

# I *The Rebirth of Magic*

A French Countess tells in her memoirs<sup>1</sup> of a bizarre character who arrived in Paris in the 1720s and soon had the court and the salons buzzing with stories of his remarkable deeds. He was reported to be fluent in every European language, as well as Chinese, Arabic and Sanskrit. He was a skilful pianist and also painted expertly in oils, achieving startling effects of colour, whose secret he refused to divulge. His appearance was striking, for he dressed very plainly, except for a large number of diamonds which he wore on his fingers, shoe-buckles, snuff-boxes and watches.

His origin was mysterious, but the commonest theory was that he was the youngest son of a dispossessed Transylvanian prince. He went by a number of names, among them the Marquis de Montferrat, Comte Bellamarre, Chevalier Schoening, Comte Soltikoff, Graf Tzarogy. But the name by which he was most widely known was Comte de Saint-Germain.

One incident related in the Countess's memoirs is enough to give an idea of the legend surrounding his person. At a gathering in Paris Saint-Germain was introduced to the Countess von Georgy, who, fifty years earlier, had been to Venice where her husband had been posted as ambassador. Recognising the name of Saint-Germain, she asked if by any chance his father had been in Venice at that time. Saint-Germain's reply was surprising: no, but he himself had been in Venice fifty years ago and, what was more, had paid court to the Countess.

"Forgive me," said the Countess, but that is impossible; the Comte Saint-Germain I knew in those days was at least forty-five years old, and you, at the outside, are that at present."

"Madame," replied the Count, smiling, "I am very old."

"But then you must be nearly a hundred years old."

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“That is not impossible,” the Count replied, and recounted some details which convinced the Countess, who exclaimed:

“I am already convinced. You are a most extraordinary man, a devil.”

“For pity’s sake!” exclaimed Saint-Germain in a thundering voice. “No such names!”

‘He appeared to be seized with a cramp-like trembling in every limb, and left the room immediately.’

Similar stories about the strange Count crop up all over Europe. Evidently he was in England during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, and was arrested and held for a time as a spy. Horace Walpole confirms this in a letter to Sir Horace Mann, dated 9th December 1745:

‘The other day they seized an odd man who goes by the name of Count Saint-Germain. He has been here these two years, and will not tell who he is or whence, but professes that he does not go by his right name. He sings and plays on the violin wonderfully, is mad and not very sensible.’

The Comte de Saint-Germain represents a recognisable type of semi-legendary figure who appears frequently in history. He has his counterpart in Appollonius of Tyana, the Greek sage, healer and wonder-worker of the first century A.D.; and in Christian Rosencreutz, the shadowy medieval figure, supposedly the founder of the Rosicrucian movement. Like both of these men, and like many another miraculous figure, Saint-Germain was credited with a journey to the East and a series of initiations into oriental mysteries. For example, at the court of the Shah of Persia he is supposed to have gathered his prodigious knowledge of precious stones, and in India his knowledge of alchemy.

It is impossible to say how many of the stories about Saint-Germain are true, but the very existence of the legend at this period of history is significant. It may seem surprising that the rational eighteenth century, and particularly the ultra-rational France, should encourage such a legend. But the fact is that the human mind abhors the absence of irrational belief, just as nature abhors a vacuum. Thus, the intellectuals who had initiated the revolt against the Christian Church were, by the middle of the eighteenth century, already becoming tired of their own scepticism and were looking around for a new faith to replace the one they had abandoned.

One manifestation of this search was the growth of freemasonry; and it is significant that Saint-Germain is credited with having been a leading light in the masonic movement. According to one account, for example, he was one of the French representatives at the great masonic convention that took place in Paris in 1785. He is also said to have initiated the Italian occultist Cagliostro, using a Templar ritual.

Although claiming to be of the greatest antiquity, the freemasonic movement in its present form dates from 1717 when the Grand Lodge of London was established. From England it spread quickly throughout Europe and also reached North America. The first French lodge, that of Brotherhood and Friendship, is believed to have been started at Dunkirk in 1721. But it was not until over twenty years later that a lodge officially recognised by the English Grand Lodge was set up in Paris. This probably took place in about 1743. In 1756 The Grand Lodge of France was founded. This later split up into factions, but was reassembled in 1771 by the Grand Duke of Luxembourg. A year later it was reconstituted as the Grand Orient of France.

By the time the Revolution broke out in 1789 there were between six and seven hundred lodges in France, totalling about 30,000 members.<sup>2</sup> One of the leaders of the movement was the Duke of Chartres, the future Philippe Egalité, who sided with the revolutionaries, but was eventually executed in 1793. In 1773 he was made Grand Master, and his sister, the Duchesse of Bourbon, was Grand Mistress of the women's lodges. In the provincial cities, and especially in Lyons, freemasonry had a strong following.

