

Need I add, in conclusion, that we all promised to call and see the portrait of the mother of our worthy brother should we ever find it possible to do so?—*Masonic Monthly*.

COUNT CAGLIOSTRO:

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A MASONIC CHARLATAN.

BY ALBERT G. MACKAY M. D.

Of all the masonic charlatans who flourished in the eighteenth century the Count Cagliostro was most prominent, whether we consider the ingenuity of his schemes of deception, the extensive field of his operations through almost every country in Europe, or the distinguished character and station of many of those whose credulity made them his victims. The history of Masonry in that century would not be complete without a reference to this prince of masonic impostors. To write the history of Masonry in the eighteenth century and to leave out Cagliostro, would be like enacting the play of Hamlet and leaving out the part of the Prince of Denmark. And yet Carlyle has had occasion to complain of the paucity of materials for such a work. Indeed of one so notorious as Cagliostro comparatively but little is to be found in print. The only works upon which he who would write his life must depend, are a *Life* of him published in London 1787; *Memoirs* in Paris 1786; and *Memoirs Authentiques*, Strasburg 1786; a *Life* in Germany, published at Berlin, 1787; another in Italian, published at Rome in 1791; and a few fugitive pieces, consisting chiefly of manifestoes of himself and his disciples.

Joseph Balsamo, subsequently known as Count Cagliostro, was the son of Peter Balsamo and Felicia Braconieri, both of mean extraction, who was born on the 8th of June, 1743, in the city of Palermo. Upon the death of his father, he was taken under the protection of his maternal uncles, who caused him to be instructed in the elements of religion and learning, by both of which he profited so little, that he eloped several times from the seminary of St. Roch, near Palermo, where he had been placed for his instruction. At the age of thirteen he was carried to the Convent of the Good Brotherhood at Castiglione. There, having assumed the habit of a novice, he was placed under the tuition of the apothecary, from whom he learned the principles of chemistry and medicine. His brief residence at the convent was marked by violations of many of its rules; and finally, abandoning it altogether, he returned to Palermo. There he continued his vicious courses, and was frequently seized and imprisoned for infractions of the law. At length, having cheated a goldsmith, named Marano, of a large amount of gold, he was compelled to flee from his native country.

He then repaired to Messina, where he became acquainted with one Altotas, who pretended to be a great chemist. Together they proceeded to Alexandria in Egypt, where, by means of certain chemical, or perhaps rather by financial operations, they succeeded in collecting a considerable amount of money. There next appearance is in the Island of Malta, where they worked for some time in the laboratory of the Grand Master Pinto. There Altotas died, and Balsamo, or—as I shall henceforth call him by the name which he subsequently assumed—Cagliostro, proceeded to visit Naples, under the protection of a Knight of Malta, to whom he had been recommended by the Grand Master.