

Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky by A.P. Sinnett

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by A.P. Sinnett

Compiled from information supplied by her relatives and friends

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

[Page 5] THE first edition of this book, published in 1886, was issued during Madame Blavatsky's lifetime as an indirect protest against the cruel and slanderous attack on her embodied in the Report to the Committee of the Psychical Research Society appointed to investigate the phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society. This Report was very effectually answered at the time, and the passages in my original book especially relating to it are hardly worth reproduction now. But the facts relating to Madame Blavatsky's life which it then dealt with are more interesting now than ever, in view of the gigantic development of the Theosophical Society; and the original edition having been long out of print, the present edition is prepared to meet a widespread desire.

I need not now reproduce dissertations which the original edition contained in deprecation of the incredulity that still held sway twenty-five years ago in reference to the reality of occult phenomena. A great change in this respect has come over cultivated thinking within that period, and appeals for tolerance on behalf of those who give testimony concerning occult super-psychical phenomena of which they may have been witness are no longer necessary.[Page 6]

For the rest, the book is now republished as written, no attempt having been made to recast its language to suit the present time, when the subject of the memoir is no longer with us; but I have added some notes where later events or experience have seemed to claim them.

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MADAME BLAVATSKY

CHAPTER 1

CHILDHOOD

[Page 9] QUOTING the authoritative statement of her late uncle, General Fadeef, made at my request in 1881, at a time when he was Joint-Secretary of State in the Home Department at St Petersburg, Mme. H. P. Blavatsky (Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, to give the name at full length) “ is, from her father's side, the daughter of Colonel Peter Hahn, and granddaughter of General Alexis Hahn von Rottenstern Hahn (a noble family of Mecklenburg, Germany, settled in Russia); and she is, from her mother's side, the daughter of Helene Fadeef, and granddaughter of Privy Councillor Andrew Fadeef and of the Princess Helene Dolgorouky. She is the widow of the Councillor of State, Nicephore Blavatsky, late Vice-Governor of the Province of Erivan, Caucasus.”

Mademoiselle Hahn, to use her family name in referring to her childhood, was born at Ekaterinoslaw, in the south of Russia, in 1831. Von Hahn would be the proper German form of the name, and in French writing or conversation the name, as used by Russians, would be De Hahn, but in its strictly Russian form the prefix was generally dropped.[Page 10]

For the following particulars concerning the family I am indebted to some of its present representatives who have taken an interest in the preparation of these memoirs.

The Von Hahn family is well known in Germany and Russia. The Counts Von Hahn belong to an old Mecklenburg stock. Mme. Blavatsky's grandfather was a cousin of Countess Ida Hahn-Hahn, the famous authoress, with whose writings England is well acquainted. Settling in Russia, he died in its service a full general. He was married to the Countess Proëbstin, who, after his death, married Nicholas Wassiltchikof, the brother of the famous Prince of that name. Mme. Blavatsky's father left the military service with the rank of a colonel after the death of his first wife. He had been married *en premières noces* to Mademoiselle H. Fadeew, known in the literary world between 1830 and 1840 as an authoress — the first novel-writer that had ever appeared in Russia — under the *nom de plume* of Zenaida R . . . , and who, although dying before she was twenty-five, left some dozen novels of the romantic school, most of which have been translated into the German language. In 1846 Colonel Hahn married his second wife — a Baroness Von Lange, by whom he had a daughter referred to by Mme. Jelihowsky as ' little Lisa' in the extracts here given from her writings, published in St Petersburg. On her mother's side Mme. Blavatsky is the granddaughter of Princess Dolgorouky, with whose death the elder line of that family became extinct in Russia. Thus her maternal ancestors belong to the oldest families of the empire, since they are the direct descendants of the Prince or Grand Duke Rurik, the first ruler called to govern Russia. Several ladies of that family belonged to the Imperial house, becoming Czarinas (Czaritiza) by marriage. For a Princess Dolgorouky (Maria Nikitishna) had been married to the grandfather of Peter the Great, the Czar Michael Fedorovitch, the first reigning Romanof; another, the Princess Catherine Alexeévna, was on the [Page 11] eve of her marriage with Czar Peter the II when he died suddenly before the ceremony.

A strange fatality seems always to have persecuted this family in connection with England; and its greatest vicissitudes have been in some way associated with that country. Several of its members died,

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and others fell into political disgrace, as they were on their way to London. The last and most interesting of all is the tragedy connected with the Prince Sergeéy Gregoreevitch Dolgorouky, Mme. Blavatsky's grandmother's grandfather, who was ambassador in Poland. At the advent of the Archduchess Anne of Courlang to the throne of Russia, owing to their opposition to her favourite of infamous memory, the Chancellor Biron, many of the highest families were imprisoned or exiled; others put to death and their wealth confiscated. Among these, such fate befell the Prince Sergèey Dolgorouky. He was sent in exile to Berezof (Siberia) without any explanation, and his private fortune, that consisted of 200,000 serfs, was confiscated. His two little sons were, the elder placed with a village smith as an apprentice, the younger condemned to become a simple soldier, and sent to Azof. Eight years later the Empress Anne Iaxnovna recalled the exiled father, pardoned him, and sent him as ambassador to London. Knowing Biron well, however, the prince sent to the Bank of England 100,000 roubles to be left untouched for a century, capital and accumulated interest, to be distributed after that period to his direct descendants. His presentiment proved correct. He had not yet reached Novgorod, on his way to England, when he was seized and put to death by 'quartering' (cut in four). When the Empress Elizabeth, Peter the Great's daughter, came to the throne next, her first care was to undo the great wrongs perpetrated by her predecessor through her cruel and crafty favourite Biron. Among other exiles the two sons and heirs of Prince Sergeéy were recalled, their title restored, and their property ordered to be given back. This, however, instead of being 200,000 serfs, had dwindled down to only 8000. The younger son, after a youth of extreme misery and [Page 12] hardship, became a monk, and died young. The elder married a Princess Romadanovsky; and his son, Prince Paul, Mme. Blavatsky's great-grandfather, named while yet in his cradle a Colonel of the Guards by the Emperor, married a Countess du Plessy, the daughter of a noble French Huguenot family, emigrated from France to Russia. Her father had found service at the Court of the Empress Catherine II where her mother was the favourite *dame d'honneur*.

The receipt of the Bank of England for the sum of 100,000 roubles, a sum that at the end of the term of one hundred years had grown to immense proportions, had been handed by a friend of the politically murdered prince to the grandson of the latter, the Prince Paul Dolgorouky. It was preserved by him with other family documents at Marfovka, a large family property in the government of Penja, where the old prince lived and died in 1837. But the document was vainly searched for by the heirs after his death ; it was nowhere to be found. To their great horror further research brought to light the fact that it must have been burnt, together with the residence, in a great fire that had some time previous destroyed nearly the whole village. Having lost his sight in a paralytic stroke some years previous to his demise, the octogenarian prince, old and ill, had been kept in ignorance of the loss of the most important of his family documents. This was a crushing misfortune, that left the heirs bereft of their contemplated millions. Many were the attempts made to come to some compromise with the bank, but to no purpose. It was ascertained that the deposit had been received at the bank, but some mistake in the name had been made, and then the bank demanded very naturally the receipt delivered about the middle of the last century. In short, the millions disappeared for the Russian heirs. Mme. Blavatsky has thus in her veins the blood of three nations — the Slavonian, the German, and the French."

The year of Mademoiselle Hahn's birth, 1831, was fatal for Russia, as for all Europe, owing to the first visit of the cholera, that terrible plague that decimated from [Page 13] 1830 to 1832 in turn nearly every town of the continent, and carried away a large part of its populations. Her birth was quickened by several deaths in the house. She was ushered into the world amid coffins and desolation. The following narrative is composed from the family records :—

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Her father was then in the army, intervals of peace after Russia's war with Turkey in 1829 being filled with preparations for new fights. The baby was born on the night between July 30 and 31 — weak and apparently no denizen of this world. A hurried baptism had to be resorted to, therefore, lest the child died with the burden of original sin on her soul. The ceremony of baptism in 'orthodox' Russia is attended with all the paraphernalia of lighted tapers, and 'pairs' of godmothers and godfathers, every one of the spectators and actors being furnished with consecrated wax candles during the whole proceedings. Moreover, everyone has to stand during the baptismal rite, no one being allowed to sit in the Greek religion — as they do in Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches — during the church and religious service. The room selected for the ceremony in the family mansion was large, but the crowd of devotees eager to witness it was still larger. Behind the priest officiating in the centre of the room, with his assistants, in their golden robes and long hair, stood the three pairs of sponsors and the whole household of vassals and serfs. The child-aunt of the baby — only a few years older than her niece aged twenty-four hours, — placed as 'proxy' for an absent relative, was in the first row immediately behind the venerable *protopope*. Feeling nervous and tired of standing still for nearly an hour, the child settled on the floor, unperceived by the elders, and became probably drowsy in the overcrowded room on that hot July day. The ceremony was nearing its close. The sponsors were just in the act of renouncing the Evil One and his deeds, a renunciation emphasised in the Greek Church by thrice spitting upon the invisible enemy, when the little lady, toying with her lighted taper at the feet of the crowd, [Page 14] inadvertently set fire to the long flowing robes of the priest, no one remarking the accident until it was too late. The result was an immediate conflagration, during which several persons — chiefly the old priest — were severely burnt. That was another bad omen, according to the superstitious beliefs of orthodox Russia; and the innocent cause of it — the future Mme. Blavatsky — was doomed from that day in the eyes of all the town to an eventful life, full of vicissitude and trouble.

Perhaps on account of an unconscious apprehension to the same effect, the child became the pet of her grandparents and aunts, and was greatly spoiled in her childhood, knowing from her infancy no other authority than that of her own whims and will. From her earliest years she was brought up in an atmosphere of legends and popular fancy. As far back as her remembrances go, she was possessed with a firm belief in the existence of an invisible world of supermundane and sub-mundane spirits and beings inextricably blended with the life of each mortal. The '*Domovoy*' (house goblin) was no fiction for her, any more than for her nurses and Russian maids. This invisible landlord — attached to every house and building, who watches over the sleeping household, keeps quiet, and works hard the whole year round for the family, cleaning the horses every night, brushing and plaiting their tails and manes, protecting the cows and cattle from the witch, with whom he is at eternal feud — had the affections of the child from the first. The *Domovoy* is to be dreaded only on March the 30th, the only day in the year when, owing to some mysterious reasons, he becomes mischievous and very nervous, when he teases the horses, thrashes the cows and disperses them in terror, and causes the whole household to be dropping and breaking everything, stumbling and falling that whole day — every prevention notwithstanding. The plates and glasses smashed, the inexplicable disappearance of hay and oats from the stables, and every family unpleasantness in general, are usually attributed to the fidgetiness and nervous excitement of the *Domovoy*. Alone, those born on the night between July 30th and 31st are exempt from his freaks. It is from the philosophy [Page 15] of her Russian nursery that Mademoiselle Hahn learned the cause of her being called by the serfs the *Sedmitchka*, an untranslatable term, meaning one connected with number Seven; in this particular case, referring to the child having been born on the *seventh* month of the year, on the night between the 30th and 31st of July — days so conspicuous in Russia in the annals of popular beliefs with regard to witches and their doings. Thus the mystery of a certain ceremony enacted in great secrecy for years during July the 30th, by the nurses and household, was divulged to her as soon as her consciousness could realise the importance of the initiation. She learned even in her childhood the

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reason why, on that day, she was carried about in her nurse's arms around the house, stables, and cow-pen, and made personally to sprinkle the four corners with water, the nurse repeating all the while some mystic sentences. These may be found to this day in the ponderous volumes of Sacharof's ' Russian Demonology,' [*The Traditions of the Russian People* by J Sacharof in seven volumes, embracing popular literature, beliefs, magic, witchcraft, the sub-mundane spirits, ancient customs and rites, songs and charms, for the last 1000 years.] a laborious work that necessitated over thirty years of incessant travelling and scientific researches in the old chronicles of the Slavonian lands, and that won to the author the appellation of the Russian Grimm."

Born in the very heart of the country which the Roussalka (the Undine) has chosen for her abode ever since creation — reared on the shores of the blue Dnieper, that no Cossack of Southern Ukraine ever crosses without preparing himself for death — the child's belief in these lovely green-haired nymphs was developed before she had heard of anything else. The catechism of her Ukraine nurses passed wholly into her soul, and she found all these weird poetical beliefs corroborated to her by what she saw, or fancied she saw, herself around her ever since her earliest babyhood. Legends seem to have [Page 16] lingered in her family, preserved by the recollections of the older servants, of events connected with such beliefs, and they inspired the early tyranny she was taught to exercise, as soon as she understood the powers that were attributed to her by her nurses. The sandy shores of the rapid Dnieper encircling Ekaterinoslaw, with their vegetation of willows, were her favorite rambling place, Once there, she saw a *roussalka* in every willow tree, smiling and beckoning to her; and full of her own invulnerability, impressed upon her mind by her nurses, she was the only one who approached those shores fearless and daring. The child felt her superiority and abused it. The little four-year-old girl demanded that her will should be implicitly recognized by her nurse, lest she should escape from her side, and thus leave her unprotected, to be tickled to death by the beautiful and wicked *roussalka*, who would no longer be restrained by the presence of one *whom she dared not approach*. Of course her parents knew nothing of this side of the education of their eldest born, and learned it too late to allow such beliefs to be eradicated from her mind. It is only after a tragic event that would otherwise have passed hardly noticed by the family, that a foreign governess was thought of. In one of her walks by the river side a boy about fourteen who was dragging the child's carriage incurred her displeasure by some slight disobedience. "I will have you tickled to death by a *roussalka* ! " she screamed. "There's one coming down from that tree . . . here she comes . . . See, see!" Whether the boy saw the dreaded nymph or not, he took to his heels, and, the angry commands of the nurse notwithstanding, disappeared along the sandy banks leading homeward. After much grumbling the old nurse was constrained to return home alone with her charge, [Page 17] determined to have Pavlik" punished. But the poor lad was never seen alive again. He ran away to his village, and his body was found several weeks later by fishermen, who caught him in their nets. The verdict of the police was "drowning by accident". It was thought that the lad, having sought to cross some shallow pools left from the spring inundations, had got into one of the many sand pits so easily transformed by the rapid Dnieper into whirlpools. But the verdict of the horrified household — of the nurses and servants — pointed to no *accidental* death, but to the one that had occurred in consequence of the child having withdrawn from the boy her mighty protection, thus delivering the victim to some *roussalka* on the watch. The displeasure of the family at this foolish gossip was enhanced when they found the supposed culprit gravely corroborating the charge, and maintaining that it was she herself who had handed over her disobedient serf to her faithful servants the water-nymphs. Then it was that an English governess was brought upon the scene.