Because of the close-knit, federal structure of the masonic movement it had the appearance of a counter-Church, and to begin with was opposed by the authorities, though it fairly rapidly came to be tolerated. A bull against freemasonry was issued in 1738 by Pope Clement XII, but it was not recorded by the French parliament and had little effect. In 1789 twenty-six lodges were presided over by priests, and there were even lodges within certain religious houses.<sup>3</sup> It was not until the nineteenth century that freemasonry was to come into serious conflict with the Church.

The main appeal of freemasonry lay in the fact that it claimed to be the sole recipient and guardian of an ancient and powerful

secret handed down from antiquity. The precise nature and provenance of this secret was naturally a matter of some dispute, and when the movement began to split into factions it was inevitable that each new order that appeared should lay claim to being the only 'true' masonry.

The idea of 'ancient wisdom' was not new. It had been propagated during the Renaissance by the scholars who revived the Hermetic teachings and espoused the Jewish Cabala. What was new about masonry was the fact that it constituted a widespread esoteric movement which, in spite of its warring factions, had a strong element of cohesion and central direction.

Most of the leading occultists of the eighteenth century were members of masonic or quasi-masonic fraternities. Those who were not masons were inevitably influenced indirectly by the movement. It was out of the masonic barrel, therefore, that there came most of the odd fish of eighteenth-century occultism.

Of these, one of the oddest was Martines de Pasqually, founder and self-appointed Grand Sovereign of a masonic rite called the Order of the Elect Cohens, the name being derived from the Hebrew word for priest.

Pasqually's origins, like those of Saint-Germain, are veiled in mystery. Some had it that he was a Spanish Jew. It is certain, however, that he was a Catholic, as there is a record of the baptism of his son. There is evidence that he was born in the parish of Notre-Dame de Grenoble, and that his father was a schoolmaster of Latin in the town. Pasqually's follower, J.-B. Willermoz, denies that he had any Jewish blood.

Of his childhood and youth almost nothing is known, but once again there is the well-worn legend of a journey to the Orient, and the acquisition of hidden wisdom in Egypt, Arabia, Palestine and China. The first solid fact known about him is that in 1754 at Montpellier he founded a society called the Scottish Judges—presumably the title referred to the Scottish rite of freemasonry. This society failed to get off the ground, and about six years later at Bordeaux he established his Order of the Elect Cohens, which soon gathered a substantial following.

The order practised a form of ceremonial magic, which Pasqually had derived partly from the Catholic mass and partly from Renaissance occult writers such as Cornelius Agrippa. Pasqually believed that he was in communication with un-earthly beings, who endowed him with special powers. He

claimed, for example, that he had been able to cure his wife of an illness by magical means.

One of his disciples was the Abbé Fournier, a cleric of Lyons, who told of his experiences with Pasqually in a book with the rather ponderous title *Ce que nous avons été, ce que nous sommes, et ce que nous deviendrons*. His first meeting with the master took place at a time when he was passing through an agony of religious doubt during which 'God accorded me the grace to meet a man who said to me in a friendly way: "You ought to come and see us, we are good men; you will open a book, you will glance at the first page, then at the middle of the book, and then at the end, reading only a few words, and you will know all that it contains;"' The strange man then pointed to the passers-by in the street. "Those people," he said "do not know why they are walking, but you . . ." he pointed to the Abbé, "you will know why you are walking." Fournier was understandably taken aback by this curious man and at first imagined him to be a sorcerer, if not the devil himself. But evidently the lure of Pasqually's extravagant promises got the better of him, and he sought admission to the order. What Fournier's first reactions to the ceremonies were we do not know, but we do know, from letters exchanged between Pasqually and his closest disciples, roughly what form these ceremonies took.

Before the ritual the participants would have fasted for eleven hours. The fast was a well-established custom in magical rituals and, according to Pasqually, helped to free the soul and enable it to communicate with the 'centre of truth'.

The time at which the ceremony took place was usually regulated by celestial considerations, for Pasqually believed in an idiosyncratic type of astrology. 'The bodies of the universe,' he declared, 'are all vital organs of eternal life.'<sup>4</sup> Particularly influential were the moon, because of its proximity, and the sun, because life on earth was dependent on its light. Pasqually therefore chose the equinoxes for his most important rituals, and also regarded the crescent moon as propitious. These conditions encouraged the good spirits whose support was necessary for magical operations. One must, at all costs, avoid the demonic influences and evil intelligences that populate the astral domaine.

René le Forestier, in his *La Franc-maçonnerie occultiste au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et l'ordre des Elus Coëns*, has pieced together a fascinating picture of the rituals practised by Pasqually's sect.

The simplest of these was the 'daily invocation' for which the adept had to trace a circle on the floor, at the centre of which he placed a candle and wrote the letter W. He then stood in the circle, holding a light to read his invocation which began: 'O Kadoz, O Kadoz, who will enable me to become as I was originally when a spark of divine creation? Who will enable me to return in virtue and eternal spiritual power . . . ?'

