

---

## FOREWORD

---

In the year 1614 there appeared at Cassel, Germany, "The Discovery of the Brotherhood of the Worshipful Order of the Rose-Cross," containing the history, constitution and laws of the Order. This was followed in 1615 by "The Confession of the Brotherhood of the Rose-Cross," giving 37 reasons for their existence, defining their objects and the means for attaining them. These two publications are generally referred to by their Latin titles, "Fama Fraternalitatis," and "Confessio Fraternalitatis." This was the first time that this most hidden and secret order had issued anything officially, over their name and seal. Innumerable works, both for and against them, began to appear all over Europe, and for a time, a learned controversy of considerable violence raged. By the year 1630, or thereabouts, it subsided and the succeeding years saw the appearance of numerous philosophical and alchemical works, which implied Rose-Cross affiliation, though they did not bear the "imprimatur" of the Right Worshipful Brotherhood itself. Among these were many illustrious names, and there is more than a suspicion that they were writing from the high ground of the Brotherhood of Adepts.

There are many unpublished manuscripts in European libraries and some in private hands, concerned with the problems of Alchemy, professing to expose to the reader the most hidden secrets of the "Stone of the Wise," the "Universal Medicine," and the method of concocting the "True Tincture." These are written in the enigmatic language of Allegory and Symbolism, requiring a key to unlock their meaning. Many of these seem to have been intended for private circulation among students and not for publication or public perusal. Some of the manuscripts are beautifully illustrated with symbolic pictures and elaborate designs, intended to instruct the initiated reader in the mysteries of Occult Philosophy.

From the subsidence of the tides of controversy, there was complete silence, as far as the Brotherhood was concerned, until the year 1785, when the first part of a work appeared at Altona, Germany, bearing many guarantees of authenticity, and constituting a contribution of supreme importance to Rosicrucian literature. A second part appeared in the year 1788, completing the work. It consisted of 36 colored plates, of folio size, each plate lettered closely in Latin and German, and 16 pages, double columns, of German text.

This work is second only, in importance, to the original "Fama" and "Confessio" and its value to the student would be difficult to estimate. It is concerned throughout with the Secret Teachings, Philosophy, and Praxis, of the Brotherhood, expressed in Allegory, Signs, Symbols, and Mystery Numbers. This is the language of the Secret Tradition, which may be understood only by those who have learned the meaning through experience and practice, to others it may have nothing to say. The earlier documents were addressed to the learned, everywhere, but the "Secret Symbols," is, by its very nature, a sealed book to all except those who have made some progress on the way of the "Great Quest" of what is variously called, "The Stone of the Wise," the "Summum Bonum," and by many other names, or simply "The Stone," implying thereby, all that the word means in the language of the Secret Tradition.

In its manifold representation of the subject from all aspects, it seeks to lead the student by enigmatic ways, to a progressive initiation into the ineffable mysteries of God, Man, and the Universe, combining Astrology, The Holy Qabalah, Alchemy, The Three Principles of Jacob Boehme, The Creation Mystery of Genesis, the Chariot of Ezekiel, the Logos Philosophy and Apocalyptic Visions of St. John. This is the high altitude of Spiritual Alchemy, leading the way to Spiritual Regeneration and the Renewal of Life. The combined effect of all these aspects of the Secret Tradition, brought together in one volume, staggers the imagination. One may truly find here a study for a life time, a very Book of Books for the Curriculum of the "House of the Holy Spirit."

"The Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians" claims on the title pages to be taken from an "ancient manuscript," and now published for the first time. This leads one to suppose that there was a single manuscript from which the published work was made. But upon examination, it is found that two of the Alchemical treatises which are included in the work, were printed previously, one in 1621, the other, presumably in 1625. Thirty of the thirty-six colored plates, which form the most notable and important part of the book, are known to have existed previously in an unique manuscript, produced sometime around the year 1700.