Miss Augusta Sophia Jeffries did not believe in the *roussalkas* or the *domovoys*; but this negative merit was insufficient to invest her with a capacity for managing the intractable pupil consigned to her care.

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She gave up her task in despair, and the child was again left to her nurses till about six years old, when she and her still younger sister were sent to live with their father. For the next two or three years the little girls were chiefly taken care of by their father's orderlies; the elder, at all events, greatly preferring these to their female attendants. They were taken about with the troops to which their father was attached, and were petted on all sides as the *enfants du régiment*.

Her mother died when Mademoiselle Hahn was still a child, [Page 18] and at about eleven years of age she was taken charge of altogether by her grandmother, and went to live at Saratow, where her grandfather was civil governor, having previously exercised similar authority in Astrachan. She speaks of having at this time been alternately petted and punished, spoiled and hardened; but we may well imagine that she was a difficult child to manage on any uniform system. Moreover, her health was always uncertain in childhood; she was ever sick and dying", as she expresses it herself, a sleep walker, and remarkable for various abnormal psychic peculiarities, set down by her orthodox nurses of the Greek Church to possession by the devil, so that she was drenched during childhood, as she often says, in enough holy water to have floated a ship, and exorcised by priests who might as well have been talking to the wind for all the effect they produced on her.

Some notes concerning her childhood have been furnished, for the service of the present memoir, by her aunt, a lady who, as well as Madame Jelihowsky, is known personally to myself and to many others of Mme. Blavatsky's friends in Europe. Her strange excitability of temperament, still one of her most marked characteristics, was already manifest in her earliest youth. Even then she was liable to ungovernable fits of passion, and showed a deep-rooted disposition to rebel against every kind of authority or control. Her warm-hearted impulses of kindness and affection, however, endeared her to her relatives in childhood, much as they have operated to obliterate the irritation caused sometimes by her want of self-control in regard to the minor affairs of life with the friends of a later period. It is justly asserted by the memoranda before me, she has no malice in her nature, no lasting resentment even against those who [Page 19] have wronged her, and her true kindness of heart bears no permanent traces of momentary disturbances".

We who know Madame Blavatsky well", writes her aunt, speaking for herself and for another relative who had joined with her in the preparation of the notes I am now dealing with — we who know her now in age can speak of her with authority, not merely from idle report. From her earliest childhood she was unlike any other person. Very lively and highly gifted, full of humour, and of most remarkable daring; she struck everyone with astonishment by her self-willed and determined actions. Thus in her earliest youth and hardly married, she disposed of herself in an angry mood, abandoning her country, without the knowledge of her relatives or husband, who, unfortunately, was a man in every way unsuited to her, and more than thrice her age. Those who have known her from her childhood would — had they been born thirty years later — have also known that it was a fatal mistake to regard and treat her as they would any other child. Her restless and very nervous temperament, one that led her into the most unheard of, un-girlish mischief; her unaccountable — especially in those days — attraction to, and at the same time fear of, the dead; her passionate love and curiosity for everything unknown and mysterious, weird and fantastical; and, foremost of all, her craving for independence and freedom of action — a craving that nothing and nobody could control; all this, combined with an exuberance of imagination and a wonderful sensitiveness, ought to have warned her friends that she was an exceptional creature, to be dealt with and controlled by means as exceptional. The slightest contradiction brought on an outburst of passion, often a fit of convulsions. Left alone with no one near her to impede her liberty of action, no hand to chain her down or stop her natural impulses, and thus arouse to fury her inherent combativeness, she would

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spend hours and days quietly whispering, as people thought, to herself, and narrating, with no one near her, in some dark corner, marvellous tales of travels in bright stars and other worlds, which her governess [Page 20] described as 'profane gibberish'; but no sooner would the governess give her a distinct order to do this or the other thing, than her first impulse was to disobey. It was enough to forbid her doing a thing to make her do it, come what would. Her nurse, as indeed other members of the family, sincerely believed the child possessed 'the seven spirits of rebellion'. Her governesses were martyrs to their task, and never succeeded in bending her resolute will, or influencing by anything but kindness her indomitable, obstinate, and fearless nature.

Spoilt in her childhood by the adulation of dependents and the devoted affection of relatives, who forgave all to 'the poor, motherless child' — later on, in her girlhood, her self-willed temper made her rebel openly against the exigencies of society. She would submit to no sham respect for or fear of the public opinion. She *would* ride at fifteen, as she had at ten, any Cossack horse on a man's saddle! She would bow to no one, as she would recede before no prejudice or established conventionality. She defied all and everyone. As in her childhood, all her sympathies and attractions went out towards people of the lower class. She had always preferred to play with her servants' children rather than with her equals, and as a child had to be constantly watched for fear she should escape from the house to make friends with ragged street boys. So, later on in life, she continued to be drawn in sympathy towards those who were in a humbler station of life than herself, and showed as pronounced indifference to the 'nobility' to which by birth she belonged."

The five years passed in safety with her grandparents seem to have had an important influence on her future life. Miss Jeffries had left the family; the children had another English governess, a timid young girl to whom none of her pupils paid any attention, a Swiss preceptor, and a French governess, who had gone through remarkable adventures in her youth. Madame Henriette Peigneur was a distinguished beauty in the days of the [Page 21] first French Revolution. Her favorite narratives to the children consisted in the description of those days of glory and excitement when, chosen by the Phrygian red-caps", the *citoyens rouges* of Paris to represent in the public festivals the Goddess of Liberty, she had been driven in triumph, day after day, along the streets of the *grande ville* in glorious processions. The narrator herself was now a weird old woman, bent down by age, and looked more like the traditional *Fée Carabosse* than anything else. But her eloquence was moving, and the young girls that formed her willing audience were greatly excited by the glowing descriptions — most of all the heroine of these memoirs. She declared then and there that she meant to be a Goddess of Liberty" all her life. The old governess was a strange mixture of severe morality and of that brilliant flippancy that characterises almost every *Parisienne* to her deathbed unless she is a bigot — which Mme. Peigneur was not. But while her old husband — the charming, witty, kind-hearted Sieur Peigneur, ever ready to screen the young girls from his wife's *pénitences* and severity — taught them the merriest songs of Béranger, his best *bons mots* and anecdotes, his wife had no such luck with her lesson books. The opening of Noël and Chopsal became generally the signal for an escape to the wild woods that surrounded the large villa occupied by Mademoiselle Hahn's grandparents during the summer months. It was only when roaming at leisure in the forest, or riding some unmanageable horse on a Cossack's saddle, that the girl felt perfectly happy.

For the following interesting reminiscence of this period I am indebted to Mme. Jelihowsky: —

The great country mansion (*datche*) occupied by us at Saratow was an old and vast building, full of subterranean galleries, long abandoned passages, turrets, [Page 22] and most weird nooks and corners. It

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had been built by a family called Pantchoolidzef, several generations of whom had been governors at Saratow and Penja — the richest proprietors and noblemen of the latter province. It looked more like a mediaeval ruined castle than a building of the past century. The man who took care of the estate for the proprietors — of a type now happily rare, who regarded the serfs as something far lower and less precious than his hounds — had been known for his cruelty and tyranny, and his name was a synonym for a curse. The legends told of his ferocious and despotic temper, of unfortunate serfs beaten by him to death, and imprisoned for months in dark subterranean dungeons, were many and thrilling. They were repeated to us mostly by Mme. Peigneur, who had been for the last twenty-five years the governess of three generations of children in the Pantchoolidzef family. Our heads were full of stories about the ghosts of the martyred serfs, seen promenading in chains during nocturnal hours; of the phantom of a young girl, tortured to death for refusing her love to her old master, which was seen floating in and out of the little iron-bound door of the subterranean passage at twilight; and other stories that left us children and girls in an agony of fear whenever we had to cross a dark room or passage. We had been permitted to explore, under the protection of half-a-dozen male servants and a quantity of torches and lanterns, those awe-inspiring 'Catacombs'. True, we had found in them more broken wine bottles than human bones, and had gathered more cobwebs than iron chains, but our imagination suggested ghosts in every flickering shadow on the old damp walls. Still Helen (Mme. Blavatsky) would not remain satisfied with one solitary visit, nor with a second either. She had selected the uncanny region as a Liberty Hall, and a safe refuge where she could avoid her lessons. A long time passed before her secret was found out, and whenever she was found missing, a deputation of strong-bodied servant-men, headed by the *gendarme* on service in the Governor's Hall, was despatched in search of her, as it required no less than one who was not a serf and feared her little to [Page 23] bring her up-stairs by force. She had erected for herself a tower out of old broken chairs and tables in a corner under an iron-barred window, high up in the ceiling of the vault, and there she would hide for hours, reading a book known as *Solomon's Wisdom*, in which every kind of popular legend was taught. Once or twice she could hardly be found in those damp subterranean corridors, having in her endeavours to escape detection lost her way in the labyrinth. For all this she was not in the least daunted or repentant, for, as she assured us, she was never there alone, but in the company of 'beings' she used to call her little 'hunch-backs' and playmates.

Intensely nervous and sensitive, speaking loud, and often walking in her sleep, she used to be found at nights in the most out-of-way places, and to be carried back to her bed profoundly asleep. Thus she was missed from her room one night when she was hardly twelve, and, the alarm having been given, she was searched for and found pacing one of the long subterranean corridors, evidently in deep conversation with someone invisible for all but herself. She was the strangest girl one has ever seen, one with a distinct dual nature in her, that made one think there were two beings in one and the same body; one mischievous, combative, and obstinate — every way graceless; the other as mystical and metaphysically inclined as a seeress of Prevorst. No schoolboy was ever more uncontrollable or full of the most unimaginable and daring pranks and *espiègleries* than she was. At the same time, when the paroxysm of mischief-making had run its course, no old scholar could be more assiduous in his study, and she could not be prevailed to give up her books, which she would devour night and day as long as the impulse lasted. The enormous library of her grandparents seemed then hardly large enough to satisfy her cravings.

Attached to the residence there was a large abandoned garden, a park rather, full of ruined kiosks, pagodas, and out-buildings, which, running up hillward, ended in a virgin forest, whose hardly visible paths were covered knee-deep with moss, and with thickets in it which perhaps no human foot had disturbed for centuries. [Page 24] It was reputed the hiding-place for all the runaway criminals and

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deserters, and it was there that Helen used to take refuge, when the 'catacombs' had ceased to assure her safety."

Her strange temperament and character are thus described in a work called *Juvenile Recollections Compiled for my Children*, by Mme. Jelihowsky, a thick volume of charming stories selected by the author from the diary kept by herself during her girlhood: —

Fancy, or that which we all regarded in these days as fancy, was developed in the most extraordinary way, and from her earliest childhood, in my sister Helen. For hours at times she used to narrate to us younger children, and even to her seniors in years, the most incredible stories with the cool assurance and conviction of an eye-witness, and one who knew what she was talking about. When a child, daring and fearless in everything else, she got often scared into fits through her own hallucinations. She felt certain of being persecuted by what she called 'the terrible glaring eyes,' invisible to everyone else, and often attributed by her to the most inoffensive inanimate objects; an idea that appeared quite ridiculous to the bystanders. As to herself, she would shut her eyes tight during such visions, and run away to hide from the ghostly glances thrown on her by pieces of furniture or articles of dress, screaming desperately, and frightening the whole household. At other times she would be seized with fits of laughter, explaining them by the amusing pranks of her invisible companions. She found these in every dark corner, in every bush of the thick park that surrounded our villa during the summer months ; while in winter, when all our family emigrated back to town, she seemed to meet them again in the vast reception rooms of the first floor, entirely deserted from midnight till morning, Every locked door notwithstanding, Helen was found several times during the night hours in those dark apartments in a half-conscious state, sometimes fast asleep, [Page 25] and unable to say how she got there from our common bedroom on the top story. She disappeared in the same mysterious manner in daytime also. Searched for, called and hunted after, she would be often discovered, with great pains, in the most unfrequented localities; once it was in the dark loft, under the very roof, to which she was traced, amid pigeons' nests, and surrounded by hundreds of those birds. She was 'putting them to sleep' (according to the rules taught in *Solomon's Wisdom*), as she explained. [And, indeed pigeons were found if not asleep still unable to move, and as though stunned in her lap at such times.] At other times behind the gigantic cupboards that contained our grandmother's zoological collection — the old princess's museum of natural history having achieved a wide renown in Russia in those days, — surrounded by relics of fauna, flora, and historical antiquities, amid antediluvian bones of stuffed animals and monstrous birds, the deserter would be found, after hours of search, in deep conversations with seals and stuffed crocodiles. If one could believe Helen, the pigeons were cooing to her interesting fairy tales, while birds and animals, whenever in solitary *tête-à-tête* with her, amused her with interesting stories, presumably from their own autobiographies. For her all nature seemed animated with a mysterious life of its own. She heard the voice of every object and form, whether organic or inorganic; and claimed consciousness and being, not only for some mysterious powers visible and audible for herself alone in what was to everyone else empty space, but even for visible but inanimate things such as pebbles, mounds, and pieces of decaying phosphorescent timber.

