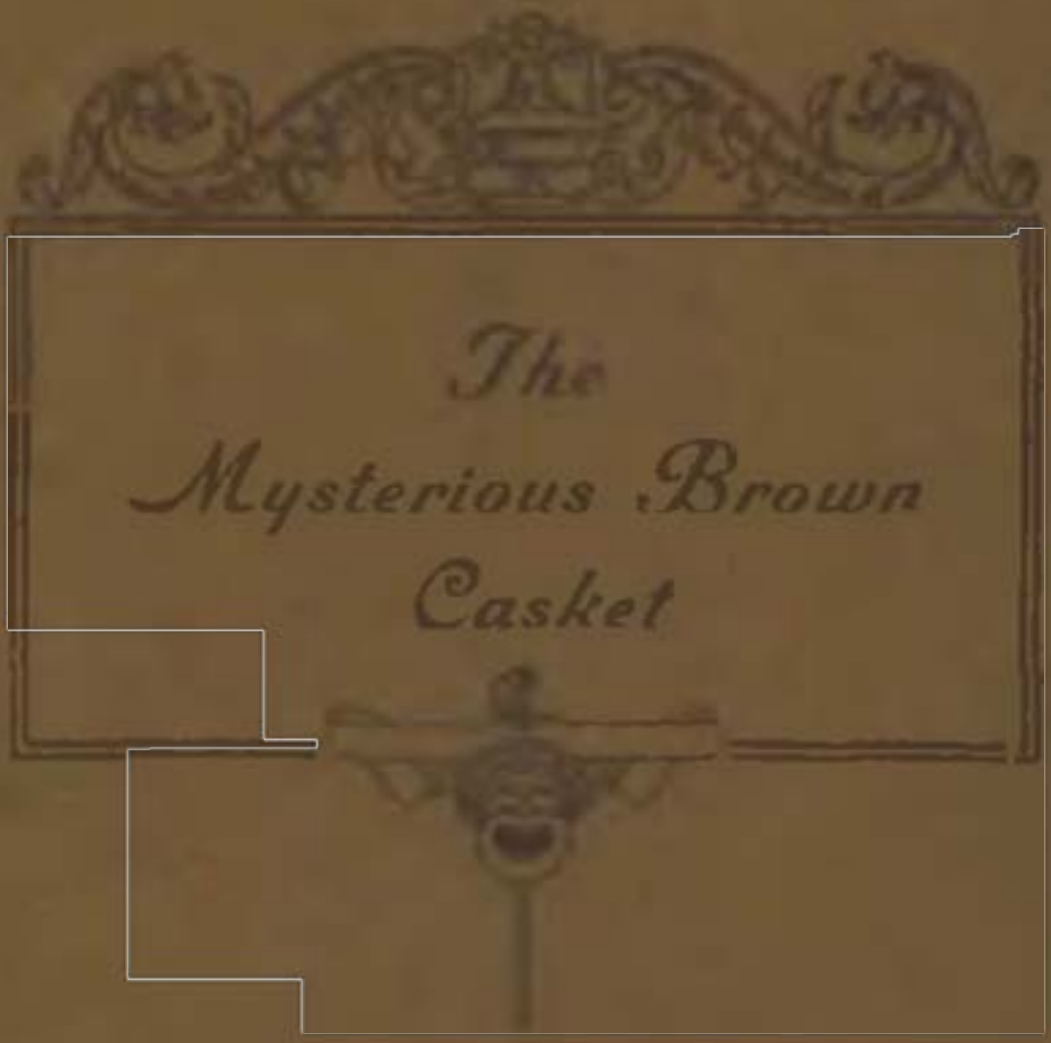
