

THE

MASONIC ESSAYIST.

*A Vindication of Masonry from a Charge of having given rise
to the French Revolution.*

In the Gentleman's Magazine for June 1794, was inserted a most insidious attack on the excellent institution of Free-Masonry. To the operations of which, the anonymous writer very candidly attributed the French Revolution. It was contained in a letter of which the following is a Copy.

Winchester, May 18.

Mr. Urban,

As every thing that relates to the French Revolution, especially whatever tends to investigate the causes of it, is extremely curious and interesting at the present period, I embrace the opportunity which your widely circulated Magazine affords of making known amongst my countrymen, an opinion on this subject, which, whether well or ill founded, is very prevalent on the Continent, hoping that some of your intelligent correspondents will be enabled to throw a greater light upon it. The opinion in question is, that the mysteries of Freemasonry have, in a great measure, contributed to those changes in sentiment and in reality, no-less than in Government, amongst a neighbouring people, which the surrounding nations view with such surprize. I cannot better make known these ideas than by giving a short account of a work, in which they are contained, now lying before me, written in the French language, and much esteemed by the honest part of the French nation, though little known amongst our countrymen. The author of this was a M. Le Franc, the late superior of the seminary of Eudists at Caen, who was butchered at Paris on the famous 2nd of September. He is said, by his friends, one of whose letters on this subject I have seen, to have derived his knowledge of freemasonry from a voluminous collection of papers which a master of that Order, in his last sickness put into his hands. It is farther stated, that the author, having thoroughly examined these papers, conceived it to be his duty to lay the substance of them before the Arch-bishop of Paris some years previous to the commencement of the Revolution; at the same time undertaking to demonstrate, that the system contained in them, menaced approaching ruin both to Church and State. The work I have mentioned is entitled "The veil withdrawn; or, the secrets of the French Revolution explained by the help of Freemasonry." The second edition, which I make use of, was printed at Paris in 1792.