With a view of adding specimens to the remarkable entomological collection of our grandmother, as much as for our own instruction and pleasure, diurnal as well as nocturnal expeditions were often arranged. We preferred the latter, as they were more exciting, and had a mysterious charm to us about them. We knew of no greater enjoyment. Our delightful travels in the neighbouring woods would last from 9 P.M. till 1, and often 2, [Page 26] o'clock A.M. We prepared for them with an earnestness that the Crusaders may have experienced when setting out to fight the infidel and dislodge the Turk from

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Palestine. The children of friends and acquaintances in town were invited — boys and girls from twelve to seventeen, and two or three dozen of young serfs of both sexes, all armed with gauze nets and lanterns, as we were ourselves, strengthened our ranks. In the rear followed a dozen of strong grown-up servants, cossacks, and even a *gendarme* or two, armed with real weapons for our safety and protection. It was a merry procession as we set out on it, with beating hearts, and bent with unconscious cruelty on the destruction of the beautiful large night-butterflies for which the forests of the Volga province are so famous. The foolish insects, flying in masses, would soon cover the glasses of our lanterns, and ended their ephemeral lives on long pins and cork burial grounds four inches square. But even in this my eccentric sister asserted her independence. She would protect and save from death all those dark butterflies — known as *sphynxes* — whose dark fur-covered heads and bodies bore the distinct images of a white human skull. ' Nature having imprinted on each of them the portrait of the skull of some great dead hero, these butterflies are sacred, and must not be killed,' she said, speaking like some heathen fetish-worshipper. She got very angry when we would not listen to her, but would go on chasing those ' dead heads' as we called them; and maintained that by so doing we disturbed the rest of the defunct persons whose skulls were imprinted on the bodies of the weird insects.

No less interesting were our day-travels into regions more or less distant. At about ten versts from the Governor's villa there was a field, an extensive sandy tract of land, evidently once upon a time the bottom of a sea or a great lake, as its soil yielded petrified relics of fishes, shells, and teeth of some (to us) unknown monsters. Most of these relics were broken and mangled by time, but one could often find whole stones of various sizes on which were imprinted figures of fishes and plants and animals of kinds now wholly extinct, but [Page 27] which proved their undeniable antediluvian origin. The marvellous and sensational stories that we, children and schoolgirls, heard from Helen during that epoch were countless. I well remember when stretched at full length on the ground, her chin reclining on her two palms, and her two elbows buried deep in the soft sand, she used to dream aloud and tell us of her visions, evidently clear, vivid, and as palpable as life to her! . . . How lovely the description she gave us of the submarine life of all those beings, the mingled remains of which were now crumbling to dust around us. How vividly she described their past fights and battles on the spot where she lay, assuring us she saw it all; and how minutely she drew on the sand with her finger the fantastic forms of the long-dead sea-monsters, and made us almost see the very colours of the fauna and flora of those dead regions. While listening eagerly to her descriptions of the lovely azure waves reflecting the sunbeams playing in rainbow light on the golden sands of the sea bottom, of the coral reefs and stalactite caves, of the sea-green grass mixed with the delicate shining anemones, we fancied we felt ourselves the cool, velvety waters caressing our bodies, and the latter transformed into pretty and frisky sea-monsters; our imagination galloped off with her fancy to a full oblivion of the present reality. She never spoke in later years as she used to speak in her childhood and early girlhood. The stream of her eloquence has dried up, and the very source of her inspiration is now seemingly lost! She had a strong power of carrying away her audiences with her, of making them see actually, if even vaguely, that which she herself saw. . . . Once she frightened all of us youngsters very nearly into fits. We had just been transported into a fairy world, when suddenly she changed her narrative from the past to the present tense, and began to ask us to imagine that all that which she had told us of the cool, blue waves with their dense populations was around us, only invisible and intangible, so far. . . . 'Just fancy! A miracle!' she said ; ' the earth suddenly opening, the air condensing around us and rebecoming sea waves....Look, look there, they begin already appearing and moving. [Page 28] We are surrounded with water, we are right amid the mysteries and the wonders of a submarine world ! . . . '

She had started from the sand, and was speaking with such conviction, her voice had such a ring of real

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amazement, horror, and her childish face wore such a look of a wild joy and terror at the same time, that when, suddenly covering her eyes with both hands, as she used to do in her excited moments, she fell down on the sand screaming at the top of her voice, 'There's the wave . . . it has come! . . . The sea, the sea, we are drowning!' . . . Every one of us fell down on our faces, as desperately screaming and as fully convinced that the sea had engulfed us, and that we were no more! . .

It was her delight to gather around herself a party of us younger children at twilight, and, after taking us into the large dark museum, to hold us there, spell-bound, with her weird stories. Then she narrated to us the most inconceivable tales about herself; the most unheard of adventures of which she was the heroine, every night, as she explained. Each of the stuffed animals in the museum had taken her in turn into its confidence, had divulged to her the history of its life in previous incarnations or existences. Where had she heard of reincarnation, or who could have taught her anything of the superstitious mysteries of metempsychosis, in a Christian family? Yet she would stretch herself on her favourite animal, a gigantic stuffed seal, and caressing its silvery, soft white skin, she would repeat to us his adventures, as told to her by *himself*, in such glowing colours and eloquent style, that even grown-up persons found themselves interested involuntarily in her narratives. They all listened to, and were carried away by the charm of her recitals, the younger audience believing every word she uttered. Never can I forget the life and adventures of a tall white flamingo, who stood in unbroken contemplation behind the glass panes of a large cupboard, with his two scarlet-lined wings widely opened as though ready to take flight, yet chained to his prison cell. He had been ages ago, she told us, no bird, but a real man. He had committed fearful crimes and a murder, for which a great genius had changed him into [Page 29] a flamingo, a brainless bird, sprinkling his two wings with the blood of his victims, and thus condemning him to wander for ever in deserts and marshes. . . .

I dreaded that flamingo fearfully. At dusk, whenever I chanced to pass through the museum to say goodnight to our grandmother, who rarely left her study, an adjoining room, I tried to avoid seeing the blood-covered murderer by shutting my eyes and running quickly by.

If Helen loved to tell us stories, she was still more passionately fond of listening to other people's fairy tales. There was, among the numerous servants of the Fadeef family, an old woman, an under-nurse, who was famous for telling them. The catalogue of her tales was endless, and her memory retained every idea connected with superstition. During the long summer twilights on the green grassy lawn under the fruit trees of the garden, or during the still longer winter evenings, crowding around the flaming fire of our nursery-room, we used to cling to the old woman, and felt supremely happy whenever she could be prevailed upon to tell us some of those popular fairy tales, for which our northern country is so famous. The adventures of 'Ivan Zarewitch,' of 'Kashtey the Immortal,' of the 'Gray-Wolf', the wicked magician travelling in the air in a self-moving sieve; or those of Meletressa, the Fair Princess, shut up in a dungeon until the Zarevitch unlocks its prison door with a gold key, and liberates her — delighted us all. Only, while all we children forgot those tales as easily as we had learned them, Helen never either forgot the stories or consented to recognise them as fictions. She thoroughly took to heart all the troubles of the heroes, and maintained that all their most wonderful adventures were quite natural. People *could* change into animals and take any form they liked, *if they only knew how*; men *could* fly, if they only wished so *firmly*. Such wise men had existed in all ages, and existed even in our own days, she assured us, making themselves known, of course, only to those who were worthy of knowing and seeing them, and who believed in, instead of laughing at, them. . . .

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As a proof of what she said, she pointed to an old man, a centenarian, who lived not far from the villa, in [Page 30] a wild ravine of a neighbouring forest, known as '*Baranig Bouyrak*'. The old man was a real magician, in the popular estimation; a sorcerer of a good, benevolent kind, who cured willingly all the patients who applied to him, but who also knew how to punish with disease those who had sinned. He was greatly versed in the knowledge of the occult properties of plants and flowers, and could read the future, it was said. He kept beehives in great numbers, his hut being surrounded by several hundreds of them. During the long summer afternoons he could be always found at his post, slowly walking among his favourites, covered as with a living cuirass, from head to foot, with swarms of buzzing bees, plunging both his hands with impunity into their dwellings, listening to their deafening noise, and apparently answering them — their buzzing almost ceasing whenever he addressed them in his (to us) incomprehensible tongue, a kind of chanting and muttering. Evidently the golden-winged labourers and their centenarian master understood each other's languages. Of the latter, Helen felt quite sure. '*Baranig Bouyrak*' had an irresistible attraction for her, and she visited the strange old man whenever she could find a chance to do so. Once there, she would put questions and listen to the old man's replies and explanations as to how to understand the language of bees, birds, and animals with a passionate earnestness. The dark ravine seemed in her eyes a fairy kingdom. As to the centenarian '*wise-man*', he used to say of her constantly to us: '*This little lady is quite different from all of you. There are great events lying in wait for her in the future. I feel sorry in thinking that I will not live to see my predictions of her verified; but they will all come to pass! . . .*' "

It would be impossible to write even a slight sketch of Mme. Blavatsky's life without alluding continually to the occult theories on which her own psychological development turns, and I think the narrative will be rendered most intelligible if I frankly explain some of [Page 31] these at the outset, without here being supposed to argue the question as to whether these theories rest upon a correct appreciation of natural laws (operating above and within those of physical existence), or whether they constitute an exclusive hallucination to which her mind has been subject. It will be seen, at all events, that, according to such a view, the hallucination has been very protracted and coherent, so much so that, as I say, the life which has been entirely subordinate to the career marked out for it by those to whom Mme. Blavatsky believes herself, and always has believed herself, guided and protected, would be meaningless without reference to this vitalising thread running through it. Of course I have no wish to disguise my own adhesion to the view of nature on which Mme. Blavatsky's theory of life rests, nor my own conviction concerning the real existence of the living Adepts of occult science with whom I believe Mme. Blavatsky, throughout her life, to have been more or less closely associated. But to argue the matter would convert this memoir into a philosophical treatise going over a great deal of ground more fitly traversed in works of a purely theosophical character. It will be enough for my present purpose to expound the theory on which, as I say, Mme. Blavatsky's comprehension of her own life rests, merely for the sake of rendering the story which has to be set forth intelligible to the reader.

The primary conception of oriental occultism, in reference to the human soul, recognises it as an entity, a moral and intellectual centre of consciousness, which not only survives the death of any physical body in which it may be functioning at any given time, but has also enjoyed many periods of both physical and spiritual existence before its incarnation in that body. In fact, [Page 32] the entity — the real individual according to this view — may be identified by persons with psychic faculties sufficiently developed through a series of lives, and not merely in reference to one. The view of Nature I am describing — the Esoteric Doctrine — quite sufficiently accounts for the fact that, from the point of view of any given body, no incarnated person can command a prospect of the life-series through which he may have passed. Each incarnation, each successive life of the series, is a descent into matter from the point of view of the

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real spiritual entity: a descent into a new organism in which the entity — which is only altogether its true or higher self on the spiritual plane of Nature — may function with greater or less success according to the qualifications of the organism. The *organism* only remembers, with specific detail, the incidents of its own objective life. The true entity animating that organism may perhaps retain the capacity of remembering a great deal more, but not through the organism. Moreover, until the organism is complete — that is to say, until the person concerned is grown up — the true entity is only immersed in it — if I may employ a materialistic illustration to suggest the idea which would be only fully expressible in metaphysical language of great elaboration — to a limited extent. The quite young child, as we ordinarily phrase it, is not a morally responsible being: that is to say, the organism has not attained a development in which the moral sense of the true entity can function through the physical brain and direct physical acts. But the young child is already marked out as in process of becoming the efficient habitat of the entity or soul that has begun to function through its organism; and, therefore, if we imagine that there are in the world living men — adepts in the direction of forces on the [Page 33] higher planes of Nature with which physical science is not yet acquainted — we shall readily understand the peculiar relations that exist between them and a child in process of growing up, and gradually taking into itself a soul that such adepts *are already in relations with*.

Let me repeat that this mere statement of the occult science view of human nature is not put forward as a proof that things are so; but simply because that theory of things will be found a continuous thread upon which the facts of Mme. Blavatsky's life are strung. It may be that, as the story goes on, some readers will develop other theories to account for them, but all I have to say would appear disjointed and incoherent without this brief explanation, while it becomes, at all events, clearly intelligible with that clue to its successive incidents.

In this way I proceed to assume, as a working hypothesis, that even in childhood Mademoiselle Hahn was under the protection of a certain abnormal agency capable even of producing results on the physical plane when in extraordinary emergencies these were called for. For example, I have more than once heard her tell a story of her childhood's days about a great curiosity she entertained in reference to a certain picture — the portrait of one of the ancestors of the family — which hung up in the castle where her grandfather lived, at Saratow, with a curtain before it. It hung at a great height above the ground in a lofty room, and Mademoiselle Hahn was a small mite at the time, though very resolute when her mind was set upon a purpose. She had been denied permission to see the picture, so she waited for an opportunity when the coast was clear, and proceeded to take her own measures for compassing [Page 34] her design. She dragged a table to the wall, and contrived to set another small table on that, and a chair on the top of all, and then gradually succeeded in mounting up on this unstable edifice. She could just manage to reach the picture from this point of vantage, and leaning with one hand against the dusty wall, contrived with the other to draw back the curtain. The effect wrought upon her by the sight of the picture was startling, and the momentary movement back upset her frail platform. But exactly what occurred she does not know. She lost consciousness from the moment she staggered and began to fall, and when she recovered her senses she was lying quite unhurt on the floor, the tables and chair were back again in their usual places, the curtain had been run back upon its rings, and she would have imagined the whole incident some unusual kind of dream but for the fact that the mark of her small hand remained imprinted on the dusty wall high up beside the picture.