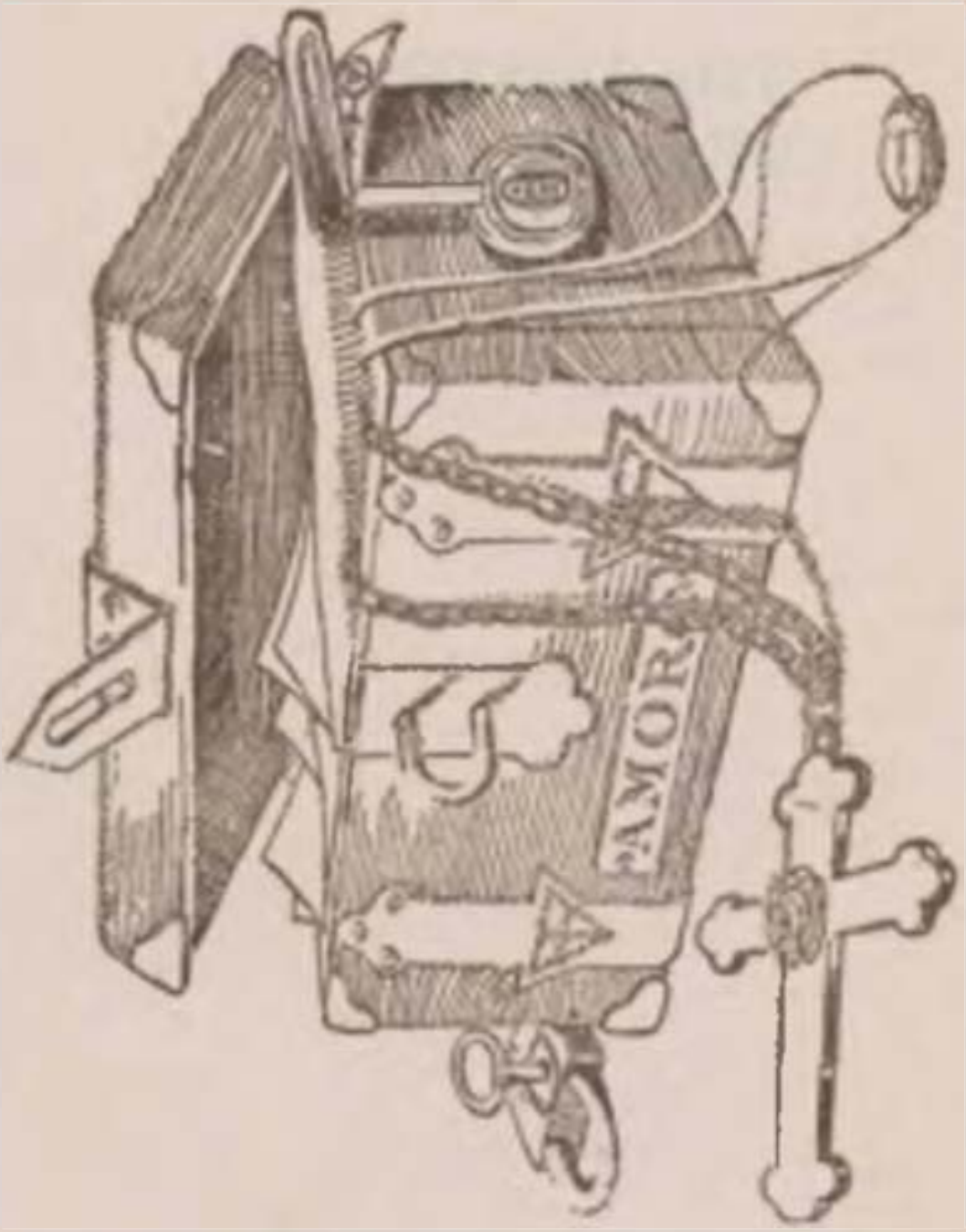
The Mysterious Brown Casket