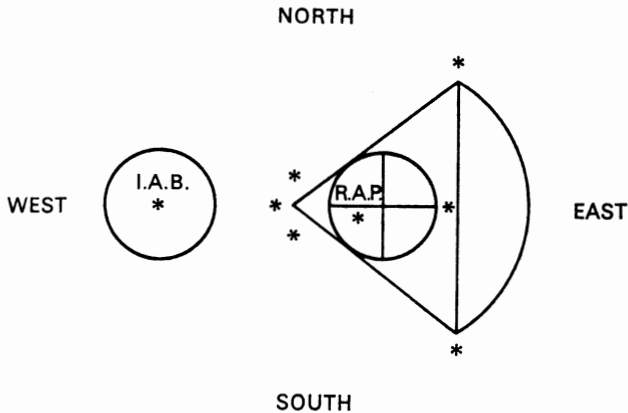
The more important rituals, however, took the form of a series of invocations which were performed over three consecutive days which had to fall between the new moon and the end of the first quarter. The details of the ritual, such as the tracing on the floor within which the adept operated, changed periodically as Pasqually was constantly revising the procedures and introducing new ones. A fairly constant feature, however, was the method used to produce a pungent aroma during the ceremony. The adept carried a small earthenware dish containing hot coals on which he periodically scattered a mixture containing the following ingredients: saffron, incense, sulphur, white and black poppy seeds, cloves, white cinnamon, mastic, sandarac, nutmeg and spore of agaric.<sup>5</sup>

The costume worn by the operator was probably also constant. Jacket, breeches and stockings were black. Over these he wore a long white robe with red borders, and over this were hung a blue ribbon, a black ribbon, a red sash and a green sash.<sup>6</sup>

As an example of the procedure carried out by the adept over three days, the following is an outline of the method proscribed by Pasqually in 1768. Every morning the adept began his day by reading the office of the Holy Spirit and when evening came he entered the privacy of his room at about ten o'clock. There he read some psalms and litanies from a missal and, having done this, was ready to draw the ceremonial tracing on the floor with a chalk. At the eastern side of the room he traced an approximate quarter segment with the point facing west, and then drew a line across the segment forming an isosceles triangle with the two radii. In the triangle he drew a small circle divided by a cross. Then he drew at the western side of the room a larger circle known as the 'circle of retreat' which was separated by two feet from the point of the segment. In this circle he drew the capital letters IAB and along the western branch of the cross in the small circle he put the letters RAP. This completed the tracing (see diagram opposite).

The operator then placed eight candles in the tracing: three at the point of the triangle, one beside the letters RAP, two at each end of the arc of the segment, one at the centre of the base of the triangle and one at the centre of the circle of retreat. He also wrote certain other mystical names.

The adept was then ready for the operation which had to begin at midnight precisely. When the twelve strokes began to sound he took off his shoes, removed the candle from the circle of retreat, lit it and placed it outside the circle on his right. He then lay down in the circle, face downwards, his forehead resting on his two fists. Having remained for six minutes in this position, he stood up and lit the candles in the segment. These he rearranged so that the one beside the letters RAP and the one at the base of the triangle were placed outside and opposite the centre of the arc. Then he knelt down in the segment, right knee on the ground and hands flat on the floor so that the tips of the forefingers came together at a right angle. Remaining in this position he repeated each of the names inscribed in the tracing, inserting them into the following formula which he recited three times for each name: *'In quali die . . . invocavero te, velociter exaudi me.'*<sup>7</sup> He then asked God to accord him the grace which he desired of 'a sincere heart, truly contrite and humble'.<sup>8</sup>



Floor tracing used in one of the rituals practised by Martines de Pasqually's Order of the Elect Cohens (the asterisks mark the points where candles were placed)

Taking the dish containing the glowing coals, he threw on to it a large pinch of the aromatic mixture and walked around the segment. Finally he sat down with the dish in the circle of retreat and settled down to a period of meditation.

On the first night the adept was only supposed to leave the circle between 1.30 and 2.00 in the morning. When he was finished he rubbed out all the figures traced on the floor, repeating as he did so invocations for the signs representing the good spirits and banishing formulae for those representing the bad. When all traces had been effaced he retired to bed.

