

steps (the number of rotations of the Earth in circumambulating the Sun), go through a painted arch at the top (the arch of heaven familiar to certain freemasons), to find themselves in an upper hall decked like paradise. Here they are greeted by sixty virgins bearing laurel wreaths. Each of the initiates is also given a laurel wreath by the Virgin of Lights. She then presents each one of them to the king of the castle who, with the queen, is revealed behind a curtain. The queen, it should be said, is clad in garments so brilliant that the eye cannot look upon them.

The Virgin of Lights lays down her branch upon the ground and silence falls upon the assembled company. In this holy quietness the figure of Atlas steps forth and welcomes them on the king's behalf. Again we find ourselves in the presence of most ancient symbolism. Atlas is one of the Titans, and particularly associated with the Hesperides, from whom Heracles sought aid in obtaining the golden apples. One of his functions is also to uphold the sphere of the heavens.

Atlas then bids the Virgin to continue the ceremonies, and we note that these mysteries are run by feminine forces. She leads the company to another room where, under a great arch in the west, are three royal thrones. Each throne has a couple seated upon it, with a semicircle of elders behind them, and a great golden crown over all. The central throne bears a young couple, the bride and bridegroom of the Mystery wedding, and a figure of Cupid plays about them and round the golden crown. We should by now be aware that the figure of Cupid is no sentimental convention, but represents an almighty force that drives the worlds in their motions and fires the vital forces of all living creatures upon them.

Before the queen is an altar, dressed with symbols relating to the Mysteries about to be encountered. These are a black velvet book inlaid with gold; a taper in an ivory candlestick; a celestial globe; a striking watch; a fountain of blood; and a skull wherein dwells a white serpent.

Each of these symbols will repay long and deep meditation. They are each in their way aspects of the Mystery dynamics of life and death, of transformation and regeneration. The intention of such symbolism is to reveal not to explain, and although it may seem obscure it is in fact not so. It is the plainest possible representation of a truth that is beyond the grasp of the intellect. A symbol is a door or gateway. It is to be gone through. By meditating upon, visualizing, taking the symbol to heart, with aspiration and spiritual intention, one is enabled to pass through it.

Returning in procession to the lower hall the virgins play a game with the candidates which is based on the number seven. They all stand in a circle and count round in sevens, to choose bedfellows for the night. In doing so, however, they find they are so disposed by sexes round the