On another occasion again her life seems to have been saved under peculiar circumstances, at a time when she was approaching fourteen. A horse bolted with her — she fell, with her foot entangled in the

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stirrup, and before the horse was stopped she ought, she thinks, to have been killed outright but for a strange sustaining power she distinctly felt around her, which seemed to hold her up in defiance of gravitation. If anecdotes of this surprising kind were few and far between in Mme Blavatsky's life I should suppress them in attempting to edit her memoirs, but, as will be seen later, they form the staple of the narratives which each person in turn, who has anything to say about her, comes forward to tell. The records of her return to Russia after her first long wanderings are full of evidence, [Page 35] given by her relatives, compared to which these little anecdotes of her childhood told by herself sink into insignificance as marvels. I refer to them, moreover, not for their own sake, but, as I began by saying, to illustrate the relations which appear to have existed in her early childhood between herself and those whom she speaks of as her Masters", unseen in body, unknown by her at that time as living men, but not unknown to the visions with which her child-life was filled.

In the narrative quoted above, it will have been seen that she was often noticed by her friends sitting apart in corners, when she was not interfered with, apparently talking to herself. By her own account she was at this time talking with playmates of her own size and apparent age, who to her were as real in appearance as if they had been flesh and blood, though they were not visible at all to anyone else about her. Mademoiselle Hahn used to be exceedingly annoyed at the persistent way in which her nurses and relatives refused to take any notice whatever of one little hunchback boy who was her favourite companion at this time. Nobody else was able to take notice of him, for nobody else saw him, but to the abnormally gifted child he was a visible, audible, and amusing companion, though one who seems to have led her into endless mischief. But amidst the strange double life she thus led from her earliest recollections, she would sometimes have visions of a mature protector, whose imposing appearance dominated her imagination from a very early period. This protector was always the same, his features never changed ; in after life she met him as a living man, and knew him as though she had been brought up in his presence.

Students of spiritualism, of occultism, of clairvoyance [Page 36] will find this record strangely confused at the first glance, but I think, by the light of what I have said above in reference to the occult theory of incarnation, people who hold that theory will be excused for thinking that they see their way through the entanglement pretty clearly. Mademoiselle Hahn was born, of course, with all the characteristics of what is known in spiritualism as mediumship in the most extraordinary degree, also with gifts as a clairvoyant of an almost equally unexampled order. And as a child, the time had not come at which it would have been possible for the occult protectors of the entity thus beginning to function in that organism to set on foot any of those processes of physical training by which such natural gifts can be tamed, disciplined, and utilised. They had to run wild for a time; thus we find Mademoiselle Hahn — looking at her childhood's history from the psychological point of view — surrounded by all, or a large number of the usual phenomena of mediumship, and also visibly under the observation and occasional guardianship of the authorities to whose service her mature faculties were altogether given over, to the absolute repression in after life of the casual faculties of mediumship.

Her friends were half-interested, half-terrified by those of her manifestations which they could understand sufficiently to observe. Her aunt says that from the age of four years she was a somnambulist and somniloquent. She would hold, in her sleep, long conversations with unseen personages, some of which were amusing, some edifying, some terrifying for those who gathered around the child's bed. On various occasions, while apparently in the ordinary sleep, she would answer questions, put by persons who took hold [Page 37] of her hand, about lost property or other subjects of momentary anxiety, as though she were

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a sibyl entranced. Sometimes she would be missing from the nursery, and be found in some distant room of the mansion, or in the garden, playing and talking with companions of her dream-life. For years, in childish impulse, she would shock strangers with whom she came in contact, and visitors to the house, by looking them intently in the face and telling them that they would die at such and such a time, or she would prophesy to them some accident or misfortune that would befall them. And since her prognostications usually came true, she was the terror, in this respect, of the domestic circle."

In 1844, the middle of the period during which she was growing up from childhood to girlhood at Saratow, her father took her on her first journey abroad. She accompanied him to Paris and London, a child of fourteen, but a troublesome charge even then and even for him, though in her father's hands she was docile from the point of view of her demeanour in any other custody. One object of the visit to London was to get her some good music lessons, for she showed great natural talents as a pianist — which indeed have lingered about her in later life, though often in total abeyance for many years together. She had some lessons from Moscheles, and even, I understand, played a duet at a private concert with a then celebrated professional pianist. Colonel Hahn and his daughter went to stay for a week in Bath during this visit to England, but the only striking feature of this excursion that I can hear of had to do with a little difficulty that arose between mademoiselle and her father on the subject of riding. She wanted to go on a man's saddle, Cossack fashion, as she had been used [Page 38] to, in face of all protests to the contrary, in Saratow. The Colonel would not tolerate this, so there was a scene, and a fit of hysterics on the part of the young lady, followed by an attack of some more serious illness. He is represented as having been well satisfied to get her home again, and lodge her once more in the congenial wilds of Asia Minor. Her pride in another accomplishment, her knowledge of the English language, received a rude shock during this early visit to London. She had been taught to speak English by her first governess, Miss Jeffries, but in Southern Russia people did not make the fine distinctions between different sorts of English which more fastidious linguists are alive to. The English governess had been a Yorkshire woman, and as soon as Mademoiselle Hahn began to open her lips among friends to whom she was introduced in London, she found her remarks productive of much more amusement than their substance justified. The combination of accents she employed — Yorkshire grafted on Ekaterinoslow — must have had a comical effect, no doubt, but Mdlle Hahn soon came to the conclusion that she had done enough for the entertainment of her friends, and would give forth her hollow o's and a's" no more. With her natural talent for speaking foreign tongues, however, she set her conversation in another key by the time she next visited England in 1851.[Page 39]

CHAPTER 2
MARRIAGE AND TRAVEL

THE marriage by which Madlle Hahn acquired the name she has since been known by took place in 1848. She was then, it will be seen, about seventeen, and General Blavatsky to whom she was united — as far as the ceremonies of the Church were concerned — was, at all events, a man of advanced age. Madame herself believed that he was nearer seventy than sixty. He was himself reluctant to acknowledge to more than about fifty. Other matrimonial opportunities of a far more attractive character were, as I now learn from her relatives, open to her really at the time, but these would have rendered the marriage state, had she entered it with some of her younger admirers, a much more serious matter than she designed it to be in her case. Her demeanor, therefore, with the most desirable of her suitors was purposely intolerable. The actual adventure on which she launched herself — for in its precipitation and brevity it may fairly be described by that phrase — seems to have been brought about by a combination of circumstances that could only have influenced a girl of Mademoiselle Hahn's wild temper and irregular training. Her aunt describes the manner in which the marriage was arranged as follows : —

"She cared not whether she should get married or not. She had been simply defied one day by her governess to find any man who would be her husband, in view of her [Page 40] temper and disposition. The governess, to emphasize the taunt, said that even the old man she had found so ugly, and had laughed at so much, calling him 'a plume-less raven' — that even he would decline her for a wife! That was enough: three days after she made him propose, and then, frightened at what she had done, sought to escape from her joking acceptance of his offer. But it was too late. Hence the fatal step. All she knew and understood was — when *too late* — that she had been accepting, and was now forced to accept — a *master* she cared nothing for, nay, that she hated; that she was *tied* to him by the law of the country, hand and foot. A 'great horror' crept upon her, as she explained it later; one desire, ardent, unceasing, irresistible, got hold of her entire being, led her on, so to say, by the hand, forcing her to act instinctively, as she would have done if, in the act of saving her life, she had been running away from a mortal danger. There had been a distinct attempt to impress her with the solemnity of marriage, with her future obligations and her duties to her *husband*, and married life. A few hours later, at the altar, she heard the priest saying to her: 'Thou shalt honour and obey thy husband', and at this hated word 'shalt,' her young face — for she was hardly seventeen — was seen to flush angrily, then to become deadly pale. She was overheard to mutter in response, through her set teeth — 'Surely, I *shall not*.' "

And surely she has not. Forthwith she determined to take the law and her future life into her own hands, and — he left her 'husband' for ever, without giving him any opportunity to ever even think of her as *his wife*.

"Thus Mme. Blavatsky abandoned her country at seventeen, and passed ten long years in strange and out-of-the-way places — in Central Asia, India, South America, Africa, and Eastern Europe."

At the time the marriage took place, Mademoiselle Hahn was staying with her grandmother and some other relatives at Djellallogly, a mountain retreat frequented in the summer by the residents of Tiflis. The young lady herself had never intended to do more than establish the [Page 41] fact that General Blavatsky would be ready to marry her, but with an engagement regularly set on foot, announced in the family,

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proclaimed to friends, and so forth, with "congratulations" coming in, and the bridegroom claiming its fulfilment, a restoration of the *status quo* was found by the reckless heroine of the complication more easily talked about than obtained. Her friends protested against the scandal that would be created if the engagement were broken off for no apparent reason. Pressed to go on with the wedding, she seems to have consoled herself with the belief that she would be securing herself increased liberty of action as a married woman than ever she could compass as a girl. Her father was altogether off the scene, far away with his regiment in Russia, and though consulted by letter, was not sufficiently acquainted with the facts of the case to take up any decided attitude either way. The ceremony of the marriage, at all events, duly took place on the 7th of July 1848.

Of course the theories concerning the married state entertained by General Blavatsky and his abnormally natured young bride differed *toto coelo*, and came into violent conflict from the day of the wedding — a day of unforeseen revelations, furious indignation, dismay, and belated repentance. Nothing was ever imagined in fiction more extravagant than the progress of the brief and stormy though imperfect partnership. The intelligent reader will understand that a born occultist like Mademoiselle Hahn could never have plunged into a relationship so intolerable, so impossible for her, as that of husband and wife if she had understood on the ordinary plane of human affairs what she was about. The day after the wedding she was conducted by the General to a place called Darechichag, a summer retreat for Erivan residents. She tried already on this journey to make [Page 42] her escape towards the Persian frontier, but the Cossack she sought to win over as her guide in this enterprise betrayed her instead to the General, and she was carefully guarded. The cavalcade duly reached the residence of the governor — the scene of his peculiar honeymoon. Certainly the position in which he was placed commands our retrospective sympathy for some reasons ; but it is impossible to go into a discussion of details that might go far to qualify this. For three months the newly married couple remained together under the same roof, each fighting for impossible concessions, and then at last, in connection with a quarrel more violent even than the rest, the young lady took horse on her own account and rode to Tiflis.

Family councils followed, and it was settled that the unmanageable bride should be sent to join her father. He arranged to meet her at Odessa, and she was despatched in the care of an old servant-man and a maid, to catch at Poti a steamer that would take her to her destination. But her desperate passion for adventure, coupled with apprehensions that her father might endeavour to refasten the broken links of her nuptial bond, led her to design in her own mind an amendment to this programme. She so contrived matters on the journey through Georgia, to begin with, that she and her escort missed the steamer at Poti. But a small English sailing vessel was lying in the harbour. Mme. Blavatsky went on board this vessel — the *Commodore* she believes was the name, and, by a liberal outlay of roubles, persuaded the skipper to fall in with her plans. The *Commodore* was bound first to Kertch, then to Taganrog in the Sea of Azof, and ultimately to Constantinople. Mme. Blavatsky took passage for herself and servants, ostensibly to Kertch. On arriving there, she sent the servants ashore to procure apartments and prepare for her landing [Page 43] the following morning. But in the night, having now shaken herself free of the last restraints that connected her with her past life, she sailed away in the *Commodore* for Taganrog in the first instance, as the vessel had business at that port, and afterwards returning to the Black Sea, for Constantinople.

The little voyage itself seems to have been full of adventures, which, in dealing with a life less crowded with adventures all through, than Mme. Blavatsky's one would stop to chronicle. The harbour police of Taganrog visiting the *Commodore* on her arrival, had to be so managed as not to suspect that an extra

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person was on board. The only available hiding place — amongst the coals — was found unattractive by the passenger, and was assigned to the cabin boy, whose personality she borrowed for the occasion, being stowed away in a bunk on pretence of illness. Later on, when the vessel arrived at Constantinople, further embarrassments had developed themselves, and she had to fly ashore precipitately in a caique with the connivance of the steward to escape the persecutions of the skipper. At Constantinople, however, she had the good fortune to fall in with a Russian lady of her acquaintance, the Countess K-----, with whom she formed a safe intimacy, and travelled for a time in Egypt, Greece, and other parts of Eastern Europe.

Unfortunately, it is impossible for me to do more than sketch the period of her life that we now approach in the meagrest outline. For the full details of her childhood given in the foregoing pages, we are indebted to her relatives. She herself, though frequently able to tell disjointed anecdotes of her childhood, could never have put together so connected a narrative as that obtained from Mme. Jelihowsky, and there was no sister at hand to keep a record of her subsequent adventures during her [Page 44] wanderings all over the world. She never kept diaries during this period, and memory at a distance of time is a very uncertain guide, but if the present record is uneven in its treatment of various periods, I can only point in excuse for this to the obvious embarrassments of my task.

