



SAINT-GERMAIN

Eighteenth century Europe witnessed a constellation of remarkable spiritual men who laboured to ease human suffering, pointed to a regenerated human community, and played a central role in the transition from the regal notion, "*L'Etat, c'est moi*," to the contemporary concept of nations. The Comte de Saint-Germain was the most mysterious and enigmatic figure among them. Though he was on familiar terms with most of the crowned heads of Europe, little was known of his own life. No date or place can be assigned to his birth, and his recorded death is almost certainly a fabrication. Though brilliant and accomplished, his origin and education are unknown. Ceaselessly moving among the important capitals of the day, his activities are largely hidden. H.P.Blavatsky suggests an intimate connection between Mesmer, Saint-Martin, Cagliostro and Saint-Germain and affirms that Saint-Germain "supervised the development of events" in the career of Mesmer and directed Cagliostro to assist him. The vast span of time in which Saint-Germain operated and the level at which he worked suggest that his vision and efforts are not bounded by any single locale or period.

Saint-Germain first appeared in Venice early in the century, looking about forty-five years of age, extremely handsome, with intense eyes and a charming manner. About 1760 Countess von Georgy met him at the court of Louis XV. Stunned to see the Count completely unchanged over fifty years, she asked if it were really he. The Count not only confirmed her guess, but related several incidents which the two alone would have known.

In 1710 Rameau praised Saint-Germain's clear and moving pianoforte improvisations. Prince Ferdinand von Lobkowitz received one of his compositions, and another, with the Count's signature, eventually came into the hands of Tchaikowsky. Two others, dated 1745 and 1760, are preserved in the British Museum. Saint-Germain played the violin equally well, being favorably compared with Paganini by those who had heard both.

Saint-Germain's knowledge of languages was phenomenal. He spoke French. English. German. Italian. Spanish and Portuguese fluently and

without an accent. Scholars were surprised by his facility in Greek and Latin as well as Sanskrit, Chinese and Arabic, which were not yet well taught in French colleges.

He was ambidextrous and could write with both hands simultaneously. Franz Gräffer witnessed Saint-Germain quickly write the same letter with both hands on two pieces of paper. When placed on top of one another and held up against a window pane, the translucent sheets revealed identical scripts, "as if they were impressions from the same copper-plate."

He was also a superb painter and art critic. His own work was noted for the realistic lustre he gave to the precious stones he painted on the canvas. Though rumoured to have mixed mother-of-pearl in his pigments, he never revealed the secret and his colours have not been duplicated.

His knowledge of alchemy and chemistry is well attested. He admitted that he could grow pearls artificially and once removed a flaw from a large diamond owned by Louis XV. Casanova witnessed a silver sixty-centime coin taken from his own pocket transmuted into pure gold in about two minutes. When Casanova voiced doubts about what he had seen, Saint-Germain simply replied, "People who question my Art do not merit my attention," and never saw Casanova again. Two months later Casanova gave the coin to Field Marshall Keith in Berlin. Besides his capacity to perfect metals, Saint-Germain's own unchanging age and unique eating habits – no one ever saw him eat – suggest that he had in his possession the *elixir vitae*. Since others claim to have received direct benefit, including renewed stamina and restored health, enhanced memory and prolonged life from its derivatives, it appears that Saint-Germain possessed knowledge of Azoth, which in its three forms constitutes the Philosopher's Stone, the power of projection and the elixir of life.

While there is no evidence that he ever received bills of exchange or interest from investments, Saint-Germain was wealthy. His personal jewelry was fabulous, including a pair of shoe buckles worth 200,000 francs. Invitations to his sumptuous dinners, at which he ate nothing, were sent on cards encrusted with precious stones. He had credit at every bank and was never in debt. The source of his wealth, however, remains unknown.

His origins are equally undiscoverable. He was variously rumoured to be a descendant of Charles II of Spain, an Alsatian Jew, the son of a king of Portugal, and Prince Rákócxy of Transylvania. Prince Karl von Hesse-Cassel, a friend of the Count, believed but did not claim certitude for the latter. Saint-Germain occasionally used the title Graf Tzarogy, and Prince Karl had heard that when the Count's brother and sister had received the titles and names Saint Karl and Saint Elizabeth from Emperor Charles VII, he himself had adopted the name Sanctus Germano, "the holy brother." But

Saint-Germain bought the countdom of San Germano and its title from the Pope. He himself once said that he had lived for a period in Chaldea, but it is not clear whether he was referring to a previous life. A recent speculation by Jacques Sadoul suggests a connection between Signor Gerald, Lascaris and Saint-Germain. Surviving descriptions of their appearance and manner are quite similar and all three were remarkable alchemists, linguists and conversationalists. Gerald was in Vienna in 1687; in 1691 he disappeared. Lascaris appeared in about 1693, performed many documented transmutations and vanished between 1730 and 1740, just before Saint-Germain arrived in England. The astrologer Etteila ventured to declare in 1786 that Saint-Germain and Eirenaeus Philalethes were the same person, adding, "M. de Saint-Germain unites in his own person a perfect knowledge of the three classical sciences."