THE MYSTERIOUS BROWN CASKET




AMOR

The
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Wherein the story of an ancient guild is partially revealed in language which the mind will realize and the inner man will come to understand.

The Mysterious Brown Casket

It was in the center of the large library table when I first saw it.

I had entered Berkley's library unannounced, just as was my custom of years. After the close of business, Berkley and I found much in common to discuss; thus the evening hours were passed intimately and pleasantly.

The little brown casket was new to me; yet I cannot say that this fact alone caused my considerable interest in it. Its environment, if I may use the word, was strange. In a well-appointed library, and upon a rich mahogany table, alone and seemingly alive with a story, the old box really appealed to one's imagination. It was so out of place —there.

Berkley had just placed some papers in the box as I entered, and the cover had not closed tightly upon it. A few trinkets were beside it and I felt, instinctively, that Berkley had hurriedly ended an examination of the contents of the box as I approached the door.

His greetings were as usual, and the conversation opened with the common-place remarks of the day and the weather; but as I drew a chair beside his fireplace I noticed that he remained near the table and seemed to assume an attitude of guardianship over the casket.

I knew Berkley well. He had been an associate of mine in several business ventures and for twenty or more years we had been like brothers. For the past year he had gradually released his holdings in many companies and was retiring from active interest in the commercial world. Broad-minded, kind, charitable, and in no way given to extreme views of any kind, one would class him as the ordinary successful business man of the world—well-read and versed in many subjects without prejudices or preferences. This is as I knew him; and I was very close to Berkley in many ways.

But the little brown casket aroused my interest beyond reason. I tried to analyze the curiosity which increased as we talked, for it seemed that he was avoiding any reference to the box, and from him—or the

box!—came the impression that I was in the presence of a mystery.

I became uneasy. I moved my chair slightly so that while talking I might rest my eyes casually upon the casket and the few trinkets lying outside of it.

The document which protruded from the casket was old and yellow. On one corner of it was a red seal, while hanging from it was another seal, yellow in color and Egyptian in design. In front of the casket on the table, was a gold cross, much like the Christian cross, but with a red coral rose in its center, while to the cross was attached a gold chain, the ends of which were within the casket. A golden cord also extended from the casket and to this was attached an odd-looking symbol in the form of a bug of some kind. The casket itself was brown in color with green-tinted brass corners and bands. The lock, lying beside the box, was very old and antiquated, while the thickness of the wood and the general design of the box suggested that it contained valuables from another land—a distant land.

The cross suggested that the box and its contents pertained to some religious matters.

I had never known Berkley to be deeply interested in religious subjects or to be active in matters of the church; and there was an ancient air about the casket and its Egyptian seal, which suggested relics from some old Temple. The name on the box, AMORC, indicated nothing to me, and I could no longer refrain from reference to the casket and the story it might tell.

"That is a strange-looking box you have there, Berkley. Has it some story worth hearing?"

"Not especially. It's not very old, not very valuable, and—not very interesting," he replied in a manner which was aggravatingly evasive.

"But the cross," I began; "is it not the cross of some old monkish order or a religious sect? That rose on the cross seems rather symbolical; in fact, I have seen references to the Cross with a Rose in old writings."

"Yes, it is an old symbol, but it has nothing to do with a monkish order or a religious sect in the sense you mean. The box has been in my possession for many years,

and tonight I was looking over its contents. Just curiosity — and a little retrospection — personal reminiscences."

His last words were meant to discourage any further questioning. But I could not conceive of Berkley having any serious secrets or mysteries in his life, and so I did question further.

"Has the Egyptian seal on the document any connection with the symbolical cross?"

"Yes—that is, the cross as you see it there, is a result of Egyptian mysticism." Berkley walked over to my side and seated himself in a large chair with the resignation of one who has said the last word, performed the last act, and now desires quiet and peace. His attitude was new—or strange—to me. It was quite evident that he believed the casket and its contents held no interest for me. Because he was laboring under the wrong impression, I determined to speak further, even at the risk of displeasing him.

"See here, Berkley," I began with an air of insistence. "That little casket with its story interested me the moment I saw it. All that you have said has only added to my cur-

iosity, and your reference to EGYPTIAN MYSTICISM has touched a very responsive chord in me. You have known me many years and you have never heard me make any reference to things mystical; I have never permitted my personal beliefs and interests to reveal themselves in my business affairs. But for years I have been a deep and serious reader, a student of mysticism, in its purer and more esoteric sense. I know that in Egypt there were many strange sects whose teachings were uncommon and whose learning was profound. Your secrecy is excellent and makes more worthy whatever story that casket contains. Why not unburden your heart to me and let me dream over the mysticism you hold so sacred?"

"But there is no story that I can tell you," he insisted, with just a little too much accent on the personal pronoun.

"The papers in that box pertain to certain offices of certain men who are concerned with a private movement of learning. They are private and I could not show them to you if I so desired. The Cross—the Rosy Cross—is the symbol of this movement, and

the other object is an old Egyptian seal of one of the early mystics of this class. This explains the contents of the box fairly well."

