

gold. Dupes were not wanting, and Cagliostro seems to have been successful in his schemes for enriching himself by "obtaining money under false pretenses." In 1776 Cagliostro again repaired to London. Here he appeared with renovated fortunes, and, taking a house in a fashionable neighborhood, attracted attention by the splendor of his domestic establishment.

In London, during this visit, Cagliostro became connected with the Order of Freemasonry. In the month of April he received the degrees in Esperance Lodge, No. 289, which then met at the King's Head Tavern. Cagliostro did not join the Order with disinterested motives, or at least he determined in a very short period after his initiation to use the institution as an instrument for the advancement of his personal interests. Here he is said to have invented, in 1777, that grand scheme of imposture under the name of "Egyptian Masonry," by the propagation of which he subsequently became so famous as the great masonic charlatan of his age.

London did not fail to furnish him with a fertile field for his impositions, and the English Masons seemed no ways reluctant to become his dupes; but, being ambitious for the extension of his rite, and anxious for the greater income which it promised, he again passed over the continent, where he justly anticipated unbounded success in its propagation.

As this Egyptian Masonry constituted the great pursuit of the rest of his life, and was the instrument which he used for many years to make dupes of thousands of credulous persons, among whom not a few princes, nobles, and philosophers are to be counted, it is proper that, in any biography of this great charlatan, some account should be given of the so-called masonic scheme of which he was the founder. This account is to be derived, as all accounts hitherto published on the same subject have been, from the book which came into the possession of the Inquisition at the trial of Cagliostro, and which purports to contain the rituals of his degrees. Of this work, which Carlyle calls in his rough style a "certain expository masonic order-book of Cagliostro's," the author of the Italian biography,* who writes however in the interest of the Church and with the sanction of the Apostolic Chambers, says, that the style is so elegant, that it could not have been composed by himself; but he admits that the materials were furnished by Cagliostro, and put into form by some other person of greater scholarship. Be this as it may, this book furnishes us with the only authentic account of the Masonry of Cagliostro, and to its contents we must resort, as very fully extracted in the *Compendio della Vita*.

Cagliostro states, that in England he purchased some manuscripts from one George Coston, which treated of Egyptian Masonry, but with a system somewhat magical and superstitious. Upon this plan, however he resolved to build up a new ritual of Masonry. Assuming the title of Grand Cophta, a title derived from that of the high priests of Egypt, Cagliostro promised his followers to conduct them to perfection by means of moral and physical regeneration: By the first, to make them find the primal matter, or philosopher's stone, and the acacia, which consolidates in man the powers of the most vigorous youth and renders him immortal: by the second, to teach him how to procure the pentagon, which restores man to his primitive state of innocence, forfeited

* *Compendio della Vita e delle Gesta di Giuseppe Balsamo denominato il Conte Cagliostro*, Roma, 1791, p. 87