards, which were a most necessary adjunct to the pip cards, for when the fortunes of the players were to be revealed by reading the prophecies of the gods it was imperative that the two sets should be used in connection with each other, but the complete pack that is still known as Tarots can only be found in Italy.

The German cards were never intended for fortune-telling, but entirely for gambling, and they have devices peculiarly their own. Hitherto no one has explained why or for what purpose these symbols were invented, since they had no particular significance when used in connection with the cards. They are Acorns, Bells, Hearts and Leaves, and are partly heraldic emblems connected with the game of Lansquenet. There are but three male court cards called King, Over Knave and Under Knave.



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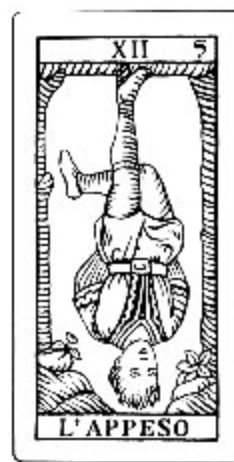
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Larger Image

ATOUTS OF AN EARLY ITALIAN PACK OF TAROTS

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| 7 Il Carro | 10 Ruota della Fortuna |
| 8 La Giustizia | 11 La Forza |
| 9 L'Eremita | 12 L'Appeso |

France uses the gambling pack invented for Charles VI about the year 1395. This contains three court cards—namely, King, Queen and Knave, and the cards display Carreaux, Piques, Cœurs and Trifles, or as we know them Diamonds, Spades, Hearts and Clubs. This French pack is

the only one confining itself to two simple dominant colours, while all other cards are extravagantly blazoned in variegated tints that are by no means as harmonious as the distinctive French *Rouge et Noir*, which commends itself so well to players for gambling purposes, that the packs of this nation are being now rapidly introduced and adopted all over the world to the exclusion of native designs, even although these symbols have been inherited from the prophetic cards of prehistoric times. This is due to the fact that the cards used for fortune-telling are not as convenient as those that were invented particularly for gambling.

In Persia, where only the Atout or figure part of the pack is used, while the pip part is omitted, the figures are painted in harmonious colours and it is left for the tints of the background to indicate the suits. In the Kile Kort or Cucu pack of Sweden (which also has figures) there are no colours whatever, but the designs are printed in black ink on white cardboard. This is also the case with old cards from the Netherlands, but none of these packs were ever intended for fortune-telling.

There have been many persons who have interested themselves in the history of playing cards, and some of them have pierced the veil surrounding their cradle; but, generally, since these students have only been interested in the cards as toys or gambling instruments or as rare specimens of painting, engraving or stencilling, the studies have not extended beyond the time when playing cards became common in Europe, or about the beginning of the fourteenth century. None of these students followed the

clues that would have proved the original purport of the "tablets of fate."

In "Les Etudes Historique sur les Cartes à Jouer," by M. C. Leber (1842), the question is asked: "Where do cards come from, what are they and what do they say?" These queries the writer proceeds to answer only in part, for he fails to see the connection of the cards familiar to him, that have French or German pips, with the more ancient Tarots, which, in all probability, he had never seen. But Leber states positively that cards "are of ancient origin and Eastern invention, and primarily they constitute a symbolic and moral game." He professes to be guided by the emblems on the cards themselves, but he fails to decipher or to understand the evidences shown by the heraldic devices peculiar to one of the ancient Greek gods, which would have answered his questions.

According to the Rev. Edward Taylor and other authorities, the emblematic and mystic cards called Tarots were "born long since in the East, from whence they were brought by the gypsies for thaumaturgic purposes." Although it is declared that the gypsies always carried and consulted packs of cards ever since the wanderers were known in Europe, these people themselves have no history of their mystic book that they will disclose, so the positive historical record of playing cards as used for gambling games or fortune-telling does not commence before the second half of the fourteenth century.

These cards are the ones we call Tarots, which are still common in Italy, and the emblems on the cards themselves reveal their original connection with the worship of Mercury

in Etruria, of Thoth in Egypt, and of Nebo in Babylonia. These three gods have the same attributes, and were worshipped for many generations in the then civilised portions of the world; yet the forms of their worship, that have been so strangely transmitted to us through the greatest of their books, the cards are now little understood and seldom consulted.