In Egypt, while travelling with the Countess K-----, Mme. Blavatsky already began to pick up some occult teaching, though of a very different and inferior order from that she acquired later. At that time there was an old Copt at Cairo, a man very well and widely known ; of considerable property and influence, and of a great reputation as a magician. The tales of wonder told about him by popular report were very thrilling. Mme. Blavatsky seems to have been a pupil who readily attracted his interest, and was enthusiastic in imbibing his instruction. She fell in with him again in later years, and spent some time with him at Boulak, but her acquaintance with him in the beginning did not last long, as she was only at that time in Egypt for about three months. With an English lady of rank whom she met during this period she also travelled for a time. Her relatives at Tiflis had lost all traces of her from the time the deserted servants at Kertch reported her disappearance, but she herself communicated privately with her father, and secured his consent to her vague programme of foreign travel. He realised the impossibility of inducing her to resume the broken thread of her married life; and, indeed, considering all that had passed, it is not unreasonable to suppose that General Blavatsky himself was ready to acquiesce in the separation. He endeavoured, indeed, to obtain a formal divorce on the ground that his marriage had never been more than a form, and that his wife had run away; but Russian law at the time was not favourable to divorce, and the [Page 45] attempt failed. Colonel Hahn, however, supplied his fugitive daughter with money, and kept her counsel in regard to her subsequent movements. Ten years elapsed before she again saw her relatives, and her restless eagerness for travel carried her during this period to all parts of the world. She kept no diary, and at this distance of time can give no very connected story of these complicated wanderings. Within about a year of their commencement she seems to have been in Paris, where she was intimate with many literary celebrities of the time, and where a famous mesmerist, still living as I write, though an old man now, discovered her wonderful psychic gifts, and was very eager to retain her under his control as a sensitive. But the chains had not yet been forged that could make her prisoner, and she quitted Paris precipitately to escape this influence. She went over to London, and passed some time in company with an old Russian lady of her acquaintance, the Countess B-----, at Mivart's Hotel, whom, however, she outstayed in London, remaining there in company with the Countess's *demoiselle de compagnie* in a big hotel, she says, somewhere between the City and the Strand, "but as to names or numbers, you might as well ask me to tell you what was the number of the house you lived in in your last incarnation."

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Connected as she was in Russia, she naturally met a good many of her own countrymen abroad with whom she was either already acquainted, or who were glad to befriend her. Sometimes, when circumstances were favourable, she would travel with companions thus thrown in her way, at other times altogether alone. Her craving for adventure and for all strange and outlandish places and people was quite insatiable. Her first long flight abroad was prompted by a passionate [Page 46] enthusiasm for the North American Indians, contracted from the perusal of Fennimore Cooper's novels. After a little minor touring about Europe with the Countess B----- in 1850, she welcomed the New Year of 1851 at Paris, and in the July of that year went in pursuit of the Red Indians of her imagination to Canada. Fortunately her illusion on the subject of these heroes was destined to an early dissipation. At Quebec (she believes it was) a party of Indians were introduced to her. She was delighted to encounter the sons of the forest, and even the daughters thereof, their squaws. With some of these she settled down for a long gossip over the mysterious doings of the medicine men. Eventually they disappeared, and with them various articles of Madame's personal property — especially a pair of boots that she greatly prized, and which the resources of Quebec in those days could not replace. The Red Indian of actual fact thus ruined the ideal she had constructed in her fancy. She gave up her search for their wigwams, and developed a new programme. In the first instance, she thought she would try to come to close quarters with the Mormons, then beginning to excite public attention; but their original city, Nauvoo, in Missouri, had just been destroyed by the unruly mob of their less industrious and less prosperous neighbours, and the survivors of the massacre in which so many of their people fell were then streaming across the desert in search of a new home. Mme. Blavatsky thought that under these circumstances Mexico looked an inviting region in which to risk her life next, and she made her way, in the meanwhile, to New Orleans.

This apparently hasty sketch will give the reader no idea of the difficulty with which she has, at this long subsequent period, recalled even so much as is here set [Page 47] down. It has only been by help of public events that she can remember to have heard about at such and such places that I have been enabled to construct a skeleton diary of her wanderings, on which here and there her recollections enable me to put a little flesh and blood. At New Orleans the principal interest of her visit centred in the Voodoos, a sect of negroes, natives of the West Indies, and half-castes, addicted to a form of magic practices that no highly-trained occult student would have anything to do with, but which nevertheless presented attractions to Mme. Blavatsky, not yet far advanced enough in the knowledge held in reserve for her, to distinguish "black" from "white" varieties of mystic exercise. The Voodoos' pretensions were of course discredited by the educated white population of New Orleans, but they were none the less shunned and feared. Mme. Blavatsky might have been drawn dangerously far into association with them, fascinated as her imagination was liable to become by occult mysteries of any kind; but the strange guardianship that had so often asserted itself to her advantage during her childhood — which had by this time assumed a more definite shape, for she had now met, as a living man the long familiar figure of her visions — again come to her rescue. She was warned in a vision of the risk she was running with the Voodoos, and at once moved off to fresh fields and pastures new.

She went through Texas to Mexico, and contrived to see a good deal of that insecure country, protected in these hazardous travels by her own reckless daring, and by various people who from time to time interested themselves in her welfare. She speaks with special gratitude of an old Canadian, a man known as PÈre Jacques, whom she met in Texas, where at the time she was quite without any companionship. He saw her [Page 48] safely through some perils to which she was then exposed, and thus by hook or by crook Madame always managed to scramble along unscathed; though it seems miraculous in the retrospect that she should have been able — young woman at that time as she was — to lead the wild life on which she was embarked without actually incurring disasters. There was no reliance in her

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case, as in that of Moore's heroine, on "Erin's honour and Erin's pride". She passed through rough communities of all kinds, savage as well as civilised, and seems to have been guarded from harm, as assuredly she was guarded, by the sheer force of her own fearlessness, and her fierce scorn for all considerations however remotely associated with the "magnetism of sex".

During her American travels, which for this period lasted about a year, she was lucky enough to receive a considerable legacy bequeathed her by one of her godmothers. This put her splendidly in funds for a time, though it is much to be regretted on her account that the money was not served out to her in moderate instalments, for the temperament, which the facts of her life so far even will have revealed, may easily be recognised as one not likely to go with habits of prudent expenditure. Madame, in the course of her adventures, has often shown that she can meet poverty with indifference, and battle with it in any way that may be necessary, but with her pockets full of money, her impulse has always been to throw it away with both hands. She is wholly unable to explain how she ran through her 80,000 roubles, except that amongst other random purchases she bought land in America, the very situation of which she has long since totally forgotten, besides having, as a matter of course, lost all the papers that had any reference to the transaction.

She resolved during her Mexican wanderings that she [Page 49] would go to India, fully alive already to the necessity of seeking beyond the northern frontiers of that country for the further acquaintanceship of those great teachers of the highest mystic science, with whom the guardian of her visions was associated in her mind. She wrote, therefore, to a certain Englishman, whom she had met in Germany two years before, and whom she knew to be on the same quest as herself, to join her in the West Indies, in order that they might go to the East together. He duly came, but the party was further augmented by the addition of a Hindu whom Mme. Blavatsky met at Copau, in Mexico, and whom she soon ascertained to be what is called a "chela", or pupil of the Masters, or adepts of oriental occult science. The three pilgrims of mysticism went out *via* the Cape to Ceylon, and thence in a sailing ship to Bombay, where, as I make out the dates, they must have arrived at quite the end of 1852.

A dispersion of the little party soon followed, each being bent on somewhat different ends. Madame would not accept the guidance of the Chela, and was bent on an attempt of her own to get into Tibet through Nepal. For the time her attempt failed, chiefly, she believes, as far as external and visible difficulties were concerned, through the opposition of the British resident then in Nepal. Mme. Blavatsky went down to Southern India, and then on to Java and Singapore, returning thence to England.

1853, however, was an unfortunate year for a Russian to visit this country. The preparations for the Crimean War were distressing to Mme. Blavatsky's patriotism, and she passed over at the end of the year again to America, going this time to New York, and thence out West, first to Chicago, then an infant city compared to the Chicago of the present day, and afterwards to the Far West, and across the Rocky Mountains with emigrants' [Page 50] caravans, till ultimately she brought up for a time in San Francisco. Her stay in America was prolonged on this occasion altogether to something like two years, and she then made her way a second time to India *via* Japan and the Straits, reaching Calcutta in the course of 1855.

In reference to her prolonged wanderings her aunt writes: —

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"For the first eight years she gave her mother's family no sign of life for fear of being traced by her legitimate 'lord and master', Her father alone knew of her whereabouts. Knowing, however, that he would never prevail upon her to return home, he acquiesced in her absence, and supplied her with money whenever she came to places where it could safely reach her."

During her travels in India in 1856 she was overtaken at Lahore by a German gentleman known to her father, who, — in association with two friends, having laid out a journey in the East on his own account, with a mystic purpose in view, in reference to which fate did not grant him the success that attended Mme. Blavatsky's efforts — had been asked by Colonel Hahn to try if he could find his errant daughter. The four compatriots travelled together for a time, and went through Kashmir to Leli in Ladakh in company with a Tartar Shaman, who was instrumental in helping them to witness some psychological wonders wrought at a Buddhist monastery. Her companions, Mme. Blavatsky explains, had all formed what, referring to the incident in *Isis Unveiled*, she calls "the unwise plan of penetrating into Tibet under various disguises — none of them speaking the language, although one of them, a Mr K-----, had picked up some Kasan Tartar, and thought he did". The passage in *Isis* rather too long for quotation here. It begins on page 599, vol. ii of that book, and describes the [Page 51] animation of an infant by the psychic principles of the old Lama, the superior of the monastery. The passage as given in his is taken from a narrative written by Mr K-----, and put by him in Mme. Blavatsky's hands, and corresponds in outline to similar marvels related by the Abbé Huc in the *first edition* of his *Recollections of Travel in Tartary, Tibet, and China*. In the later editions of that book the testimony the author gives to the wonders he witnessed in Tibet is all cut down and mutilated. His story was found to be too striking in recognition of "miracles" that were not, under the direction of the church, to be tolerated by the authorities in its earlier form ; but the first edition of the book can still be seen at the British Museum, where I have verified the accuracy of the quotation given in *Isis*.

In reference to the journey in the course of which the Russian travellers witnessed the transaction at the Buddhist monastery, Mme. Blavatsky writes: —

"Two of them, the brothers N-----, were very politely brought back to the frontier before they had walked sixteen miles into the weird land of Eastern Bod, and Mr K-----, an ex-Lutheran minister, could not even attempt to leave his miserable village near Leli, as from the first days he found himself prostrated with fever, and had to return to Lahore *via* Kashmir."

The Tartar Shaman, referred to above, rendered Mme. Blavatsky more substantial assistance in her efforts to penetrate into Tibet than he was able to afford to her companions. Investing her with an appropriate disguise, he conducted her successfully across the frontier, and far on into the generally inaccessible country. It was to this journey that she vaguely refers in a striking passage occurring in the last chapter of *Isis Unveiled*. As the narrative, though given in *Isis* without any of [Page 52] the surrounding circumstances, fits here into its proper place in these records, I quote it at full length. Reference has just been made to certain talismans which each shaman carries under his left arm, attached to a string. Mme. Blavatsky goes on : —

" ' Of what use is it to you, and what are its virtues ? ' was the question we often offered to our guide. To this he never answered directly, but evaded all explanation, promising that as soon as an opportunity was offered and we were alone, he would ask the stone *to answer for himself*. With this very indefinite hope

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we were left to the resources of our own imagination.

"But the day on which the stone 'spoke' came very soon. It was during the most critical hours of our life; at a time when the vagabond nature of a traveller had carried the writer to far-off lands where neither civilisation is known nor security can be guaranteed for one hour. One afternoon, as every man and woman had left the *yourta* (Tartar tent) that had been our house for over two months, to witness the ceremony of the Lamaic exorcism of Tshoutgour, [An elemental demon, in which every native of Asia believes.'] accused of breaking and spiriting away every bit of the poor furniture and earthenware of a family living about two miles distant, the Shaman, who had become our only protector in those dreary deserts, was reminded of his promise. He sighed and hesitated, but after a short silence, left his place on the sheepskin, and going outside, placed a dried-up goat's head with its prominent horns over a wooden peg, and then dropping down the felt curtain of the tent, remarked that now no living person would venture in, for the goat's head was a sign that he was 'at work.'

"After that, placing his hand in his bosom, he drew out the little stone, about the size of a walnut, and, carefully unwrapping it, proceeded, as it appeared, to swallow it. In a few moments his limbs stiffened, his body became rigid, and he fell, cold and motionless as a corpse. But for a slight twitching of his lips at every question asked, the scene would have been embarrassing, nay dreadful. [Page 53] The sun was setting, and were it not that the dying embers flickered at the centre of the tent, complete darkness would have been added to the oppressive silence which reigned. We have lived in the prairies of the West, and in the boundless steppes of Southern Russia; but nothing can be compared with the silence at sunset on the sandy deserts of Mongolia; not even the barren solitudes of the deserts of Africa, though the former are partially inhabited, and the latter utterly void of life. Yet, there was the writer, alone with what looked no better than a corpse lying on the ground. Fortunately this state did not last long.

" ' Mahaudû !' uttered a voice which seemed to come from the bowels of the earth, on which the Shaman was prostrated, ' Peace be with you. What would you have me do for you ? '

"Startling as the fact seemed, we were quite prepared for it, for we had seen other Shamans pass through similar performances. 'Whoever you are', we pronounced mentally, 'go to K-----, and try to bring that person's thought here. See what that other party does, and tell ----- what we are doing and how situated.'

" ' I am there,' announced the same voice. ' The old lady (kokona) is sitting in the garden. . . . she is putting on her spectacles and reading a letter.'

" 'The contents of it, and hasten', was the hurried order, while preparing note-book and pencil. The contents were given slowly, as if, while dictating, the invisible presence desired to put down the words phonetically, for we recognised the Vallachian language, of which we knew nothing beyond the ability to recognise it. In such a way a whole page was filled.

" ' Look west . . . toward the third pole of the *yourta*,' pronounced the Tartar in his natural voice, though it sounded hollow, and as if coming from afar. 'Her *thought* is here.'

