

THE COMTE DE ST. GERMAIN



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By Isabel Cooper-Oakley

MYSTIC AND PHILOSOPHER

HE was, perhaps, one of the greatest philosophers who ever lived. The friend of humanity, wishing for money only that he might give to the poor, a friend to animals, his heart was concerned only with the happiness of others.--*Mémoires de Mon Temps*, p. 135. S. A. LE LANDGRAVE CHARLES, PRINCE DE HESSE. (Copenhagen, 1861.)

DURING the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by those Masters, of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity. Towards the close of each century you will invariably find that an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality--or call it mysticism if you prefer--has taken place. Some one or more persons have appeared in the world as their agents, and a greater or less amount of occult knowledge or teaching has been given out.--*The Key to Theosophy*, H. P. BLAVATSKY.

THE Comte de St. Germain was certainly the greatest Oriental Adept Europe has seen during the last centuries. *Theosophical Glossary*, H. P. BLAVATSKY.

AMONG the strange mysterious beings, with which the eighteenth century was so richly dowered, no one has commanded more universal comment and attention than the mystic who was known by the name of the Comte de St. Germain. A hero of romance; a charlatan; a swindler and an adventurer; rich and varied were the names that showered freely upon him. Hated by the many, loved and revered by the few, time has not yet lifted the veil which screened his true mission from the vulgar speculators of the period. Then, as now, the occultist was dubbed charlatan by the ignorant; only some men and women here and there realised the power of which he stood possessed. The friend and councillor of kings and princes, an enemy to ministers who were skilled in deception, he brought his great knowledge to help the West, to stave off in some small

measure the storm clouds that were gathering so thickly around some nations. Alas! his words of warning fell on deafened ears, and his advice went all unheeded.

Looking back from this distance of time it will be of interest to many students of mysticism to trace the life, so far as it may yet be told, of this great occultist. Sketches are to be found here and there from various writers, mostly antagonistic, but no coherent detailed account of his life has yet appeared. This is very largely owing to the fact that the most interesting and important work, done by M. de St. Germain, lies buried in the secret archives of many princely and noble families. With this fact we have become acquainted during the careful investigations which we have been making on the subject. Where the archives are situated we have also learned, but we have not yet in all cases received permission to make the necessary researches.

It must be borne in mind that the Comte de St. Germain, alchemist and mystic, does not belong to the French family of St. Germain, from which descended Count Robert de St. Germain; the latter was born in the year 1708, at Lons-le-Saulnier, was first a Jesuit, and entered later in turn the French, Palatine, and Russian military services; he became Danish Minister of War under Count Struensee, then re-entered the French service, and at the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI., he tried, as Minister of War, to introduce various changes into the French army; these raised a violent storm of indignation; he was disgraced by the king and finally died in 1778. He is so often confounded with his mystic and philosophic namesake, that for the sake of clearing up the ignorance that prevails on the matter it is well to give these brief details, showing the difference between the two men; unfortunately the disgrace into which the soldier fell is but too often attributed to the mystic, to whom we will now turn our entire attention.

That M. de St. Germain had intimate relations with many high persons in various countries is quite undeniable, the testimony on this point being overwhelming. That such relations should cause jealousy and unkindly speculation is unfortunately not rare in any century. Let us, however, see what some of these princely friends say. When questioned by the Herzog Karl August as to the supernatural age of this mystic, the Landgraf von Hessen-Phillips-Barchfeld replied: "We cannot speak with certainty on that point; the fact is the Count is acquainted with details about which only contemporaries of that period could give us information; it is now the fashion in Cassel to listen respectfully to his statements and not to be astonished at anything. The Count is known not to be an importunate sycophant; he is a man of good society to whom all are pleased to attach themselves. . . . He at all events stands in close relation with many men of considerable importance, and exercises an incomprehensible influence on others. My cousin the Landgraf Karl von Hessen is much attached to him; they are eager Freemasons, and work together at all sorts of hidden arts. . . . He is supposed to have intercourse with ghosts and supernatural beings, who appear at his call."

Herr Mauvillon, in spite of his personal prejudice against M. de St. Germain, is obliged to acknowledge the feeling of the Duke towards the great alchemist. For on his supposed death being mentioned in the Brunswick newspaper of the period, wherein M. de St. Germain was spoken of as "a man of learning," "a lover of truth," "devoted to the good" and "a hater of baseness and deception," the Duke himself wrote to the editor, expressing his approbation of the announcement.

In France M. de St. Germain appears to have been under the personal care, and enjoying the affection of Louis XV., who repeatedly declared that he would not tolerate any mockery of the Count, who was of high birth. It was this affection and protection that caused the Prime Minister, the Duc de Choiseul, to become a bitter enemy of the mystic,

although he was at one time friendly to him, since the Baron de Gleichen in his memoirs says: "M. de St. Germain frequented the house of M. de Choiseul, and was well received there."

The same writer, who later became one of his devoted students, testifies to the fact that M. de St. Germain ate no meat, drank no wine, and lived according to a strict régime. Louis XV. gave him a suite of rooms in the royal Château de Chambord, and he constantly spent whole evenings at Versailles with the King and the royal family.

One of the chief difficulties we find in tracing his history consists in the constant changes of name and title, a proceeding which seems to have aroused much antagonism and no little doubt. This fact should not, however, have made the public (of the period) dislike him, for it appears to have been the practice of persons of position, who did not wish to attract vulgar curiosity; thus, for instance, we have the Duc de Medici travelling in the years 1698 and 1700 under the name of the Conte di Siena. The Graf Marcolini, when he went from Dresden to Leipzig to meet M. de St. Germain, adopted another name. The Kur-Prinz Friedrich-Christian von Sachsen travelled in Italy from 1738 to 1740, under the name Comte Lausitz. Nearly all the members of the royal families in every country, during the last century, and even in this, adopted the same practice; but when M. de St. Germain did so, we have all the small writers of that period and later calling him an adventurer and a charlatan for what appears to have been, practically, a custom of the time.