Indeed, the very name Tarot has been deemed by some authors as positive proof that the cards are the unbound leaves of one of the great books of the Temple of Thoth Hermes Trismegistus, since they derive the word Tarot from Thoth or else from Thror Tahar, which, says Wilkinson (Volume II, page 90), "were the parchment records kept in the Temple, which are mentioned in the time of the eighteenth dynasty that were written on skins." The same author states (page 207) that "Thoth framed the laws." In fact, his temple was the seat of all learning, where doctors, lawyers and scientists were able to study and to devote their knowledge to the god they worshipped.

It seems, therefore, that the name is in truth one of the links in the chain of evidence proving that what we use as playthings were once part of the great cult of Mercury and his African or Asian *confrères*, in whose time the pictures and the emblems were thoroughly understood and were regarded with awe or reverently consulted, since by their means alone could the wishes of the gods be made known to mortals, through the medium of the priests of Mercury, Thoth, or Nebo.

The intimate connection of the triple god is no fanciful suggestion, but is acknowledged by all students. Nebo, of

the Babylonians (mentioned in the Bible), Thoth, of the Egyptians, and Hermes, of the Greeks, were all worshipped as gods of speech and inventors of transmitted ideas. It is not credible that in Asia or Africa, even as early as the twelfth dynasty, that voice language or speech was a gift newly granted to mankind, so there must have been some reason for the belief that "these gods gave speech to mankind." This is one of the superstitions puzzling many modern students who have tried to investigate the mysteries of the Temple of Thoth.

It is now believed that one of the priests who was connected with the cult conceived the bright idea of communicating the wishes of the planets, of the vegetable and the animal kingdoms, as well as those of the patron gods, to mankind through a well-arranged system that had the Temple of Thoth for a centre and its priests as interpreters. The power that this system would give to the learned men congregated in the vast Temple of learning would be great, and would increase their prestige to a wonderful extent. Before that time the primitive people were content with simple means of consulting the wishes of the gods, or with the decrees written at the birth of each child on the tablet of fate by "the writer of Esigalia, who was called Nebü." The means generally resorted to were those still common in Korea, Japan and China, where the oracle is consulted by throwing a handful of sticks before a shrine. Among the Arabs a sheaf of arrows is used. Gordon Cummings describes his negro servants using sticks which were marked and then thrown on the ground, when the

natives desired to be told by their gods where the game lay and what direction to take when hunting.

The scientific arrangement devised by the priest of Thoth that earned for his god the reputation of giving speech to mankind was done through placing on the walls of the temple a series of pictures representative of the chief gods, such as Thoth, Isis, Maut, Phthah and Ammon, as well as various virtues, vices, etc., either pictorially or through heraldic and emblematic devices. These mural pictures could be consulted by the priests by casting on a central altar a handful of arrows, straws or rods, that were always connected with the magic of the Egyptians, as is mentioned in Exodus. As these rods fell they naturally pointed toward the pictures on the walls, and since these represented nearly every event in human life the "speech or commands" of the gods were readily interpreted by the priests, who thus proved that Thoth was the "God of speech" with themselves for his mouthpieces. This superstition was carried out even to the sacrifice of tongues, which was customary as late as the days of the Roman emperors, when tongues were used as one of the sacrifices to Mercury.

It can easily be seen that the primitive arrows were incomplete without the interpretation of the pictures on the walls used in their connection, just as the pip part of the Tarot pack is useless for fortune-telling without the Atouts, which are supposed to be crude Europeanized copies of the pictures on the walls of the Egyptian temples representing their deities. It will also be seen that the cards bearing the comparatively modern pips of Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and Spades, or of Acorns, Bells, Hearts and Leaves have no

power whatever of translating the wishes of the gods, since they were invented for another and widely different purpose.

Some old and beautifully painted Tarots have been found in Italy, so it is assumed that their use was common among the upper classes in that country, who could afford to buy the beautiful unbound leaves of the great book of Thoth, long before there is any historical record of cards either for gambling or for fortune-telling, and that these cards were probably used for the latter purpose whenever any wandering priest of the cult could be induced to interpret their meaning.