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"Then with a convulsive jerk the upper portion of the Shaman's body seemed raised, and his head fell heavily on the writer's feet, which he clutched with both his hands. The position was becoming less and less attractive, but curiosity proved a good ally to courage. [Page 54] In the west corner was standing, life-like, but flickering unsteady, and mist-like, the form of a dear old friend, a Roumanian lady of Vallachia, a mystic by disposition, but a thorough disbeliever in this kind of occult phenomena.

" 'Her thought is here, but her body is lying unconscious. We could not bring her here otherwise', said the voice.

"We addressed and supplicated the apparition to answer, but all in vain. The features moved and the form gesticulated as if in fear and agony, but no sound broke forth from the shadowy lips; only we imagined — perchance it was a fancy — hearing, as if from a long distance, the Roumanian words, '*Non se pote*' ('It cannot be done').

"For over two hours the most substantial, unequivocal proofs that the Shaman's astral soul was travelling at the bidding of our unspoken wish were given us. Ten months later, we received a letter from a Vallachian friend in response to ours, in which we had enclosed the page from the note-book, inquiring of her what she had been doing on that day, and describing the scene in full. She was sitting, she wrote, in the garden on that morning, [The hour in Bucharest corresponded perfectly with that of the country in which the scene had taken place.] prosaically occupied in boiling some conserves; the letter sent to her was word for word the copy of the one received by her from her brother; all at once, in consequence of the heat she thought, she fainted, and remembered distinctly *dreaming* she saw the writer in a desert place, which she accurately described, and sitting under a gipsy's tent,' as she expressed it. ' Henceforth,' she added, 'I can doubt no longer'.

"But our experiment was proved better still. We had directed the Shaman's Inner Eye to the same friend heretofore mentioned in this chapter, the Kutchi of Lhassa, who travels constantly to British India and back. *We know* that he was apprised of our critical situation in the desert; for a few hours later came help, and we were rescued by a party of twenty-five horsemen, who had been directed by their chief to find us at the place where we were, which no living man endowed with common powers could have known. The chief of this [Page 55] escort was a Shaberon, an 'adept' whom we had never seen before, nor did we after that, for he never left his *soumay* (lamasary), and we could have no access to it. ... But he was a personal friend of the Kutchi."

This incident put an end for the time to Mme. Blavatsky's wanderings in Tibet. She was conducted back to the frontier by roads and passes of which she had no previous knowledge, and after further travels in India, was directed by her occult guardian to leave the country, shortly before the troubles which began in 1857.

She went in a Dutch vessel from Madras to Java, and thence returned to Europe in 1858.

Meanwhile the fate to which she has been so freely exposed all through her later life was already asserting itself to her disadvantage, and without, up to this time, having challenged the world's

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antagonism, by associating her name with tales of wonder, she, nevertheless, already found herself — or rather, in her absence, her friends found her — the mark for slanders, no less extravagant, in a different way, than some that have been aimed at her quite recently by people claiming to take an interest in psychic phenomena, but unable to tolerate those reported to have been brought about by her agency. Her aunt writes: " Faint rumours reached her friends of her having been met in Japan, China, Constantinople, and the far East. She passed through Europe several times, but never lived in it. Her friends, therefore, were as much surprised as pained to read, years afterwards, fragments from her supposed biography, which spoke of her as a person well known in the *high life*, as well as the *low*, of Vienna, Berlin, Warsaw, and Paris, and mixed her name with events and anecdotes whose scene was laid in these cities, at various epochs, when her friends had every possible proof of her being far [Page 56] away from Europe. These anecdotes referred to her indifferently under the several Christian names of Julie, Nathalie, etc which were those really of other persons of the same surname; and attributed to her various extravagant adventures. Thus the *Neue Freie Presse* spoke of Madame Heloise (?) Blavatsky, a non-existing personage, who had joined the Black Hussars — les *Huzzards de la Mart* — during the Hungarian revolution, her sex being found out only in 1849." Similar stories, equally groundless, were circulated at a later date. Anticipating this, her aunt goes on : —

"Another journal of Paris narrated the story of Mme. Blavatsky, 'a Pole from the Caucasus' (?), a supposed relative of Baron Hahn of Lemberg, who, after taking an active part in the Polish Revolution of 1863 (during the whole of which time Mme. H. P. Blavatsky was quietly living with her relatives at Tiflis), was compelled, from lack of means, to serve as a female waiter in a '*restaurant du Faubourg St Antoine*'. "

These, and many other infamous stories circulated by idle gossips, were laid at the door of Mme. Blavatsky, the heroine of our narrative.

On her return from India in 1858, Mme. Blavatsky did not go straight to Russia, but, after spending some months in France and Germany, rejoined her own people at last in the midst of a family wedding-party at Pskoff, in the north-west of Russia, about 180 miles from St Petersburg.

Concerning the next few years of Mme. Blavatsky's life, we are furnished with ample details by means of narrative written at the time by her sister, Mme. V. P.de Jelihowsky, and published in 1881 in a Russian periodical — the *Rebus* — as a series of papers, headed, "The Truth about H. P. Blavatsky". To this source of information we may now turn. [Page 57]

CHAPTER 3

AT HOME IN RUSSIA, 1858

IN the course of certain *Personal and Family Reminiscences*, put together by Mme de Jelihowsky, she explains the attitude of mind in which she was brought up, interesting both as bearing on the narrative she has to relate and also as connected with the family history of the subject of this memoir. She writes:

"I was born and bred in a strictly orthodox, sincerely religious, yet far from being mystically-inclined, family. But if the spirit of mysticism had failed to influence its members, it was not in consequence of any predetermined policy of an *a priori* denial of everything unknown, or of a tendency to sneer at the incomprehensible only because it is far beyond one's capacities and nature to take it in; but as 'highly educated and polished people' can hardly be expected to confess their mental and intellectual failings, hence the conscious efforts of playing at incredulity and *esprits forts*. Nothing of the sort was to be found in our family. Nor was there any great superstition or bigotry amongst them — two feelings the best calculated to generate and develop faith in the supernatural. But when, at the age of sixteen, I had to part with my mother's family, in which I had been brought up since her death, and went to live with my father, I met in him a man of quite a different 'nature. He was an extreme sceptic, a deist, if anything, and one of a most practical turn of mind; a highly intellectual and even a scientific man, one who [Page 58] knew and had seen a great deal in life, but whose erudition and learning had been developed in full accordance with his own personal views, and not at all in any spirit of humility before the truths of Christianity, or blind belief in man's immortality and life beyond the grave."

In 1858, when Mme. Blavatsky returned to Russia, her sister, the writer of the reminiscences from which I have just quoted, bore the name of Yahontoff — that of her first husband, who had died shortly before that date. She was staying at Pskoff with General N. A. Yahontoff — *Maréchal de Noblesse* of that place — her late husband's father. A wedding-party, that of her sister-in-law, was in progress, and Colonel Hahn was amongst the guests. On Christmas night, Mme. de Jelihowsky writes, "They were all sitting at supper, carriages loaded with guests were arriving one after the other, and the hall bell kept ringing without interruption. At the moment when the bridegroom's best men arose, with glasses of champagne in their hands, to proclaim their good wishes for the happy couple — a solemn moment in Russia — the bell was again rung impatiently. Mme. Yahontoff, Mme. Blavatsky's sister, moved by an irrepressible impulse, and notwithstanding that the hall was full of servants, jumped up from her place at the table, and, to the amazement of all, rushed herself to open the door. She felt convinced, she said afterwards, though why she could not tell, that it was her long lost sister! "

For some time this memoir will closely follow Mme. de Jelihowsky's narrative, now translated into English for the first time, but it will be unnecessary to load every page with quotation marks. Where the first person is used, it will be understood that Mme de [Page 59] Jelihowsky is speaking, although she also frequently refers to herself in the third person, as the narrative was originally published in Russia anonymously. When I, the present editor, have occasion to intervene with comments, such passages will be enclosed in brackets.

Spiritism (or spiritualism) was then just looming on the horizon of Europe, During her travels, the

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psychological peculiarities of Mme. Blavatsky's childhood and girlhood had developed, and she returned already possessed of occult powers, which were in those days attributed to mediumship.

These powers asserted themselves in strange incessant knocks and raps and sounds, which many hearers mistook for the *esprits frappeurs*; in the moving of furniture without contact, in the increase and the decrease of the weight of various objects, in her faculty of seeing herself (and occasionally of transferring that faculty to others) things invisible to ordinary sight, and living but absent persons who had resided years ago in the places where she happened to be, as well as spectral images of personages dead at various epochs.

Well acquainted with a number of facts of the most striking character which have happened at that period of her life (which, however, has not lasted very long, as she succeeded very soon in conquering and even obtaining mastery over the influence of forces that surrounded her), I will describe only those phenomena of which I was an eye-witness.

For this I must return to the night of Mme. Blavatsky's arrival.

From that time all those who were living in the house remarked that strange things were taking place in it. Raps and whisperings, sounds, mysterious and [Page 60] unexplained, were now being constantly heard wherever the newly arrived inmate went. Not only did they occur in her presence and near her, but knocks were heard, and movements of the furniture perceived nearly in every room in the house, on the walls, the floor, the windows, the sofa, cushions, mirrors, and clocks ; on every piece of furniture, in short, about the rooms. However much Mme. Blavatsky tried to conceal these facts, laughing at them and trying to turn these manifestations into fun, it was useless for her to deny the fact or the occult significance of these sounds. At last, to the incessant questions of her sister, she confessed that those manifestations had never ceased to follow her everywhere as in the early days of her infancy and youth. That such raps could be increased or diminished, and at times even made to cease altogether, by the mere force of her will, she also acknowledged, proving her assertion generally on the spot. Of course the good people of Pskoff, like the rest of the world, knew what was then occurring, and had heard of spiritualism and its manifestations. There had been mediums in Petersburg, but they had not penetrated as far as Pskoff, and its guileless inhabitants had never heard the rappings of the so-called spirit.

[All who have become acquainted with Mme. Blavatsky in the present phase of her development will be aware of the eagerness with which she repudiates the least trace of mediumship as entering into the phenomena with which she had been associated in recent years. In 1858 she appears to have been in a transition state, already invested with occult will-power, which put her in a position to repress the manifestations of mediumship in emergencies, but still liable to their spontaneous occurrence when they were not thus under repression. [Page 61] Expressly asked the question, she would always deny that she was a medium — which, indeed, she would appear no longer to have been, in the strict sense of the term — for she does not seem to have been *controlled* by the agencies recognised in spiritualism, even when sometimes acquiescing in casual manifestations on their part. Mme. de Jelihowsky, questioned on this subject recently, says: "I remember that when addressed as a medium, she (Mme. Blavatsky) used to laugh and assure us she was no medium, but only a *mediator* between mortals and beings we knew nothing about. But I could never understand the difference."

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This may be the best opportunity for bringing to the reader's notice some passages from Mme. Jelihowsky's *Personal and Family Reminiscences* which bear on the point, an important one as regards all psychic students of Mme. Blavatsky's phenomena and characteristics.

Her sister says :—

"Although everyone had supposed that the manifestations occurring in H. P. Blavatsky's presence were the results of a mediumistic power pertaining to her, she herself had always obstinately denied it. My sister H. P. Blavatsky had passed most of her time, during her many years' absence from Russia, travelling in India, where, as we are now informed, spiritual theories are held in great scorn, and the so-called (by us) mediumistic phenomena are said to be caused by quite another agency than that of spirits; mediumship proceeding, they say, from a source, to draw from which, my sister thinks it degrading to her human dignity; in consequence of which ideas she refuses to acknowledge such a force in herself. From letters received by me from my sister, I found she had been dissatisfied with much that I had said of her in my 'Truth about H. P. Blavatsky.' She still maintains, now as then, that in those days (of 1860) she was influenced as well as she is now by quite [Page 62] another kind of power — namely, that of the Indian sages, the *Raj-Yogis* — and that even the shadows (figures) she sees all her life, are no phantoms, no ghosts of the deceased, but only the manifestations of her powerful friends in their astral envelopes. However it may be, and whatever the power that produced her phenomena only, during the whole time that she lived with us at the Yahontoff such phenomena happened constantly before the eyes of all, believers and unbelievers (relatives and outsiders) — and they plunged everyone equally into amazement."

As this memoir is a narrative and not an occult treatise, I refrain from any minute analysis of the psychological problem involved, and would only point out that the condition of things Mme. de Jelihowsky refers to, chimes in with the rough explanation I gave in the first chapter as to the occult theory of Mme. Blavatsky's development, which would recognise her natural born, physical attributes as only coming under control when the higher faculties of her real self, entering into union with the bodily organism as this reached maturity, put her in a position to be taught how to eradicate the weed-growth of her abnormally fertile psychic faculties.]

With the arrival of Mme. Blavatsky at Pskoff, the news about the extraordinary phenomena produced by her spread abroad like lightning, turning the whole town topsy-turvy.

The fact is, that the sounds were not simple raps, but something more, as they showed extraordinary intelligence, disclosing the past as well as the future to those who held converse through them with those Mme. Blavatsky called her *kikimorcy* (or spooks). More than that, for they showed the gift of disclosing unexpressed thoughts, *i.e.* penetrating freely into the most secret recesses of [Page 63] the human mind, and divulging past deeds and present intentions.

The relatives of Mme. Blavatsky's sister were leading a very fashionable life, and received a good deal of company in those days. Her presence attracted a number of visitors, no one of whom ever left her unsatisfied, for the raps which she evoked gave answers, composed of long discourses in several languages, some of which were unknown to the *medium*, as she was called. The poor "medium" became

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subjected to every kind of test, to which she submitted very gracefully, no matter how absurd the demand, as a proof that she did not bring about the phenomena by juggling. It was her usual habit to sit very quietly and quite unconcerned on the sofa, or in an arm-chair, engaged in some embroidery, and apparently without taking the slightest interest or active part in the hubbub which she produced around herself. And the hubbub was great indeed. One of the guests would be reciting the alphabet, another putting down the answers received, while the mission of the rest was to offer mental questions, which were always and promptly answered. It so happened, however, that the unknown and invisible things at work favoured some people more than others, while there were those who could obtain no answers whatever. In the latter case, instead of replying to queries asked aloud, the raps would answer the unexpressed mental thought of some other person, first calling him by name. During that time, conversations and discussions in a loud tone were carried on around her. Mistrust and irony were often shown, and occasionally even a doubt expressed, in a very indelicate way, as to the good faith of Mme. Blavatsky. But she bore it all very coolly and patiently, a strange and puzzling smile or an ironical shrugging of the [Page 64] shoulders being her only answer to questions of very doubtful logic offered to her over and over again.