The banishing of evil spirits and the invocation of good ones was an important part of Pasqually's rituals. Another ceremony, called the 'Work of the Equinox', included the following address to the evil demons:

'I conjure you, Satan, Beelzebub, Baran, Leviathan: all of you formidable beings, beings of iniquity, confusion and abomination, hearken and tremble at my voice and commandment; all of you great and powerful demons of the four universal regions and all of you demoniacal legions, subtle spirits of confusion, horror and persecution, hear my voice and tremble when it sounds among you and during your cursed operations; I command you by the one who has pronounced eternal death on all of you.' There then followed an address to each of the four main demons already mentioned beginning with Satan. 'On you, Satan, I impose excommunication, I tie and restrict you to your formidable region in the name of the Most High, God, the Eternal Avenger and Rewarder . . .' Then came an invocation of the good spirits. All this was carried out within a tracing similar to the one used for the ceremony already described.<sup>9</sup>

None of these rituals, however, was done primarily for the purpose of calling up particular spirits. The main aim was of a higher order, namely communication with what Pasqually called the 'Active and Intelligent Cause'. 'By this fact,' says A. E. Waite, 'the school of Martines de Pasqually is placed wholly outside the narrow limits and sordid motives of ceremonial magic.'<sup>10</sup>

Competence in these ceremonies was not the only thing required of the Elect Cohen. He was also required to follow certain rules of behaviour. For example, he was forbidden ever to consume the blood, fat or kidneys of any animal or to eat



the flesh of domestic pigeons. He was not allowed, except with moderation, to indulge the senses, and had to eschew fornication.

The choice of the name 'Elect Cohens' reveals the Jewish inspiration of much of Pasqually's doctrine. Pasqually believed that the Jewish tradition had been perverted by its orthodox practitioners, but that certain 'true Jews' had preserved it in its purity. Clearly he believed that his order was in some sense helping to restore the true Judaism, by which he may have meant the Cabala as his theory of spirits corresponds closely to cabalistic doctrine. In the Cabala the number ten is given great significance—there are, for example, ten sephiroth, or spheres, on the Tree of Life. Pasqually believed in ten classes of spirit and held that ten was the divine number *par excellence*.

Pasqually continued to lead his group until the year 1772 when he sailed for Santo Domingo in the Caribbean, on a mission connected with some property he had there, leaving the Elect Cohens in the hands of his chief disciples, Bacon and Willermoz. He never returned and died at Port-au-Prince in 1774. His order died soon afterwards. Bacon joined another masonic order, the Grand Orient. Willermoz, after continuing the Elect Cohens for a time at Lyons, later went over to the Rite of Strict Observance, founded in 1754 by the German, Baron Hund.

While Pasqually had been operating at Bordeaux one of his followers had been a young army officer stationed in the town who devoted his ample leisure to the study of religion and philosophy. His name was Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, later to become famous for his writings under the name of 'Le Philosophe Inconnu'.

Saint-Martin recognised in Pasqually the master he was looking for, and in due course he was initiated into the Elect Cohens, the initiation taking place between 3rd August and 2nd October 1768. In 1771 he abandoned the military profession to devote himself entirely to contemplation and study.

At the time of Pasqually's death, Saint-Martin was living in Paris and writing his first treatise, *Of Errors and Truth*, in which he set out to teach the hidden principles behind all knowledge. It was the beginning of a long campaign of preaching his own highly individual brand of mysticism all over Europe. The greatest influence on his ideas was Jacob Boehme, the seventeenth-century German mystic whom he regarded as 'the greatest

light that has appeared on earth since One who is the light itself'.<sup>11</sup> Saint-Martin believed in an ideal society based on a 'natural and spiritual theocracy' governed by men who would be chosen by God and who would regard themselves as 'divine commissioners' to guide the people. He died in 1803, having remained a strict Catholic all his life, in spite of the fact that his first treatise was placed on the Index. He left behind him a large volume of writing which continued to influence mystics and occultists right through the nineteenth century.

While Saint-Martin was writing *Of Errors and Truth*, and Bacon and Willermoz were going their separate ways, the faithful Abbé Fournier was busy trying to contact his departed master, Pasqually. He tried for a long time in vain, then one day success came. He described the event in *Ce que nous avons été*:

'At length, on a certain day, towards ten o'clock in the evening, I, being prostrated in my chamber, calling on God to assist me, heard suddenly the voice of M. de Pasqually, my director, who had died in the body more than two years previously. I heard him speaking distinctly outside my chamber, the door being closed, and the windows in like manner, the shutters also being secured. I turned in the direction of the voice, being that of the long garden belonging to the house, and thereupon I beheld M. de Pasqually with my eyes, who began speaking, and with him were my father and my mother, both also dead in the body. God knows the terrible night which I passed!'

Fournier relates that these visions of his parents and Pasqually continued for many years.

Another interesting group that flourished at this period was Antoine-Joseph Pernety's *Illuminés d'Avignon*. Pernety was a colourful character whose life is rather better documented than Pasqually's. He was born on 13th February 1716 at Roanne-en-Forez into a rather poor lower-middle-class family. He received his first education from his cousin, the Abbé Jacques Perneti of Lyons, and early in life displayed unusual intellectual ability. Like many promising young men from the lower ranks of society he was oriented towards the Church and in 1732 he became a Benedictine, entering the abbey of Saint-Allire de Clermont. Later he was sent to the abbey of Saint-Germain in Paris to collaborate in the writing of a religious book.