The work in its original form as published at Altona, in 1785-8, consists of three separate treatises, a long poem, 36 full page colored plates, with 3 smaller ones in the text. An untitled tract on the Philosopher's Stone occupies the first place, consisting of 4 pages of text and followed by 10 plates. After this appears a full page plate of the "Emerald Tablet of Hermes," together with the enigmatic inscription, and followed by a long explanatory poem, occupying two pages and arranged in double columns. Then follow the 4 pages of Madathanus, "Golden Age Restored," and 13 plates. The third treatise, "A Golden Treatise on the Philosopher's Stone," the longest in the collection, occupies all of part two, consisting of 8 pages of text and 11 plates. The second and third treatises, appeared in a Latin translation, in the three editions, of the "Museum Hermeticum," 1625, 1678, 1749. The German original of the "Golden Age" was printed in 1621, while "A Golden Treatise," though nothing is known certainly concerning its first appearance in the original German, is believed to have been printed in 1625, the same year as the Latin text. It is barely possible that copies of the excessively rare and little known books survived and came into the possession of the editor of the "Secret Symbols," but it seems more likely that they too were handed down in manuscript and circulated among members of the Brotherhood together with the symbolic illustrations. The private circulation of hand written copies of books dealing with the Secret Teachings of the Brotherhood is a well known practice and many books have survived in this form and never were printed.

The 30 plates referred to, occur in a beautifully painted manuscript which came to this country, presumably, the precious possession of one of the early 18th century German Mystics who sought a new freedom in the New World and



settled in Pennsylvania. It is referred to by Dr. Julius F. Sachse in "The German Pietists of Pennsylvania," where several of the plates are reproduced in black and white. Comparing these plates with the Altona publication, it is evident that they are close enough to suggest a common source. The manuscript, while undated, can be reasonably placed sometime near the year 1700, from the style of writing, the coloring of the plates, and the quality and texture of the paper employed, suggesting a late survival of the German art of illumination. It may possibly be one of several painted and written copies intended for private circulation and differing in minor details according to the skill of and care of the artist. The differences from the printed book are in matters of arrangement and detail and do not materially affect the meaning and purpose of the symbols represented: besides, allowance should be made for the greater freedom of the hand-worker as compared with the mechanical work of the printer and engraver.

This is the first complete and unabridged English translation of the Altona text of "The Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians," with faithful reproductions of all the plates. "The Golden Age" and "A Golden Treatise" appeared in the English translation of the "Museum Hermeticum," edited by A. E. Waite, London, 1893, and certain fragments were offered by Dr. Franz Hartman in his inaccurate edition of the "Secret Symbols," published in Boston in 1888. The Parable from the "Golden Treatise" was translated from the original German in the English version of Dr. Herbert Silberer's "Problems of Mysticism and its Symbolism," New York, 1917, where it forms the main text for his psychoanalytic explanation of the Symbols of Mysticism and Occultism.

With the exception of these portions of the text no complete English translation has ever before been attempted.

The plates, all of which have numerous Latin and German mottoes, quotations, and descriptive labels explaining the Figures and Symbols, have never before been reproduced in their entirety, except in the German photo-lithographic facsimile made in 1919.

The Boston edition referred to includes only 25 of the 36 plates, omitting whole sections of the German text belonging on the plates, ignoring important key matter, paraphrasing and abridging arbitrarily. This translation is often meaningless. It draws upon modern Theosophy, Indian Philosophy and what not, to eke out a few pages of text, including a Dictionary of Occult Terms, in place of the translation promised on the title-page.

In the Boston edition there is no attempt to translate the first treatise in the book but substitute for it a rambling introduction. Of the "Golden Treatise" there is less than a third translated; of Madathanus but a few meagre and unsatisfactory extracts. The German text of the three treatises is garbled even worse than the inscriptions appearing on the plates. Except for the 25 plates the book would be quite worthless to anyone, for it is incomplete, inaccurate, misleading, and thoroughly uncritical.

It is believed that the translation of "The Secret Symbols" here offered for the first time and the fine reproductions of the entire set of plates will find a ready welcome among students of the Secret Tradition, and will make available to the English reader, the second most important contribution to Rosicrucian literature. It is a work of outstanding importance in the literature of Occultism and merits close and careful study on the part of Occult students of all orders.