Explains! Was Berkley just trying to test me? Each sentence contained the essence of a dozen questions left unanswered. My interest was beyond control now. I am not given to deep interest in mysteries, and psychological problems are not a hobby with me. But I have met men and women in many walks of life who have manifested a very unusual knowledge of many of nature's fundamental laws and who seem to be above or beyond the influences of the superstitions of the day. They radiate a personality which impresses one with the certainty of their knowledge and the force of the power which that knowledge gives. They are happy, contented, successful in all affairs, enjoy pleasures beyond my conception and in many other ways classify themselves—unconsciously—as profound masters of some philosophy not generally known. These I had always considered as *mystics*, for no other term applied so well. They lived no differently than I, so far as worldly signs would show,

yet there was that strange difference noticeable to one who is inwardly aware of the possibility of secret development, *mentally*, *physically*, and *spiritually*.

"Was not the movement once known as the Rosicrucian Brotherhood?" I began again. "I believe I have read somewhere, of the Brothers of the Rosy Cross, a secret sect of some kind, possessing unusual knowledge in the middle ages."

"I am surprised to find you acquainted with that name. It is not unusual to find many who have read of the old Brotherhood, but you—I never suspected you of any interest in such matters." Berkley leaned back in his chair and assumed a more lenient attitude. It indicated that he was more willing to answer questions.

"Was the knowledge of these Rosicrucians as profound as I have read?" I inquired with the hope of opening that subject in its deepest parts.

"That depends upon what you have read, of course. But I may say that these old Rosicrucians were learned men, not simply mystics. The *Brotherhood* consisted of men and women of all walks of life who had

been illuminated—that is, uncommonly informed or inspired. Philosophers, chemists, scientists, writers, musicians, physicians, and humble workers were united in one secret humanitarian movement for the purpose of mutual study and advancement in the peculiar knowledge which they possessed collectively and individually. The more profound truths of nature were carefully guarded by the deeply informed, for reasons which must be obvious; yet within this body of men and women all knowledge was classified and systematically given to those who were anxious to know."

"Did they possess facts which were unknown outside of their brotherhood?"

"Naturally. There were no biases within the Brotherhood and absolutely no incentives for the promulgation of unfounded doctrines or false teachings. The *truth* and only the *truth* was desired by each, and in the attainment of truth every error, every superstition, every *belief*, was eliminated by test and demonstration. The result gave *facts* and *laws*, and these in turn revealed unobserved laws and hidden facts. Furthermore, there are many ways, my friend, of

so attuning one's self under proper conditions and in the right environment, that through inspiration or intuition, there comes an influx of cosmic knowledge at times, beyond the conception of the uninitiated."

"The uninitiated? This Brotherhood consists of the *initiated*, then?"

"Certainly, and only the initiated ever knew of the existence of the Brotherhood or could enjoy its privileges and its knowledge. That seems logical, does it not? Have I not said this was a Brotherhood? Its reason for secrecy was in the very fact that it desired only those who would come to it free from worldly ambitions and with the sole desire of KNOWING and through knowing give unto others that which would profit them most. To avoid the casual inquirer and prevent the idly curious from demanding admission, the Order has held itself secret and thoroughly autocratic."

"'Has held itself!' Do you mean to say that the brotherhood is still in existence? I knew it once existed in many lands and included many prominent personages. This I gathered from the numerous books on phi-

losophy, history of religions, early writings of scientists, and the encyclopedia. But, I believed the Order or Brotherhood passed out of existence hundreds of years ago."

"Passed out of *public* existence, you should say. In the middle ages secret societies attracted considerably more attention than they do today, despite their efforts to remain secret. When, gradually, the worldly interest in secret societies became less and the societies succeeded in hiding themselves, the public thought them extinct—an idea which nearly all these societies fostered in the minds of the public."

"Then the Brotherhood still conducts Initiations?" I repeated.

"Ah, that I may not answer. The very purpose for which the Brotherhood, as a secret Order, was designed would be defeated if it were possible for the casual seeker to find Initiation."

"Then do you mean to say that in some way the more than casual inquirer may learn of the Brotherhood today?"

"That," he answered slowly, "is a question I cannot answer because I do not know

what you may mean by 'more than casual inquirer.' The real Rosicrucian Order must be sought; the seeker must be sincere in his or her desire, and the desire itself must be free from the taint of simple curiosity. There must be determination, reason and unselfishness back of the incentive to know. But, really, I do not see why you ask me these questions. I cannot tell you some things, other things I may not tell you."