At that time alchemy and the hermetic tradition were much in vogue, and in 1742 appeared *L'Histoire de la philosophie her-*

*métique* by the Abbé Langlet-Dufresnoy, which enjoyed great popularity. Pernety came across the book in the library at Saint-Germain and read it avidly. The fascination of alchemical symbolism took hold of him, and he immersed himself in the study of it. He conceived the theory that all ancient myths were hermetic allegories, which he expounded in a book published in 1758 entitled *Les Fables égyptiennes et grecques dévoilées et réduites au même principe avec une explication des hiéroglyphes de la guerre de Troie*. Both this and his later *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique* came to be widely read.

Finding the life of a Benedictine monk too constricting, Pernety abandoned his religious habit and left the cloisters in 1765, though he continued to be referred to as Dom Pernety. He went first to Avignon which had developed into one of the main centres of freemasonry, partly under the influence of the many Jacobite *émigrés* who lived there. The first Avignon lodge was that of Saint-Jean d'Avignon, which was composed entirely of nobles. In 1749 a separate lodge was formed for the bourgeoisie, and later the two were fused as the lodge of Saint-Jean de Jerusalem. Subsequently a schismatic lodge was formed called the *Sectateurs de la Vertu*.

It was natural that shortly after arriving in Avignon, Pernety should become a freemason. In masonry he found ample scope for his hermetic interests, and he was soon propagating a rite of his own devising known as the *rite hermétique* or *rite de Pernety* which was adopted by the *Sectateurs de la Vertu*. The initiation consisted of six degrees:

1. *Vrai Maçon*
2. *Vrai Maçon de la Voie Droite*
3. *Chevalier de la Clef d'Or*
4. *Chevalier de l'Iris*
5. *Chevalier des Argonautes*
6. *Chevalier de la Toison d'Or*.

Pernety's rite was based entirely on alchemy, and initiates to the grade of *vrai maçon* were given an alchemical explanation of the masonic symbols. For example, the three symbols of the flaming star, the moon and the sun, with their corresponding inscriptions, were explained as follows: the word 'Force' inscribed on the flaming star, signified 'black matter' or putrefaction, the first stage in the alchemical process; the word 'Wisdom', inscribed on the moon, signified 'white matter' or

purification, the second stage; the word 'Beauty', written on the sun, symbolised the final stage which produced 'red matter', the source of all good. In the other grades the candidate was taken through rituals based on Pernety's interpretations of ancient mythology. He later added another grade, *Chevalier du Soleil*, whose ritual, he claimed, contained a complete course of hermetism and gnosis.

Avignon at that time was still on papal territory, and the anti-masonic bull issued by Pope Clement XII in 1738 was enforceable there. Masons were therefore in constant danger of persecution. Finding that his situation was becoming perilous, Pernety left Avignon and made his way to Berlin where Frederick the Great, who was a francophile and a lover of philosophy, was extending a warm welcome to *émigré* French intellectuals. Frederick made Pernety a member of the Royal Academy of Berlin and gave him the post of curator of the royal library.

Pernety quickly made contact with occultists in Berlin and in due course became head of a small group of distinguished people who gathered together to discuss hermetic matters and to search for the philosopher's stone. He believed himself to be guided in his researches by an angel called Assadai who was prevented from returning to the higher regions until Pernety had discovered the secret of the Great Work. The group were also in touch with an entity called the Holy Word who informed Pernety that he was destined for the Great Work and that he would become a 'child of Sabaoth'. The entity also told him that a society would be formed as the nucleus for the new people of God, and that he and his friends had been chosen to be the centre of this society. New initiates were to be admitted by a ceremony known as consecration which was to take place on a hill near Berlin and was to continue every morning for nine days. The candidates were required to set up an altar of turf and to burn incense and swear to consecrate themselves to the service of God. Various members of the group went through this ceremony.

Pernety left Berlin in November 1783 and, after further travels, was instructed by the Holy Word to return to Avignon. On his return he became friendly with the Marquis de Vaucroze, who installed Pernety in a little house on his estate at Bédarrides, a few miles from Avignon. This territory was in one of the three fiefs of the archbishopric of Avignon which, although part of

papal territory, were, by a strange anomaly, not under papal jurisdiction. Pernety was therefore able to carry on his activities without fear of persecution. The house, which he called Thabor, was the birthplace of the group that had been predicted in Berlin by the Holy Word. The new fraternity, which was called the *Illuminés d'Avignon*, was soon flourishing with a hundred members, all of whom were freemasons. They included Dr. Bouge, grand master of the lodge of Saint-Jean d'Ecosse à la vertu persecutée, the Marquis de Thomé, who later founded a Swedenborgian rite, and Esprit Calvert, professor of physiology and anatomy at the faculty of medicine of Avignon. Unlike Pernety's earlier rite, the *Illuminés* consisted of only two grades, *novice* and *illuminé moyen*, the leader of the group being known as *mage*. The house was equipped with a temple where the Great Work was pursued. The sort of alchemical activities that went on there can be deduced from a manuscript signed by Dr. Bouge setting out the procedure for making the elixir of the philosophers. This manuscript, which is still extant, is quoted by Joanny Bricaud in his fascinating study of Pernety, *Les Illuminés d'Avignon*. Part of it reads as follows:

'Take ten parts of philosophical mercury, place it in a matrass [glass vessel with a round or oval body and a long neck] or a philosopher's egg, together with one part of gold beaten into leaves; the gold will dissolve on the spot. Seal the vessel hermetically and expose it to the first degree of heat, and in forty days it will take on a black colour, blacker than the black of the blessed Raymond Lully, which is the raven's head that the philosophers talk of. But after this blackness has lasted forty days the matrass begins, little by little, to take on the colour of the cinders which the sages tell us on no account to despise because they are the beginning of our riches, and so, day by day, the substance begins to turn perfectly white, which is why we are told: whiten the mauve; but to do that it is necessary to raise the heat by one degree. After the blackness has lasted forty days the second degree of heat should be continued for about three months, as was the first degree, which makes six months in all for the first two degrees. The substance does not remain only white, but receives more colours of all kinds, and it is for this reason that the philosophers talk of watching the peacock's tail pass, after which begins the application of the third degree of heat. This lasts for about a month and a half, and then the

substance takes on the colour of lemon, from which comes the saying of our masters that we must yellow a peacock by the third degree of heat; finally the fourth and last degree of heat must be given and continued for forty days so as to cause the substance to turn red, making nine months in all for the perfection of this work.'

Pernety's group carried on unmolested until the Revolution when there began a persecution of illuminist sects. Pernety was arrested in 1793. He was later released and went to live in Avignon where he died in 1796, guided to the last by the Holy Word. After his death the *Illuminés d'Avignon* declined, and by 1800 the membership had dwindled to fifteen. Soon after that it presumably died a natural death. One relic of Pernety's influence did, however, remain in freemasonry. The highest grade of his original rite which he had operated before going to Berlin, namely the grade of *Chevalier du Soleil*, was divided into two degrees and made the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth grade of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Pernety's writings also continued to be read long after his death.

Pernety's group was only one of an enormous proliferation of masonic and occult orders which grew up all over France in the latter half of the eighteenth century. There was, for example, the Rite of the Philalèthes, founded by Savalette de Langes, keeper of the royal treasury, in 1775. This combined the doctrines of Pasqually with those of Swedenborg. It was also, like Pernety's rite, tinged with alchemical doctrines. The rite had twelve degrees, of which the ninth was that of the Unknown Philosopher; this did not refer to Saint-Martin, but was the name of a spirit familiar to the celebrants of Pasqually's rituals. It is possible that this was the original inspiration for Saint-Martin's *nom de plume*.

Then there was the so-called Egyptian masonry of the Sicilian Cagliostro, whose strange life has been the subject of more than one biography. He claimed to have received, at the pyramids of Egypt, a full initiation into the 'mysteries of the veritable Grand Orient' and to be able to make gold and silver, renew youth, give physical beauty and evoke the spirits of the dead. He also proclaimed that he had lived for 2000 years. Cagliostro found France an ideal environment for his posturings and enjoyed enormous success in the salons.

Cagliostro's Egyptian rite, having been rejected in England, was received enthusiastically in France, and soon he had installed himself as High Priest of a Temple of Isis in the Rue de la Soudière in Paris. In 1785 he declared, apparently on Egyptian precedent, that women might be admitted to the mysteries of the pyramids, and in due course Madame de Lamballe and other ladies from the upper ranks of French society were admitted at the vernal equinox amid the oriental luxury of the temple of Isis. Cagliostro later moved to Rome, where he was arrested by the Inquisition and died in prison.

A visionary of a rather different kind, who also had an influence on French occultism, was the Swede Emanuel Swedenborg, who poured out his strange doctrines in *Arcana Coelestis*, *The Apocalypse Revealed*, *Four Preliminary Doctrines*, and *The True Christian Religion*. He held that since man is, in essence, a spirit, he is able to communicate with the instructed by spirits and angels, provided that God grants him the necessary receptivity. Swedenborg claimed that he himself enjoyed this privilege. Not only had he conversed with many types of spirit, but had been conducted by them to other planets, of whose inhabitants he gave detailed descriptions. At the same time as Pasqually was recruiting his first adepts, Swedenborg's writings were having a wide influence in France.