We find that these mediæval Italian Tarots are usually painted on cardboard by a skillful hand, and that when they were used for amusement the game was called "l'Ombre" (or The Man). The rules for playing it show plainly that it was not originally intended for amusement, but for a serious consultation of the wishes of the divine powers. In short, the game was identical with fortune-telling, since the most important rule determines that only two persons took part, the one to inquire the future, and the other to interpret the meaning of the cards that were dealt. Both the rules for laying out the pack and the value or significance of the cards point to the occult meaning of the game, which is still played with somewhat the same laws, although alterations and modifications have crept in that obscure the original intention, of consulting an oracle which is probably not even conjectured by modern players of *Tarocci*, as the game is now called.

The arrangement of the unbound leaves of the book of Thoth Hermes Trismegistus, that is regarded to-day as a mere pack of playing cards, enabled the priests (or initiates, as we may call them) of ancient days to carry a pack on their persons, so that the wishes of the gods might be consulted at any place. This rendered it needless to enter the Temple of Mercury for the purpose, which had been the custom before the Christian era. After this time secrecy was probably necessary, since the priests of the Roman Catholic Church naturally discouraged any consultation with the gods of ancient mythology, although the people might cling privately to the cult that they had enjoyed and had believed in since prehistoric ages. Through appealing to the prophets (or fortune-tellers, as the priests of Mercury would be deemed at present) the superstitious people believed that they were actually receiving divine guidance, and this belief is secretly held by many, even in the twentieth century; although few of those who consult diviners through playing cards realise that they are worshippers at the shrine of Nebo, of the Babylonians; the great god Thoth, of the Egyptians, or their successor, Mercury, of the Romans.

Many links in the chain connecting playing cards with the ancient mysteries can be separately taken up and studied. In the first place, the histories of Mercury show him as being worshipped under several distinct attributes, combined with that of being the Interpreter or Messenger of the gods, and the students who were of his cult learned twenty or more of the arts and sciences which Thoth or Mercury was supposed to have invented, such as speech, music, painting, agriculture and astronomy, all of which were under his

protection. Virtue, vice, death, temperance, health, joy and sorrow each had an emblematic figure peculiar to and connected with it, such as a hanged man or a skeleton. Each of these figures, if displayed on the walls of a temple could be recognised even by an unlettered congregation, so the people would have been accustomed to these representations, even after they were removed from the walls to the flat surface of the cards and no longer displayed in their exalted positions.

The emblematic figures found on the Tarots and called the Atouts are still known by the names given to them when the Egyptians introduced them to Europe, and are as familiar in Italy to-day as when worshipped under the protection of Mercury. After a little study the attributes displayed on the modern Tarots show most plainly their Egyptian origin, and mutely declare their pedigree—the image, value and position of each card, unchanged for ages, all silently pointing to this. Yet, while strangely conforming to all the attributes, decorations and posture of the gods as represented in the Egyptian temples, the designs have been so modernised as to be at first difficult to recognise.

It is supposed by several authors, notably by Court de Gebelin, as early as 1773, when he published “The Primitive World,” that originally the twenty-two figures of the Atout or emblem part of the Tarots were painted on the walls of the temples, a fashion inherited from Biblical times, to enable the worshippers to recognise gods, sciences, arts or conditions represented by the figures and their attributes when it was wished to consult them. Discoveries in

Babylonia and Egypt since De Gebelin's time have confirmed his suppositions.

These figures in themselves were insufficient for communicating with the gods, for they were speechless, so for the purpose of transacting business with them the second volume of the book of Thoth was adopted by taking from the peasants their ancient fashion of consulting the gods through the throw of arrows or rods. These were marked with figures representing a father, a mother, a child and a servant, and four tokens or heraldic devices were also scratched on the rods, dividing them into the suits that have been so universally retained. These symbols were always connected with the worship of the gods, and ivory rods bearing these devices have been found in the tomb of King Qa, who is supposed to have lived about 4000 B. C.

Thus, the ancient divining arrows became the pip cards now in general use, while the pictures on the walls, or the Atout part of the pack, is unknown except in Italy, where the complete book of two volumes with twenty-two Atouts and fifty-six pip leaves is still found.