"I ask you these questions," I replied, with care to make myself understood to his inner mind, "because your very reticence leads me to believe that you can guide me in search for light. I use the word 'light,' now in its *symbolical sense*, for it is *light* that I seek with all sincerity. I do not know—nor shall I try to learn—whether you are associated with the wonderful Brotherhood of learned men or women. I note from your remarks that women, too, have the privileges of that Brotherhood and by this fact I identify it at once with descriptions I have read of the truly ancient and well-reputed Brotherhood of the Rose and Cross. But I also believed that it was a religious sect as well as a learned Order."

"In that you were mistaken, unless, indeed, you use the word *religious* in a very broad sense. As I understand the work of this ancient Order it has been *free* from sectarianism. Men and women of all religious beliefs have been active workers in the Order, but it did require a firm belief in A GOD on the part of every candidate for admission. Its teachings established beyond all doubt the existence of a God and ultimately made God a very close and understandable *entity*, not a particular *being*. Therefore, these mystics came to have a religious tendency in their worship or study of nature and nature's laws which attuned them with *mighty cosmic forces and spiritual inspirations*. But this developed in the individual, not through any preachments or doctrines of the Order, but through a gradual and conscious realization of God as revealed in the laws they learned and the forces they came to master and control."

"You make me more anxious than ever to try to unite with such a grand and noble body of students and workers. Did the Brotherhood really have its origin in Egypt?"

I asked in the hope of learning of its headquarters.

"Yes, in a sense. That little 'Bug' to which you referred, attached to the cord in the Casket, is the *cartouch* of the ruler of Egypt known as Thothmes, the *Heretic King*. He was one of the traditional founders of the strange secret and learned body which attempted to classify all knowledge and so preserve it that future generations might add to and benefit by it. This was the origin of the Egyptian temple groups, out of which grew the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, or Order Rosae Crucis. The cartouch, there, is very rare, and the seal engraved upon it *has been used* to seal many very important documents of the Order, even in more modern times."

"How does it come to be in your possession?" I began, then added, "But if that is an unfair question, tell me if the Order continues to meet as in the days of old."

"I will not answer the first part of your question, but I can answer your last question, although it does seem that I have said all that should be said at this time.

"Evidently you have read how, in the days of old, this body of men and women

met in Temples to study and listen to the discourses of the philosophers and wise men. In the middle ages the Brotherhood was well organized so far as physical organization was concerned, and it spread to nearly all civilized lands. At one time the Brotherhood numbered millions of devout students and workers. It was divided into groups which existed under various names, the better to hide, called *Lodges* in our modern language. The candidates were *initiated* after proper examination and preparation. There were various *degrees* to the advancement in the studies, depending upon individual development and mastership. The ceremonies of the various degrees and the rituals of all the convocations were the most solemn and most inspiring of all sacred services. The groups met in grottos and garrets—whenever secrecy and protection against intrusion was assured. The very high ideals and strict moral laws of the Brotherhood protected it against slander, and even its open enemies have never uttered one word against its moral practices or principles.

"The members knew each other by certain signs or words, and were bound by certain

obligations which neither you nor I could or would hesitate to have binding upon us—nor upon our wives or daughters."

"And have these convocations and assemblies of groups or *Lodges* ended?" I asked, hoping that the same question in another form would bring the answer I sought.

"The Brotherhood was organized for all time, to quote the words of the founders," he replied, with an evident attempt to veil the true meaning of his words. "If the Brotherhood or Order survived the attacks of the middle ages, as you have read, do you think that anything could bring about its decline or fall?"

It was my turn to answer a question; but I did not appear to recognize the duty and asked still another question of Berkley.

"You have spoken of the enemies of the Brotherhood. Why should so noble and unselfish a movement have enemies?" My question brought to my mind an immediate answer, but I preferred to hear what he would say.

"It suffered," he drawled out slowly, as though displeased with so unnecessary a question, "not in spite of its good work and

good reputation, but *because* of it. I doubt whether today the Brotherhood would suffer in this way, though there are many always ready to attack that which is truly altruistic and good. But in days gone by, superstitions and false doctrines had too much at stake to permit themselves to be destroyed without a concentrated war against the *light* shining too brightly. But all this has been well recorded in even the casual references to the Order in the various encyclopedias. These records are untrue in many respects, for they have fallen into the error of stating that the Order ceased to exist hundreds of years ago—which is not the truth. But the brief history of the Order as it existed, eliminating the guess at its origin—is fairly true. Let me urge you to read those records some time. Have I not said enough, now, about the Order R. C.?"