"But how do you *do it*, and what *is it* that raps ? " people kept on asking. Or again, "but how can you so well guess people's thought ? How could *you* know that I had thought of this or that ? "

At first H. P. B. sought very zealously to prove to people that she did not produce the phenomena, but very soon she changed her tactics. She declared herself tired of such discussions, and silence and a contemptuous smile became for some time her only answer. Again she would change as rapidly; and in moments of good-humour, when people would be foolishly and openly expressing the most insulting doubts of her honesty, instead of resenting them she used to laugh aloud in their faces. Indeed, the most absurd hypotheses were offered by the sceptics. For instance, it was suggested that she might produce her loud raps by the means of a machine in her pocket, or that she rapped with her nails; the most ingenious theory being that "when her hands were visibly occupied with some work, she did it with her toes."

To put an end to all this, she allowed herself to be subjected to the most stupid demands ; she was searched, her hands and feet were tied with string, she permitted herself to be placed on a soft sofa, to have her shoes taken off and her hands and feet held fast against a soft pillow, so that they should be seen by all, and then she was asked that the knocks and rappings should be produced at the further end of the room. Declaring that she would try, but would promise nothing, her orders were, nevertheless, immediately accomplished, especially when the people were seriously interested. These raps were produced at her command on the ceiling, on the [Page 65] window sills, on every bit of furniture in the adjoining room, and in places quite distant from her.

At times she would wickedly revenge herself by practical jokes on those who so doubted her. Thus, for example, the raps which came one day inside the glasses of the young Professor M-----, while she was sitting at the other side of the room, were so strong that they fairly knocked the spectacles off his nose, and made him become pale with fright. At another time, a lady, an *esprit fort*, very vain and coquettish, to her ironical question of what was the best conductor for the production of such raps, and whether they could be done everywhere, received a strange and very puzzling answer. The word, "Gold", was rapped out, and then came the words, "We will prove it to you immediately".

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The lady kept smiling with her mouth slightly opened. Hardly had the answer come, than she became very pale, jumped from her chair, and covered her mouth with her hand. Her face was convulsed with fear and astonishment. Why ? Because she had felt raps in her mouth, as she confessed later on. Those present looked at each other significantly. Previous even to her own confession all had understood that the lady had felt a violent commotion and raps *in the gold* of her artificial teeth! And when she rose from her place and left the room with precipitation, there was a homeric laugh among us at her expense. **[Page 66]**

CHAPTER 4

MM DE JELIHOWSKY'S NARRATIVE

IT is impossible to give in detail even a portion of what was produced in the way of such phenomena during the stay of Mme. Blavatsky amongst us in the town of Pskoff. But they may be mentioned under general classification as follows : —

1. Direct and perfectly clear written and verbal answers to mental questions — or "thought-reading".
2. Prescriptions for different diseases, in Latin, and subsequent cures.
3. Private secrets, unknown to all but the interested party, divulged, especially in the case of those persons who mentioned insulting doubts.
4. Change of weight in furniture and of persons at will.
5. Letters from unknown correspondents, and immediate answers written to queries made, and found in the most out-of-the-way mysterious places. [Thus a governess, named Leontine, who wanted to know the fate of a certain young man she had hoped to be married to, learnt what had become of him ; his name, that she had purposely withheld, being given in full — from a letter written in an unknown handwriting she found in one of her locked boxes, placed inside a trunk equally locked.]
6. Appearances and *apport* of objects unclaimed by any one present. [Page 67]
7. Sounds as of musical notes in the air wherever Mme. Blavatsky desired they should resound.

All these surprising and inexplicable manifestations of an intelligent, and at times, I should almost say, an omniscient force, produced a sensation in Pskoff, where there yet remain many who remember it well. Truth compels us to remark that the answers were not always in perfect accord with the facts, but seemed purposely distorted as though for the purpose of making fun, especially of those querists who expected infallible prophecies.

Nevertheless, the fact remains of the manifestation of an intelligent force, capable of perceiving the thoughts and feelings of any person; as also of expressing them by rappings and motions in inanimate objects. The following two occurrences took place in the presence of many eye-witnesses during the stay of Mme. Blavatsky with us.

As usual, those nearest and dearest to her were, at the same time, the most skeptical as to her occult powers. Her brother Leonide and her father stood out longer than all against evidence, until at last the

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doubts of the former were greatly shaken by the following fact.

The drawing-room of the Yahontoffs was full of visitors. Some were occupied with music, others with cards, but most of us, as usual, with phenomena. Leonide de Hahn did not concern himself with anything in particular, but was leisurely walking about, watching everybody and everything. He was a strong, muscular youth, saturated with the Latin and German wisdom of the University, and believed, so far, in no one and nothing. He stopped behind the back of his sister's chair, and was listening to her narratives of how some persons, who called themselves mediums, made light objects become so heavy that it was impossible to lift them; and others which were naturally heavy became again remarkably light.[Page 68]

"And you mean to say that you can do it ? " ironically asked the young man of his sister.

"Mediums can, and I have done it occasionally; though I cannot always answer for its success", coolly replied Mme. Blavatsky.

"But would you try ? " asked somebody in the room; and immediately all joined in requesting her to do so.

"I will try", she said, "but I beg of you to remember that I promise nothing. I will simply fix this chess-table and try. ... He who wants to make the experiment, let him lift it now, and then try *again after I shall have fixed it.*"

"After you shall have fixed it ? " said a voice, " and what then ? Do you mean to say that you will not touch the table at all ? "

"Why should I touch it ? " answered Mme. Blavatsky, with a quiet smile.

Upon hearing the extraordinary assertion, one of the young men went determinedly to the small chess-table, and lifted it up as though it were a feather.

"All right", she said. "Now kindly leave it alone, and stand back! "

The order was at once obeyed, and a great silence fell upon the company. All, holding their breath, anxiously watched for what Mme. Blavatsky would do next. She apparently, however, did nothing at all. She merely fixed her large blue eyes upon the chess-table, and kept looking at it with an intense gaze. Then, without removing her gaze, she silently, with a motion of her hand, invited the same young man to remove it. He approached, and grasped the table by its leg with great assurance. The table *could not be moved !*

He then seized it with both his hands. The table stood as though screwed to the floor.

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Then the young man, crouching down, took hold of [Page 69] it with both hands, exerting all his strength to lift it by the additional means of his broad shoulders. He grew red with the effort, but all in vain! The table seemed rooted to the carpet, and would not be moved. There was a loud burst of applause. The young man, looking very much confused, abandoned his task *en désespoir de cause*, and stood aside.

Folding his arms in quite a Napoleonic way, he only slowly said, "Well, this is a good joke ! "

"Indeed, it is a good one ! " echoed Leonide.

A suspicion had crossed his mind that the young visitor was acting in secret confederacy with his sister and was fooling them.

"May I also try ? " he suddenly asked her,

"Please do, my dear", was the laughing response.

Her brother upon this approached, smiling, and seized, in his turn, the diminutive table by its leg with his strong muscular arm. But the smile instantly vanished, to give place to an expression of mute amazement. He stepped back a little and examined again very carefully the, to him, well-known chess-table. Then he gave it a tremendous kick, but the little table did not even budge.

Suddenly applying to its surface his powerful chest he enclosed it within his arms, trying to shake it. The wood cracked, but would yield to no effort. Its three feet seemed screwed to the floor. Then Leonide Hahn lost all hope, and abandoning the ungrateful task, stepped aside, and frowning, exclaimed but these two words, "How strange! " his eyes turning meanwhile with a wild expression of astonishment from the table to his sister.

We all agreed that this exclamation was not too strong.

The loud debate had meanwhile drawn the attention of several visitors, and they came pouring in from the drawing-room into the large apartment where we were. [Page 70]

Many of them, old and young, tried to lift up, or even to impart some slight motion to, the obstinate little chess-table. They failed, like the rest of us.

Upon seeing her brother's astonishment, and perchance desiring finally to destroy his doubts, Mme. Blavatsky, addressing him with her usual careless laugh, said, "Try to lift the table now, once more I "

Leonide H. approached the little thing very irresolutely, grasped it again by the leg, and, pulling it

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upwards, came very near to dislocating his arm owing to the useless effort: the table was lifted like a feather this time [Madame Blavatsky has stated that this phenomenon could only be produced in two different ways:

1st.. Through the exercise of her own will directing the magnetic currents so that the pressure on the table became such that no physical force could move it ; and

2nd. Through the action of those beings with whom she was in constant communication, and who, although unseen, were able to hold the table against all opposition.]

And now to our second case. It occurred in St Petersburg, a few months later, when Mme. Blavatsky had already left Pskoff with her father and sister, and when all three were living in a hotel. They had come to St Petersburg on business on their way to Mme. Yahontoff's property, in the district of Novorgeff, where they had decided to pass the summer. All their forenoons were occupied with business, their afternoons and evenings with making and receiving visits, and there was no time for, or even mention of, phenomena.

One night they received a visit from two old friends of their father; both were old gentlemen, one of them a school-fellow of the *Corps des Pages*, Baron M-----, the other the well-known K-----w. [Sceptics who insist upon having the full names are invited to apply to the writer of the above, Mme de Jelihowsky, St Petersburg, Zabalkansky Prospect, No. 10 house, r.31 apartment'] Both were much [Page 71] interested in recent spiritualism, and were, of course, anxious to see something.

After a few successful phenomena, the visitors declared themselves positively delighted, amazed, and quite at a loss what to make of Mme. Blavatsky's powers. They could neither understand nor account, they said, for her father's indifference in presence of such manifestations. There he was, coolly laying out his "*grande patience*" with cards, while phenomena of such a wonderful nature were occurring around him. The old gentleman, thus taken to task, answered that it was all bosh, and that he would not hear of such nonsense; such occupation being hardly worthy of serious people, he added. The rebuke left the two old gentlemen unconcerned. They began, on the contrary, to insist that Colonel Hahn should, for old friendship's sake, make an experiment, before denying the importance, or even the possibility of his daughter's phenomena. They offered him to test the *intelligences* and their power by writing a word in another room, secretly from all of them, and then asking the raps to repeat it. The old gentleman, more probably in the hope of a failure that would afford him the opportunity of laughing at his two old friends, than out of a desire to humour them, finally consented. He left his cards, and proceeding into an adjoining room, wrote a word on a bit of paper; after which, conveying it to his pocket, he returned to his *patience*, and waited silently, laughing behind his grey moustache.

"Well, our dispute will now be settled in a few moments", said K-----w. "What shall you say, however, old friend, if the word written by you is correctly repeated? Will you not feel compelled to believe in such a case ? "

"What I might say, *if* the word were correctly [Page 72] guessed, I could not tell at present", he skeptically

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replied. "One thing I could answer, however, from the time I can be made to believe your alleged spiritism and its phenomena, I shall be ready to believe in the existence of the devil, undines, sorcerers, and witches — in the whole paraphernalia — in short, of old women's superstitions; and you may prepare to offer me as an inmate of a lunatic asylum."

Upon delivering himself thus, he went on with his *patience*, and paid no further attention to the proceedings. He was an old "Voltarian", as the positivists who believed in nothing are called in Russia. But we, who felt deeply interested in the experiment, began to listen to the loud and unceasing raps coming from a plate brought there for the purpose.

The younger sister was repeating the alphabet; the old general marked the letters down; while Mme. Blavatsky did nothing at all — apparently.

She was what would be called, in our days, a "good writing medium"; that is to say, she could write out the answers herself while talking with those around her upon quite indifferent topics. But simple and more rapid as this mode of communication may be, she would never consent to use it.

She was too afraid to employ it, fearing as she explained, uncalled-for suspicion from foolish people who did not understand the process.

[From the first, that is to say, almost from her childhood, and certainly in the days mentioned above, Mme. Blavatsky, as she tells us, would, in such cases, see either the actual present thought of the person putting the questions, or its paler reflection — still quite distinct for her — of an event, or a name, or whatever it was, in the past, as though hanging in a shadow world around the [Page 73] person, generally in the vicinity of the head. She had but to copy it consciously, or allow her hand to do so mechanically. At any rate, she never felt herself helped or led on by an external power, *i.e.* no "spirits" helped her in this process after she returned from her first voyage, she avers. It seemed an action entirely confined to her own will, more or less consciously exercised by her, more or less premeditated and put into play.

Whenever the thought of a person had to be communicated through raps, the process changed. She had to read, first of all, sometimes to interpret the thought of the querist, and having done so, to remember it well after it had often disappeared; watch the letters of the alphabet as they were read or pointed out, prepare the will-current that had to produce the rap at the right letter, and then have it strike at the right moment the table or any other object chosen to be the vehicle of sounds or raps. A most difficult process, and far less easy than *direct writing*.']

By the means of raps and alphabet we got *one word*, but it proved such a strange one, so grotesquely absurd as having no evident relation to anything that might be supposed to have been written by her father, that all of us who had been in the expectation of some complicated sentence looked at each other, dubious whether we ought to read it aloud. To our question, whether it was all, the raps became more energetic in the affirmative sounds. We had several *triple* raps, which meant in our code — Yes ! . . . yes, yes, yes !!!

