

THE LONDON STANDARD

circa JULY 1942

Mystic Cards

I spent a mystic hour at the Berkeley Galleries among the Tarot playing cards—78 of them to the pack—painted in enlarged form by Lady Harris, wife of Sir Percy Harris, M.P., the Liberal Whip.

Tarocchi is a game for three or four players, rather of the whist family. The cards, like chess men, are of obscure Oriental creation, probably before Christ in origin. I glanced at the rules, which would make a mere bridge player blench. Nowadays the game is played in Austria and other parts of central and southern Europe.

Five Years Research

Lady Harris confessed to me that she is not in the least interested in Tarocchi. She has never played it. But she is so interested in their designs that she has spent the last five years in library research and in painting them.

There are 22 trumps in the pack and four suits of 14 cards each, named swords, cups, wands and discs. "The Universe"—trump card reproduced in the catalogue—is an example of the complexity of them all. In the centre is a maiden dancing with a great twisting serpent. She holds the moon in her hand and the sun is merged in the eye of God. The stars of the Zodiac, and the Cherubim or Winds of Heaven—the bull, lion, eagle and man—are also in the design.

Initiation

The Tarot is said to be a record of the spiritual journey of man and of the rituals "by which those capable of understanding the signposts are admitted to initiation." Lady Harris believes that their study will stimulate reflection and meditation. So she hopes to raise money by the exhibition to have them printed for use among soldiers and civilians alike.

The process is not cheap. The cost of making the 78 blocks and of reproducing the cards in colour will be not less than £1500. Private subscribers will get the packs at cost price—

about £3 each. It is evident that if the mystics of the Tarot are to be studied by soldiers it will have to be done by private benefactions; 2s. 6d. a day will not run to it.