Everyone who met him was deeply impressed by his gentle and refined nature, his graciousness, kindness and compassion, and by his brilliant and engaging conversation. His stories of earlier times, such as those of Francis I of France, were so animated and detailed that many came to believe that he was hundreds of years old. While he did suggest that he was very old and that he had personal knowledge of ancient events, he did not claim that everything he remembered transpired while he was in the body he possessed as 'Saint-Germain.' When he once showed a portrait of his mother to the Countess de Genlis in 1723, she noticed the unfamiliar dress worn in the painting. "To what period does this costume belong?" she asked, but she did not receive a reply.

'Der Wundermann,' the 'man of miracles,' fascinated the whole of courtly Europe. From every corner came accounts of some strange sight, peculiar experience, marvellous story or mysterious activity. Most accounts are fragmentary and include invented stories, for it became a mark of distinction and prestige to have some encounter with Saint-Germain. He did not attempt to encourage or suppress any particular stories, for they hid his real work from curious and prying eyes more thoroughly. While a number of minor notables recorded incidents in his life, those who were in critical positions of power and influence and who frequently took him into their confidence did not write detailed histories of unfolding events.

In 1723, Saint-Germain was in France and on intimate terms with Madame de Pompadour, to whom he had given an agate box which, when brought near a fire, revealed a picture of a shepherdess with her flock. A number of Austrian and Hungarian nobles were his friends, including Prince Kaunitz and Prince Ferdinand von Lobkowitz. From 1737 to 1742 Saint-Germain lived in the court of the Shah of Persia, where he immersed himself in alchemical studies. It was here, he said, that he began to understand the secrets of nature. He returned to Versailles and spent many hours with Louis XV. According to Horace Walpole. Saint-Germain. who "sings and plays

the violin wonderfully," came to England and was implicated in the Jacobite Revolution in 1745. An enemy planted a letter, alleged to be written by the Pretender, in Saint-Germain's pocket and then had him arrested. He immediately cleared himself, was discharged, and dined with William Stanhope, Earl of Harrington and Secretary of the Treasury, on the same evening. In the same year he went to Vienna where he was warmly received by Lobkowitz, first minister to Emperor Francis I. During this period he also visited Frederick the Great at *Sans-Souci* and there engaged Voltaire in several conversations. Though a hardened sceptic, Voltaire felt moved to write, "Le comte de Saint-Germain is a man who was never born, who will never die, and who knows everything."

Saint-Germain travelled to India with General Clive. "I am indebted," he later wrote, "for my knowledge of melting jewels to my second journey to India in the year 1755." On his own account, he had been in Africa and China as well, but he gave no dates. When he returned to France in 1757, he had a profound impact on Maréchal, the Comte de Belle-Isle who was to become Secretary of State with the Duc de Choiseul under Louis XVI. At this time the King gave an apartment in the royal castle of Chambord to Saint-Germain, and a group of students formed around him. These included Baron von Gleichen, Marquise d'Urfré and the Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst, mother of Catherine II of Russia. A number of fantastic tales about the Count spread throughout Paris because an Englishman under the name Lord Gower amused himself by impersonating Saint-Germain and by engaging in silly talk and actions. Saint-Germain had to bear the gossip which arose in the salons of the day and did so without complaint.

Louis XV sent Saint-Germain on an extraordinary secret mission to the Hague to discover if the English would accept a peace which was acceptable to France. Saint-Germain arrived with letters from Belle-Isle and quickly discovered that the Duc de Choiseul was working against peace and that the Comte d'Affry, the official French ambassador, was his minion. The Count warned Madame de Pompadour, explored the feelings of a number of diplomats and convinced George III that he was acting on behalf of the French King. Choiseul learned that Saint-Germain knew his tactics and ordered him arrested. Saint-Germain insisted that he had nothing to fear from Choiseul, nevertheless he quickly slipped through East Friesland to England where he was received at court. When the Comte de la Watù discovered the sudden departure, he wrote to Saint-Germain:

If a thunderbolt had struck me, I could not have been more confounded than I was at the Hague when I found that you had left. . . . I am well aware, Monsieur, that you are the greatest lord on earth; I am only grieved that rascally people dare to give you trouble, and it is said that gold and intrigues are employed in opposition to your peaceful efforts. . . . If you find that I can be of use to you, count on my faithfulness: I have

nothing but my arm and my blood, but that is gladly at your service.