Originally what we call the suits or pip cards were probably simply rods inherited from Moses and Aaron, or perhaps only a quiver full of arrows, or a bundle of straws, which we know were used at the Delphic oracle; and out of these primitive articles the cards were evolved. On them were placed the four heraldic emblems of Mercury by which any statue or painting of him may be readily recognised. These emblems are convincing proof that cards were part of the worship of Mercury, since the four suits of the Tarots represented the four chief attributes of the god, those

symbols by which he is universally recognised, which are *Espadas* (Swords), *Denari* (Money), *Bastoni* (Rods), and *Coppas* (Cups).

Any one familiar with the many beautiful statues of Mercury that are scattered through the great museums of Europe, or the funeral urns or sarcophagi on which Mercury is represented, is aware of this. First, he appears as Argiphontes, with the harpé or sword at his side, given him by his father, Jupiter. Second, he is shown as Cyllenius, or Agoneus, holding a purse, through the meshes of which round coins can be seen, signifying the protector and representative of merchants. Third, he appears as Caduceator, or the messenger of the gods, bearing aloft the caduceus, or magician's rod. Fourth, he is represented as Chthonius, presiding at birth or leading the soul to the unknown regions, when his emblem is the Cup of Fortune.

This emblem inspired the shape of the beautiful Etruscan funeral vase, which is in itself symbolical and derived from the worship of the Assyrians. He is frequently represented by a cup or chalice, since Mercury was also the cup bearer of the gods, like the butler of the Pharaoh (Genesis xl), who protected his master from poison. When he was the messenger he held to the lips of mortals the seven-ringed cup of sorrow or joy, and the many significances of this cup, although now nearly forgotten, were realised by the ancient worshippers as an important emblem of the functions of the god.

If the Tarots are the direct descendants of the occult images in the Temple of Thoth, as is conceded, it must also be acknowledged that then these cards each has a meaning

or intention worth studying, if only to discover their secret; and that if they are connected with the ancient mysteries they represent human life in all its phases. To wrest their secret from them has been the endeavor of many writers, some of whom have learned their portent traditionally, others through careful historical investigation, while some confess to inspiration without authority or support, but not one of these authors discovered the important connection between the emblems on the cards and those representing Mercury heraldically under his chief guises, although such a discovery would have been conclusive proof that their surmises were correct and that cards were the survival of the cult of Mercury and his predecessors.

Nevertheless, a thorough examination of all these writers shows that through different channels they all come to the same conclusions, and by comparing their writings with that of the original rules for the game of l'Ombre (or The Man) quite a definite idea of the value and meaning attached to each card by the initiates or priests of Mercury may be reached.

Raymond Lulle (1235-1315) gives an historical account of Tarots in his "Ars Magna." Jerome Cardeau (1501-1576) writes of the historic pack in his work "Subtily." An English writer named Mathers has written exhaustively about the great book of Thoth Hermes Trismegistus, chiefly with the view of explaining fortune-telling through a correct reading of the mysterious leaves.

Court de Gebelin, although sneered at by the authors who followed him, who found his learning too deep for their understanding, has given a lucid account of Tarots and their

connection with divination, while Boiteau, in his "Les Cartes à Jouer et la Cartomancie"; Merlin, in his "Origin des Cartes"; Chatto, in his "Facts and Speculations About Cards," and Taylor, in his "History of Playing Cards," agree that cards appeared suddenly in Europe early in the fourteenth century, that the cards of that day were the Tarots, or the fortune-telling cards, that they were altered to suit Dutch, Swedish or German tastes, or the fancies of a French king, following also the desires of each nation that adopted them for gambling purposes, with no thought of the ancient cult to which they had belonged. Not one of them, however, pointed out the connecting link with the emblems of Mercury, or explained the reason for this sudden appearance in civilised nations of these fortune-telling packs, except De Gebelin, while even he failed to connect the attributes of Mercury with the pips on the cards or the emblematic figures on the Atouts that still show the attributes of the chief gods of Egyptian mythology, that would have been such convincing proofs of their origin.

We are indebted to Papus, in his "Tarots of the Bohemians," for clearly pointing out that the cards are derived from the book of Thoth and for explaining the meaning of each leaf. But even Papus, shrewd and far-seeing as he is, does not bridge the chasm lying between the temples of the Egyptian deities and the introduction of cards into Europe, although he recognises the paramount importance of the emblem of Rods, which he wisely calls Sceptres, since he sees the value that such a symbol of power was to the ancients, and he never condescends to call the pip by its vulgar name of Club.