Another foreigner who influenced French occultism was the Austrian Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), the pioneer of hypnotism. Mesmer had taken a medical degree at Vienna University, and for his doctorate had written a thesis entitled *de Planetarum Influxu in Corpore Humano* (*Of the Influence of the Planets on the Human Body*), in which he postulated the existence of a subtle fluid pervading all bodies and manifesting itself in the motions of the planets, and in tidal and atmospheric changes. When the ebb and flow of this fluid within the human body was out of harmony with the universal rhythm nervous or mental disorders resulted.

Soon after qualifying Mesmer began to apply this theory to the treatment of his patients, attempting to control the flow within the sick person by applying magnets to the body and by directing the fluid with a wand. He soon achieved some startling cures, the most famous being that of a young girl who had become blind through a nervous disorder. In spite of his fame and success the medical faculty at Vienna University refused to

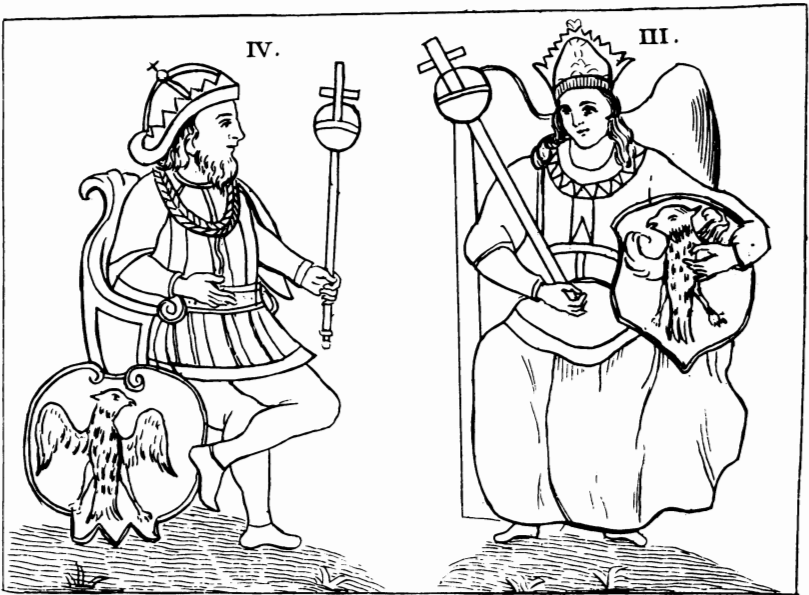
recognise his work, though he was given a warmer welcome in Bavaria and was admitted to the Munich Academy of Sciences.

In 1778 he decided he needed a change of scene and departed for Paris, armed with a letter of recommendation from the Austrian Chancellor Kaunitz to the country's ambassador in Paris, Count Merci-Argentauf. The Count introduced him to high French society and soon he was as famous in Paris as he had been in Vienna. It was not long before his sumptuous house in the Place Vendôme was full of people seeking treatment through what he called 'animal magnetism'.