While his attempts to make peace appeared to fail, he returned to Paris in May, 1761. When the Marquise d'Urfé informed Choiseul of the Count's presence, he responded, "I am not surprised, because he spent the night in my chamber." From this discussion the Family Compact emerged to be eventually followed by the Treaty of Paris which ended the colonial wars.

Saint-Germain is found next in St. Petersburg. Graf Gregor Orloff wrote to the Margrave of Brandenburg-Anspach that the Count "played a great part in their revolution" and helped set Catherine II on the throne. By 1763, however, Saint-Germain was in Brussels. Graf Karl Cobenzl wrote to Prime Minister Prince Kaunitz that he had visited the Count.

Possessing great wealth, he lives in the greatest simplicity; he knows everything, and shows an uprightness, a goodness of soul, worthy of admiration.

Cobenzl described a transmutation of iron, various dyeing processes "and the most perfect tanning," the removal of smell from oils for painting and the production of brilliant colours. He then outlined a plan for manufacturing these items inexpensively, for which the Count refused recompense save for a fraction of the profits gained. At this time Casanova met Saint-Germain in Tournay and was told of Cobenzl's factory.

Sometime between 1763 and 1769, Saint-Germain spent a year in Berlin. Dieudonné Thiébauld recalled in his memoirs that Saint-Germain "was clearly of gentle birth, and had moved in good society." When Madame de Troussel and the Abbé Pernety, "who was not slow in recognizing in him the characteristics which go to make up an adept," mentioned the Philosopher's Stone, Saint-Germain derided the illogical efforts of most alchemists. "They employed no agent but fire," the Count is reported saying, "forgetting that fire breaks up and decomposes, and that consequently it is mere folly to depend upon it for the building up of a new composition." It was believed by Thiébauld that Cagliostro had been his pupil and was initiated by Saint-Germain himself. Cagliostro was ever faithful to his teacher, though often attacked by cunning and malicious men and women. But, says Thiébauld,

In the history of M. de St. Germain, we have the history of a wise and prudent man who never wilfully offended against the code of honour, or did aught that might offend our sense of probity. Marvels we have without end, never anything mean or scandalous.

Sometime about 1770, Saint-Germain travelled to Venice where he established a factory which employed a hundred workers in bleaching and processing flax so that it took on the appearance of Italian silk. He accompanied Graf von Lamberg, Chamberlain to Emperor Joseph II. to

Tunis. During the same year Graf Alexis Orloff warmly welcomed him to Leghorn, where he appeared in Russian uniform and used the name Graf Saltikoff. At this time he was also seen in Paris upon the disgrace of Choiseul. Heer van Sypesteyn wrote:

All his abilities, especially his extraordinary kindness, yes, even magnanimity, which formed his essential characteristics, had made him so respected and so beloved, that when in 1770, after the fall of le Duc de Choiseul, his arch enemy, he again appeared in Paris, it was only with the greatest expressions of sorrow that the Parisians allowed him to depart.

Upon the death in 1774 of Louis XV – who had uttered the ominous words, "After me, the deluge" – Saint-Germain came to the Hague for the last time and soon passed on to Schwalbach. He was seen in Hanau with Lord Cavendish by Björnstahl. In the next two years he visited Triesdorf, Leipzig and Dresden.

In 1779 he went to Hamburg. There he was the honoured guest of Prince Karl von Hesse, and together they undertook a number of secret experiments, all dedicated to the welfare of humanity.

The last phase of the Count's public career is most fully reported in the *Souvenirs de Marie-Antoinette* by the Comtesse d'Adhémar. The book is apochryphal, including scenes which she could not have witnessed herself, but documents concerning Saint-Germain were carefully preserved by the descendants of the Comtesse and it seems likely that most instances related in the book are based upon her recollections. The Comtesse says that Saint-Germain came to her a number of times and prevailed upon her to use her influence with the new Queen, Marie-Antoinette. On various occasions, Saint-Germain detailed the fate of the French monarchy: a conspiracy was afoot – though it had no single head – to overthrow the entire social order. Since it arose out of the legitimate needs and the sufferings of the masses, it could not be ignored, but unless Louis XVI seized the initiative in reform, others, especially power-seeking Encyclopaedists, would use the name of the people to further their own complex, confused and ignoble ends. Beyond a certain point, nothing could be done, and so the King had to act quickly. Unfortunately, de Maurepas, on whom the King depended, was both a fool and an enemy of Saint-Germain. The King had to have the courage to bypass him.

D'Adhémar's sad story is well-known: The Count's efforts aroused the concern of Louis and Marie-Antoinette, who even admitted that the Count had sent her anonymous letters which had warned and protected her on numerous occasions. But his exertions failed to free the King from Maurepas' overbearing influence. Saint-Germain predicted the eventual outcome – revolution and republic, eventual empire and a host of governments controlled by ambitious men of no worth. He allegedly

appeared at the beheading of Marie-Antoinette and again in 1804, 1813 and 1820. Except for these brief appearances, he wrote to the Comtesse in 1789 for the last time: "All is lost, Countess! This sun is the last which will set on the monarchy; tomorrow it will exist no more, chaos will prevail, anarchy unequalled. . . . now it is too late."