Let us now make a list of these names and titles, bearing in mind that they cover a period of time dating from 1710 to 1822. The first date is mentioned by Baron de Gleichen, who says: "I have heard Rameau and an old relative of a French ambassador at Venice testify to having known M. de St. Germain in 1710, when he had the appearance of a man of fifty years of age." The second date is mentioned by Mme.

d'Adhémar in her most interesting *Souvenirs sur Marie Antoinette*. During this time we have M. de St. Germain as the Marquis de Montferrat, Comte Bellamarre or Aymar at Venice, Chevalier Schoening at Pisa, Chevalier Weldon at Milan and Leipzig, Comte Soltikoff at Genoa and Leghorn, Graf Tzarogy at Schwalbach and Triesdorf, Prinz Ragoczy at Dresden, and Comte de St. Germain at Paris, the Hague, London, and St. Petersburg. No doubt all these varied changes gave ample scope and much material for curious speculations.

A few words may fitly here be said about his personal appearance and education. From one contemporary writer we get the following sketch:

"He looked about fifty, is neither stout nor thin, has a fine intellectual countenance, dresses very simply, but with taste; he wears the finest diamonds on snuff-box, watch and buckles. Much of the mystery with which he is surrounded is owing to his princely liberality." Another writer, who knew him when at Anspach, says: "He always dined alone and very simply; his wants were extremely few; it was impossible while at Anspach to persuade him to dine at the Prince's table."

M. de St. Germain appears to have been very highly educated. According to Karl von Weber, "he spoke German, English, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish very well, and French with a Piedmontese accent."

It was almost universally accorded that he had a charming grace and courtliness of manner. He displayed, moreover, in society, a great variety of gifts, played several musical instruments excellently, and sometimes showed facilities and powers which bordered on the mysterious and incomprehensible. For example, one day he had dictated to him the first twenty verses of a poem, and wrote them simultaneously with both hands on two separate sheets of paper, no one present could distinguish one sheet from the other.

In order to arrive at some orderly sequence, it will be well to divide our material into three parts:

- i. Theories about his birth and character, with personal details, some of which we have briefly noticed.
- ii. His travels and knowledge.
- iii. His political and mystical work.

Beginning, then, with our first division, the theories about his birth and nationality are many and various; and different authors, according to their prejudices, trace his descent from prince or tax-gatherer, apparently as fancy dictates. Thus, among other parentages, we find him supposed to be descended from:

1. The widow of Charles II. (King of Spain)--the father a Madrid banker.
2. A Portuguese Jew.
3. An Alsatian Jew.
4. A tax-gatherer in Rotondo.
5. King of Portugal (natural son).
6. Franz-Leopold, Prince Ragoczy, of Transylvania.

This last seems to have been the correct view, according to the most reliable sources that have been found, and other information to which we have had access on this point.

This theory is also held by Georg Hezekiel in his *Abenteuerliche Gesellen*, i., 35, Berlin, 1862. Karl von Weber (op. cit., i., 318) also says that M. de St. Germain openly appeared in Leipzig in 1777 as Prince Ragoczy, and that he was often known as the Graf Tzarogy, which latter is merely an anagram for Ragotzy (Ragoczy). This last fact we have verified in another interesting set of articles, to which we shall refer later, written by a person who knew him at Anspach under the name Tzarogy. Another writer remarks: "His real origin would, perhaps, if revealed, have compromised important persons." And this is the conclusion to which, after careful investigation, we have also come. Prince Karl of Hesse, in writing of M. de St. Germain, says:

"Some curiosity may be felt as to his history; I will trace it with the utmost truthfulness, according to his own words, adding any necessary explanations. He told me that he was eighty-eight years of age when he came here, and that he was the son of Prince Ragoczy 2 of Transylvania by his first wife, a Tékéli. He was placed, when quite young, under the care of the last Duc de Medici (Gian Gastone), who made him sleep while still a child in his own room. When M. de St. Germain learned that his two brothers, sons of the Princess of Hesse-Wahnfried (Rheinfels), had become subject to the Emperor Charles VI., and had received the titles and names of St. Karl and St. Elizabeth, he said to himself: 'Very well, I will call myself Sanctus Germano, the Holy Brother.' I cannot in truth guarantee his birth, but that he was tremendously protected by the Duc de Medici I have learnt from another source."

Another well-known writer speaks on the same point, an author, moreover, who had access to the valuable Milan archives; we refer to the late Cæsare Cantù, librarian of the great library in Milan, who in his historical work, *Illustri Italiani*, ii., 18, says: "The Marquis of San Germano appears to have been the son of Prince Ragotzy (Ragoczy) of Transylvania; he was also much in Italy; much is recounted of his travels in Italy and in Spain; he was greatly protected by the last Grand Duke of Tuscany, who had educated him." It has been said that M. de St. Germain was educated at the University of Siena; Mme. de Genlis in her *Mémoires* mentions having heard of him in Siena during a visit that she paid to that town.

The whole life of M. de St. Germain seems to have been more or less shadowed by the political troubles and struggles of his father.

In order to understand this we must take a brief survey of his family history, a survey which will moreover give us some clues, helping us to unravel the tangled web of