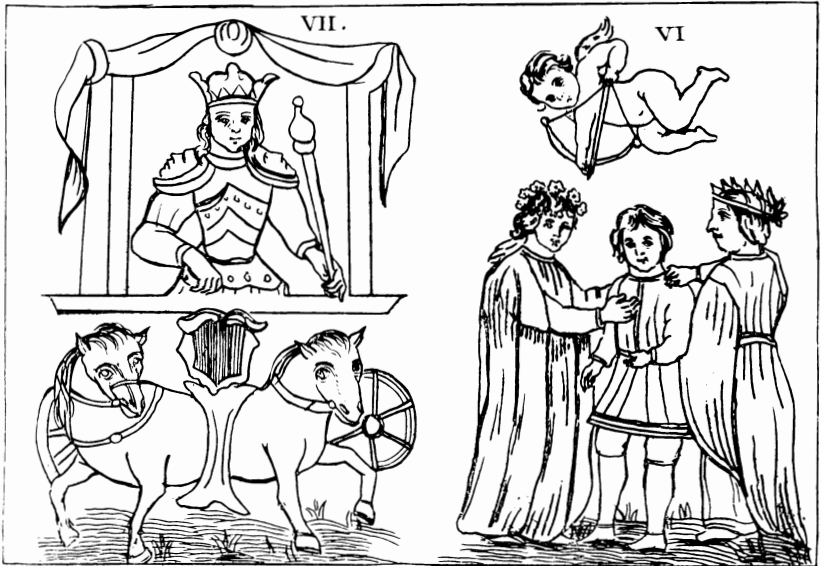
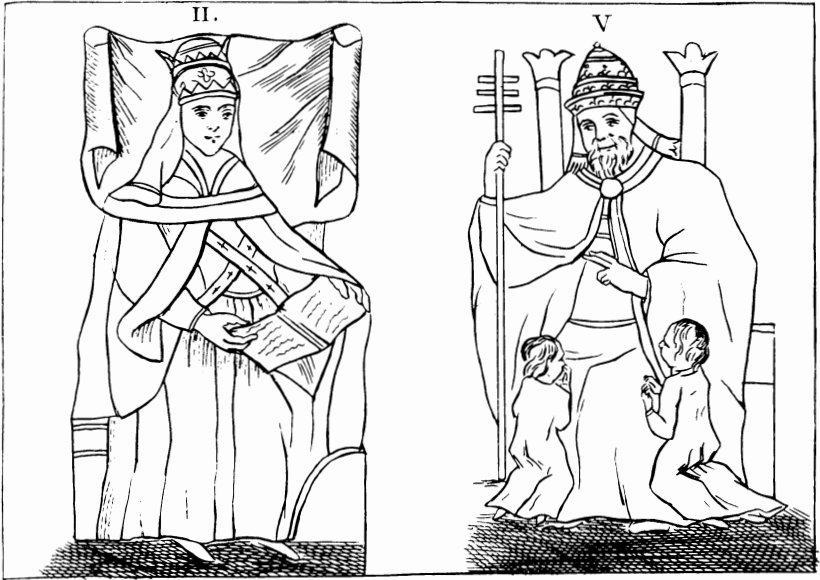
Later he took a house at Creteil, a few miles from Paris, and continued his treatments there. One piece of apparatus was an oak barrel pierced with a number of holes through which protruded movable rods of iron. The patients sat round the barrel in a dimmed room, their hands joined and their knees and feet touching to ensure the circulation of the magnetic fluid. At the same time each patient would touch the afflicted part of his body with one of the iron rods. Appropriate music was provided sometimes by Mesmer himself who was an expert performer on the glass harmonica, a curious instrument consisting basically of a series of glass bowls, varying in size to provide a scale. From time to time Mesmer would walk round the circle, gazing penetratingly at each patient, speaking in a low voice, and waving his wand over their bodies. He wore a robe of lilac silk, trimmed with lace. A feature of his treatment was the inducing of a 'crisis' in the patient, after which the disorder supposedly disappeared.

Through his French disciple, Charles d'Eslon, he was introduced to the chief medical men of France, in the hope that he would gain in Paris the recognition that had eluded him in Vienna. In justification of his theories he wrote a *Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal*. But the Paris medical faculty, like the Vienna one, turned down his theories. A long struggle ensued, during which d'Eslon found himself outlawed because of his support for Mesmer. Finally, mainly through the influence of Marie Antoinette, a Royal Commission was appointed from the French Academy of Sciences consisting of a number of distinguished scientists including Lavoisier, Benjamin Franklin and the infamous Dr. Guillotin. Later a second commission, from the Royal Medical Society, also investigated Mesmer's case. Both judged animal magnetism to be spurious. Soon after-





I Tarot card figures from Vol. 8 of Court de Gébelin's *Monde primitif* (published in 1781): top left, the Juggler; top right, the Fool; bottom left, the Emperor; bottom right, the Empress



2 Court de Gébelin's Tarot (continued): top left, the High Priestess; top right, the High Priest; bottom left, the Chariot; bottom right, the Lovers

wards Mesmer left Paris; after further wanderings he ended up in Switzerland where he continued to propagate his theories until his death.

An extract from his *Mémoire* reads as follows:

'Animal magnetism is a fluid universally diffused; it is the medium of a mutual influence between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and animated bodies; it is everywhere continuous, so as to leave no void; its subtlety admits of no comparison; it is capable of receiving, propagating, communicating all the impressions of motion; it is susceptible of flux and reflux. The animal body experiences the effects of this agent; by insinuating itself into the substance of the nerves it affects them immediately . . . The action and the virtues of animal magnetism may be communicated from one body to another, animate and inanimate . . . It perfects the action of medicines; it excites and directs salutary crises in such a manner that the physician may render himself master of them . . . In animal magnetism, nature presents a universal method of healing and preserving mankind.'

This was indeed stuff to stir the imagination of occultists; and later on we find writers like Eliphas Lévi referring enthusiastically to animal magnetism.

1. Countess de B . . . *Chroniques de l'œil de bœuf*.
2. Adrien Dansette, *Religious History of Modern France*.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Auguste Viatte, *Les Sources occultes du romantisme*, Ch. 2.
5. *Op. cit.*, pp. 75-6.
6. *Op. cit.*, p. 78.
7. 'At whatever time I shall invoke thee, hear me quickly.'
8. *Op. cit.* p. 79.
9. *Op. cit.*, p. 81.
10. A. E. Waite, *The Life of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin*.
11. *Correspondence*. See A. E. Waite, *Life of Saint-Martin*.

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