In 1784 the Count retired to the castle of Prince Karl and, according to the Church Register of Eckernförde, died after an illness on February 27. No one saw the body, however, and Saint-Germain was present at the great Paris Masonic Convention of 1785. With him were Saint-Martin, Mesmer and Cagliostro. These four were also present at the Wilhelmsbad Convention of 1782. Saint-Germain's public life over, he continued to visit a few people deeply involved in Masonic work for years afterward. Franz Gräffer reported that Saint-Germain said to him: "Towards the end of this century I shall disappear out of Europe, and betake myself to the region of the Himalayas. I will rest; I must rest. Exactly in eighty-five years will people again set eyes on me. He consulted the Comte Chalons in 1788, and advised Baron von Steuben to join Lafayette in America. Finally, Mahatma K.H. states that it was "his staunch friend and patron the benevolent German Prince from whose house and in whose presence he made his last exit – HOME."

Besides being called a Templar by Cadet de Gassicourt, Deschamps asserted that Saint-Germain had personally initiated Cagliostro into the Order. Gräffer reported that Saint-Germain in 1776 explained the principles of magnetism to Mesmer who had already begun to discover them. After their discussion, Mesmer gave up the use of magnetic iron and resorted entirely to animal magnetism.

More than one writer of the time suspected that Saint-Germain's guiding hand was upon a number of Masonic and secret spiritual societies whose heads were unknown. Besides the Frates Lucis and the Knights Templar, his name is associated with the Asiatic Brothers, the Order of Strict Observance, which he helped to found, and Rosicrucian groups.

Though Saint-Germain supposedly wrote several works, only one brief treatise survives. It is the famous *La Très Sainte Trinosophie, The Most Sacred Trinosophy*, occasionally attributed to Cagliostro because the surviving copy was seized with his personal effects when he was arrested in Rome by the Inquisition. Tradition holds that Cagliostro received it when initiated into the Templars by Saint-Germain. The conclusion contains several pages of mysterious hieroglyphic figures and drawings. The preceding twelve sections are an allegorical text on initiation written by a prisoner of the Inquisition to his friend Philochatus on the eve of the latter's entrance "into the sanctuary of the sublime sciences." open to those who can

see and soar after the Throne of the Eternal.

Two stumbling blocks equally dangerous will constantly present themselves to you. One of them would outrage the sacred rights of every individual. It is *misuse* of the power which God will have entrusted to you; the other, which would bring ruin upon you, is *indiscretion*. . . . Both are born of the same mother, both owe their existence to pride. Human frailty nourishes them; they are blind; their mother leads them.

The protagonist is ordered to proceed at night to an iron altar on a mountain near Vesuvius and utter an invocation. Upon doing so, he is wrapped in a thick smoke, the scene dissolves, and he is swept into an allegory in which he penetrates the secrets of the four elements and the mysteries of spirit. Assuming that the account has symbolic precision, the text becomes a detailed account of the triumph of the eternal nature over inner and outer appearances through obedience, courage, steadfastness, awareness and willingness to learn in the Palace of Wisdom. After many trials have been faced, the protagonist concludes:

I noticed with astonishment that I had reentered the hall of Thrones (the first in which I had found myself when entering the Palace of Wisdom). The triangular altar was still in the center of this hall but the bird, the altar and the torch were joined and formed a single body. Near them was a golden sun. The sword which I had brought from the hall of fire lay a few paces distant on the cushion of one of the thrones: I took up the sword and struck the sun, reducing it to dust. I then touched it and each molecule became a golden sun like the one I had broken. At that instant a loud and melodious voice exclaimed, 'The work is perfect!' Hearing this, the children of light hastened to join me, the doors of immortality were opened to me, and the cloud which covers the eyes of mortals, was dissipated. I SAW and the spirits which preside over the elements knew me for their master.

The life of Saint-Germain demonstrated the spiritual allegory of which he wrote. It was too majestic and marvelous for any but the most imaginative and intuitive minds to grasp. Marie-Rayonde Delarme, in her recent book *Le comte de Saint-Get-main*, concludes that

In the history of the eighteenth century, le Comte de Saint-Germain has left the image of a universal spirit, gifted with a rare intuition, capable of bringing to the forefront – in his own spiritual odyssey – the multiple possibilities of which his time carried the promise.

H.P.Blavatsky summed up his character and work simply: "Count St. Germain was certainly the greatest Oriental Adept Europe has seen during the last centuries."