It is the more strange that the surviving signs connecting the ancient worship of Mercury with the emblems on the pip cards remained unnoticed, for the old Temple of Mercury at Baiæ remains with its vaulted roof in a fairly good state of preservation; and on the ceiling of this temple can still be seen traces of pictures resembling those on the Atouts. Almost obliterated and difficult to see, since the place is dark and there is no means of lighting, they can yet be discerned, even though it would be impossible to reproduce the emblems.

They are in the shape of the old Atouts, that is to say, the figures are enclosed in a well-defined line the shape of a card, and the same size if considered in reference to that of the emblematic pictures. Two of them are distinct enough to show a figure, although which one of the Atouts is intended it is now impossible to say. Traces of other Atouts may be discerned all along the roof of the building, although they are being rapidly destroyed by the weather.

Enough evidence exists now to show that, in this house erected to Mercury by the rich merchants of Rome, the emblematic figures were displayed as ornaments on the ceiling and were not concealed in alcoves or curtained niches, which some writers have supposed was done in the more ancient temples of Egypt where pictures have been discovered that have puzzled the savants who have not connected them with the worship of Thoth or Serapis.

Why the emblems of Mercury did not receive recognition from the authorities on playing cards of the past three centuries, or from others, remains a mystery, since it seems to be quite evident that, while the Atouts show the various

virtues, vices, arts and crafts, which were under his protection, the pip cards display his four chief attributes, and that these were evidently placed in the book to represent the god when it was necessary to call on his good offices to protect or guide merchants, to direct love affairs, to encourage warriors or to inspire scientists. No other derivation for these devices has even been suggested, and these self-evident links in the chain of evidence connecting playing cards with the worship of Mercury have been totally ignored. Many students have, however, pointed out that the Tarots are the survivors of his cult and were originally the Book of Thoth Hermes Trismegistus.

In the "Catalogue of Playing and Other Cards in the British Museum," by William Hughes Willshire, M. D. (1876, page 52), he shows a picture of Addha-Nari, saying, "she is the Isis of the Hindus, a pantheistic emblem typifying Nature, Truth and Religion." In this Hindu emblematic figure the four symbols of the ancient Tarots (now the suit marks of the numeral playing cards of the Tarots and of Italy and Spain) are placed in the four hands of the figure that has the crescent or emblem of prophetic power on her head—namely, the Cup, the Circle (or Money), the Sword and the Magician's Rod. "These are recognised," says Mr. Willshire (page 62), "as being the symbols of the four chief castes into which men were divided on the banks of the Ganges and of the Nile. Accordingly, the Cup denotes the sacerdotal rank or priesthood; the Sword implies the king, a soldier or military type; the Circle or ring of eternity (that in the hands of the protector of commerce became Money) typifies the world or commercial community, and the Staff is

emblematic of agriculture or the tiller of the soil." This connection between these symbols with those on the Tarots has been copied slavishly by many authors as the only explanation for the adoption of these devices. That there were in early days these principal caste divisions is unquestionable, and men of the different professions selected their heraldic emblems when consulting the oracle to worship or consult Mercury as Chthoneus, Argiphontes, Cyllenius or Caduceator.

The bridge connecting the great goddess of India with Mercury has not yet been built, although the foundations have been laid and will soon be given to the world. It is sufficient to say at present that the mythologies of Babylonia and Egypt have mingled mysteriously, and that the mother of Thoth is connected with the Indian deity so that symbols and rites common to one country are often found in the sister continent.

Before the era of printing men crystalised their ideas by making pictures to portray the thing or person that it was desired to represent. Thus the heraldry of to-day is simply this crude idea scientifically treated and classified, and a coat-of-arms is the name of a family pictorially represented. The totem of the North American Indian displays his family cognomen in this way, as do the various symbols of uneducated people all over the world who are unable to express their ideas in written characters.

Signs over the doors of tradesmen carry out the same plan, as the barber's basin or pole (the latter being really the caduceus of Mercury, that was inherited from the doctors who studied at the Temple of Thoth). The bunch of