Berkley had said quite enough in the last few words. In my ears remained the sound of the words: "the error of stating that the Order ceased to exist hundreds of years ago, which is not the truth." He had answered my question—partly. It was evident, however, that Berkley wished to end the dis-

course. I had several questions to be answered, but resolved them into just one.

"May I ask, as a final question: How can I—or what shall I do, to get into touch with someone who will place a humble seeker, sincere and determined, in communication with the Order, if it now exists?"

"That I may not answer," began Berkley, and I felt that he meant to keep me utterly in the dark. "But you may inquire of someone when that someone who may know makes himself known to you. I cannot tell you who that may be, for I do not *know*, nor do you know. At any hour of the day you may be face to face with some man or woman who is an officer or member of the Order you seek. As in the days of old, you may meet hundreds in the course of a year who are within the secret body, yet they say nothing or do nothing to reveal the fact until they are sure that he who seeks is sincere. Mind you, I say that this is as it was in the days of old. Where such groups could meet today in this country, I cannot say. I have met those who had in their homes—in their private studies or personal libraries—certain symbols or trinkets which

proclaimed that they or their forefathers had been members of this old Order. I have met physicians, the most eminent in America, who have graduated or studied abroad and who also entered the Order in France or Germany and there perfected themselves in those laws which are taught in no university or college, but which you or I or our wives, daughters, or sons might easily master by devoting four or five nights a month to study in the lessons of the Order. But these men, like others in many professions and trades, do not reveal their connection with the Order unless there is a very good reason — devoid of personal aggrandizement — for doing so. Therefore, you may have trouble in finding one who will tell you where you may go to become acquainted with those facts which you seek.

"My advice is this: Put your desires on paper; commit yourself and express your wishes, what you would like to know and *why* you want to know. Write a letter in such a fashion and mail it to the first person whose name you may have given you as being that of one who may know of the Order. Then you may receive further information.

The information you desire would have to be communicated to you in black and white, and surely you would not ask anyone to put into writing the secrets which they have unless you are willing to put into writing your desires—your questions. Furthermore. you would not ask for the name and address of an officer of such an austere, secret, and exclusive body unless you were willing to give your name and your address that your identity, too, may be made known. Your inquiry will not obligate you to do more than consider the replies you receive as confidential. That is reasonable, and fair, is it not? Come, my old friend, the greatest good and the most wonderful knowledge and power in the world is not easily and quickly imparted. None so received it and none will so impart it. This is all I may say to you now. Question me again some other time—after you have contacted the aura of those who may know what you wish to know."

Berkley arose from his chair and walked over to the little brown casket. Slowly and almost reverently he lifted the lid and carefully replaced the document with the long

seal which partly protruded from the box, then the Cross with the Rose, and the Egyptian cartouch. He locked the casket and deposited the key in a little drawer of his writing desk. The casket he placed in the safe in the corner of his library.

"There are some things in this world, old man," he said with a slight tremor in his voice, "which are dearer than life itself to a man or woman. Life on this earth is just one big, long opportunity. When opportunities are met and utilized for good, the remembrances of the opportunities and the means which revealed the opportunities become sacredly dear to one, while life itself is only the time and the place for the doing; and both life and its opportunities come again and again. The one is made sweeter by the other."

I left him standing just where I saw him when I entered that evening. There was a joy in his heart and a seriousness in his voice which vibrated a keen appreciation of the fullness of life on this earth. I knew then why Berkley was such a tremendous power in business and social affairs and why everyone who knew him felt that he was

truly a master—a master of self and self's great forces in and about him. His prosperity, freedom from material worries, power to attract all goodness and the wealth of the Cosmic to his immediate needs, made him a Master of his fate.

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Today, the activities of the Rosicrucians are still covered by a veil of secrecy in many countries, and the Neophyte's search for the Order must be pursued through discreet inquiries which often bring him only such vague directions as Berkley gave to his friend. However, in the Americas the situation has changed. The Order is known and respected; its activities described in news columns and editorials, its history and present headquarters mentioned in new editions of most leading encyclopedias and unabridged dictionaries; its magazine (the "Rosicrucian Digest") and some of its books available in nearly all large public libraries. Most important of all—it extends a fraternal welcome to all earnest seekers for Light.

Compliments of

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