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Remarking our agitation and whispering, Madame Blavatsky's father looked at us over his spectacles, and asked:

"Well! Have you any answer ? It must be something very elaborate and profound indeed! "

He arose and, laughing in his moustache, approached [Page 74] us. His youngest daughter, Mme. Yahontoff, then went to him and said, with some little confusion :

"We only got *one* word."

"And what is it?"

"*Zaïtchik!* " [*Zaïchik* means, literally, "a little hare", while *Zaïtz* is the Russian term for any hare. In the Russian language every substantive and adjective may be made to express the same thing, only in the diminutive. Thus a house is *dom*, while *small* house is expressed by the word *domik*, etc.]

It was a sight indeed to witness the extraordinary change that came over the old man's face at this *one* word! He became deadly pale. Adjusting his spectacles with a trembling hand, he stretched it out while hurriedly saying:

"Let me see it! Hand it over. Is it really so ? "

He took the slips of paper, and read in a very agitated voice, — " 'Zaïtchik'. Yes, Zaïtchik; so it is. How very strange!"

Taking out of his pocket the paper he had written upon in the adjoining room, he handed it in silence to his daughter and guests.

They found on it both the question offered and the answer that was anticipated. The words read thus:

"What was the name of my favorite war-horse which I rode during my first Turkish campaign ? " and lower down, in parenthesis (" Zaïtchik ").

We felt fully triumphant, and expressed our feelings accordingly.

This solitary word, *Zaïtchik*, had an enormous effect upon the old gentleman. As it often happens with inveterate sceptics, once he had found out that there was indeed *something* in his eldest daughter's claims, and that it had nothing to do whatever with deceit or juggling, [Page 75] having been convinced of

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this one fact, he rushed into the region of phenomena with all the zeal of an ardent investigator. As a matter of course, once he believed he felt no more inclined to doubt his own reason.

Having received from Mme. Blavatsky one correct answer, her father became passionately fond of experimenting with his daughter's powers. Once he inquired of the date of a certain event in his family that had occurred several hundred of years before. He received it. From that time he set himself and Mme. Blavatsky the difficult task of restoring the family chronology. The genealogical tree, lost in the night of the first crusades, had to be restored from its roots down to his day.

The information was readily promised, and he set to work from morning to night.

First, the legend of the Count von Rottenstern, the Knight Crusader, was given him. The year, the month, and the day on which a certain battle with the Saracens had been fought; and how, while sleeping in his tent, the Knight Crusader was awakened by the cry of a cock (Hahn) to find himself in time to kill, instead of being stealthily killed by an enemy who had penetrated into his tent. For this feat the bird, true symbol of vigilance, was raised to the honor of being incorporated in the coat of arms of the Counts of Rottenstern, who became from that time the Rottenstern von Rott Hahn; to branch off later into the Hahn-Hahn family and others.

Then began a regular series of figures, dates of years and months, of hundreds of names by connection and side marriages, and a long line of descent from the Knight Crusaders down to the Countess Ida Hahn-Hahn — Mme. Blavatsky's father's cousin, and her father's family names and dates, as well as a mass of contemporary events which had taken place in connection with that [Page 76] family's descending line, were given *rapidly* and unhesitatingly. The greatest historian, endowed with the most phenomenal memory, could never be equal to such a task. How then could one who had been on cold terms from her very youth with simple arithmetic and history be suspected of deliberate deceit in a work that necessitated the greatest chronological precision, the knowledge very often of the most unimportant historical events, with their involved names and dates, all of which upon the most careful verification were found to be correct to a day.

True, the family immigrants from Germany since the days of Peter III. had a good many missing links and blanks in their genealogical tables, yet the few documents that had been preserved among the various branches of the family in Germany and Russia — whenever consulted, were found to be the originals of those very exact copies furnished through Mme. Blavatsky's raps.

Her uncle, a high official at the General Post Office at St Petersburg, whose great ambition in those days was to settle the title of a Count on his eldest sons permanently, took the greatest interest in this mysterious work. Over and over again he would, in his attempts to puzzle and catch his niece in some historical or chronological inaccuracy, interrupt the regular flow of her raps, and ask for information about something which had nothing to do with the genealogy, but was only some contemporaneous fact. For instance :

"You say that in the year 1572 Count Carl von Hahn-Hahn was married to the Baroness Ottilia, so and

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so. This was in June at the castle of — — at Mecklenburg. Now, who was the reigning Kurfuerst at that time; what Prince reigned at ---- (some small German state); and who was the confessor of the Pope, and the Pope himself in that year ? "[Page 77]

And the answer, always correct, would invariably come without a moment's pause. It was often found far more difficult to verify the correctness of such names and dates than to receive the information. Mr J. A. Hahn, then Post Director at St Petersburg, Mme. Blavatsky's uncle, had to plunge for days and weeks sometimes into dusty old archives, write to Germany, and apply for information to the most out-of-the-way places, that were designated to him, when he found difficulties in his way to obtain the knowledge he sought for in easily obtainable books and records.

This lasted for months. Never during that time were Mme. Blavatsky's invisible helper or helpers found mistaken in any single instance. [Indeed not; for it was neither a "spirit" nor "spirits" but living men who can draw before their eyes the picture of any book or manuscript wherever existing, and in case of need even that of any long-forgotten and unrecorded event, who helped "Mme Blavatsky", The astral light is the storehouse and the record book of all things, and deeds have no secrets for such men. And the proof of it may be found in the production of *Isis Unveiled*.(Note by H.P. Blavatsky)] They only asked occasionally for a day or two to get at the correct information.

Unfortunately, these records, put down on fly-leaves and then copied into a book, are probably lost. The papers remained with Mme. Blavatsky's father, who treasured them, and with many other far more valuable documents were stolen or lost after his death. But his sister-in-law, Mme. Blavatsky's aunt, has in her possession letters from him in which he speaks enthusiastically of his experiments.

One of the most startling of her phenomena happened very soon after Mme. Blavatsky's return, in the early spring of 1858. Both sisters were then living with [Page 78] their father, in their country house in a village belonging to Mme. Yahontoff.

In consequence of a crime committed not far from the boundaries of my property, she writes — (a man having been found killed in a gin shop, the murderers remaining unknown) — the superintendent of the district police passed one afternoon through our village, and stopped to make some inquiries.

The researches were made very secretly, and he had not said one word about his business to anyone in the house, not even to our father. As he was an acquaintance who visited our family, and stopped at our house on his district tour, no one asked him why he had come, for he made us very frequent visits, as to all the other proprietors in the neighborhood.

It was only on the following morning, after he had ordered the village serfs to appear for examination (which proved useless), that the inmates learned anything of his mission.

During tea, as they were all sitting around the table, there came the usual knocks, raps, and disturbance on the walls, the ceiling, and about the furniture of the room.

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To our father's question why the police-superintendent should not try to learn something of the name and the whereabouts of the murderer from my sister's invisible agents, the officer Captain O only incredulously smiled.

He had heard of the "all-knowing" *spirits*, but was ready to bet almost anything that these "*horned and hoofed gentlemen*" would prove insufficient for such a task. "They would hardly betray and inform against their own", he added, with a silly laugh.

This fling at her invisible "powers", and laugh, as she thought, at her expense, made Mme. Blavatsky [Page 79] change color, and feel, as she said, an irrepressible desire to humble the ignorant fool, who hardly knew what he was talking about. She turned fiercely upon the police-officer.

"And suppose I prove to you the contrary?" she defiantly asked him.

"Then", he answered, still laughing, "I would resign my office, and offer it to you, Madame ; or, still better, I would strongly urge the authorities to place you at the head of the Secret Police Department."

"Now, look here, Captain", she said, indignantly, "I do not like meddling in such a dirty business, and helping you detectives. Yet, since you defy me, let my father say over the alphabet, and you put down the letters, and record what will be rapped out. My presence is not needed for this, and with your permission I will even leave the room."

She went away, and taking a book, placed herself on the balcony, apparently quite unconcerned with what was going on.

Colonel Hahn, anxious to make a convert, began repeating the alphabet. The communication received was far from complimentary in its adjectives to the address of the police-superintendent.

The outcome of the message was, that while he was talking nonsense at Rougodevo (the name of our new property), the murderer, whose name was Samoylo Ivanof, had crossed over before daylight to the next district, and thus escaped the officer's clutches.

"At present he is hiding under a bundle of hay in the loft of a peasant, named Andrew Vlassof, of the village of Oreshkino. By going there immediately you will secure the criminal."

The effect upon the man was tremendous! Our [Page 80] *Stanovoy* (district officer) was positively nonplused, and confessed that Oreshkino was one of the suspected villages he had on his list.

"But — allow me, however, to inquire", he asked of the table from which the raps proceeded, and

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bending over it with a suspicious look upon his face, "how come *you* — whoever you are — to know anything of the murderer's name, or of that of the confederate who hides him in his loft ? And who is Vlassof, for I know him not ? "

The answer came clear and rather contemptuous.

"Very likely that you should neither know nor see much beyond your own nose. We, however, who are now giving you the information, have the means of knowing everything we wish to know. Samoylo Ivanof is an old soldier on leave. He was drunk, and quarreled with the victim. The murder was not premeditated; it is a misfortune, not a crime."

Upon hearing these words the superintendent rushed out of the house like a madman, and drove off at a furious rate towards Oreshkino, which was more than thirty miles distant from Rougodevo. The information agreeing admirably with some points he had laboriously collected, and furnishing the last word to the mystery of the names given — he had no doubt in his own mind that the rest would prove true, as he confessed some time after.

On the following morning a messenger on horseback, sent by the *Stanovoy*, made his appearance with a letter to her father.

Events in Oreshkino had proved every word of the information to be correct. The murderer was found and arrested in his hiding place at Andrew Vlassofs cottage, and identified as a soldier on leave named Samoylo Ivanof.

This event produced a great sensation in the district, and henceforward the messages obtained, through the [Page 81] instrumentality of my sister, were viewed in a more serious light. [Madame Blavatsky denies, point blank, any intervention of spirits in this case. She tells us she had the picture of the whole tragedy and its subsequent developments before her from the moment the Stanovoy entered the house. She knew the names of the murderers, the confederate, and of the village, for she saw them interested, so to say, with the visions. Then she guided the raps, and thus gave the information.] But this brought, a few weeks after, very disagreeable complications, for the police of St Petersburg wanted to know how could one, and that one a woman who had just returned from foreign countries, know anything of the details of a murder.

It cost Colonel Hahn great exertion to settle the matter and satisfy the suspicious authorities that there had been no fouler play in the business than the intervention of supernatural powers, in which the police pretended, of course, to have no faith.

The most successful phenomena took place during those hours when we were alone, when no one cared to make experiments or sought useless tests, and when there was no one to convince or enlighten.

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At such moments the manifestations were left to produce themselves at their own impulse and pleasure, none of us — *not even the chief author* of the phenomena under observation, at any rate as far as those present could see and judge from appearances — assuming any *active part* in trying to guide them.

We very soon arrived at the conviction that the forces at work, as Mme. Blavatsky constantly told us, had to be divided into several distinct categories. While the lowest on the scale of invisible beings produced most of the physical phenomena, the very highest among the agencies at work condescended but rarely to a communication or intercourse with strangers. The [Page 82] last-named "invisibles" made themselves manifestly seen, felt, and heard only during those hours when we were alone in the family, and when great harmony and quiet reigned among us.

It is said that harmony helps wonderfully toward the manifestation of the so-called mediumistic force, and that the effects produced in physical manifestations depend but little on the volition of the "medium". Such feats as that accomplished with the little chess-table at Pskoff were rare. In the majority of the cases the phenomena were sporadic, seemingly quite independent of her will, apparently never heeding anyone's suggestion, and generally appearing in direct contradiction with the desires expressed by those present. We used to feel extremely vexed whenever there was a chance to convince some highly intellectual investigator, but through H. P. Blavatsky's obstinacy or lack of will nothing came out of it. For instance :

If we asked for one of those highly intellectual, profound answers we got so often when alone, we usually received in answer some impertinent rubbish; when we begged for the repetition of some phenomena she had produced for us hundreds of times before, our wish was only laughed at.

I well remember how, during a grand evening party, when several families of friends had come from afar off, in some cases from distances of hundreds of miles on purpose to witness some phenomena, to "hear with their ears and see with their eyes" the strange doings of Mme. Blavatsky, the latter, though mockingly assuring us she did all she could, gave them no result to ponder upon. This lasted for several days. [She explains this by describing herself as tired and disgusted with the ever-growing public thirst for "miracles".] [Page 83]

The visitors had left dissatisfied and in a spirit as skeptical as it was uncharitable. Hardly, however, had the gates been closed after them, the bells of their horses yet merrily tinkling in the last alley of the entrance park, when everything in the room seemed to become endowed with life. The furniture acted as though every piece of it was animated and gifted with voice and speech, and we passed the rest of the evening and the greater part of the night as though we were between the enchanted walls of the magic palace of some Scheherazade.

It is far easier to enumerate the phenomena that *did not* take place during these forever memorable hours than to describe those that did. All those weird manifestations that we had observed at various times seemed to have been repeated for our sole benefit during that night. At one moment as we sat at supper in the dining-room, there were loud accords played on the piano which stood in the adjoining apartment, and which was closed and locked, and so placed that we could all of us see it from where we were through the large open doors.

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Then at the first command and look of Mme. Blavatsky there came rushing to her through the air her tobacco-pouch, her box of matches, her pocket-handkerchief, or anything she asked, or was made to ask for.

Then, as we were taking our seats, all the lights in the room were suddenly extinguished, both lamps and wax candles, as though a mighty rush of wind had swept through the whole apartment; and when a match was instantly struck, there was all the heavy furniture, sofas, arm-chairs, tables, cupboards, and large sideboard standing upside down, as though turned over noiselessly by some invisible hands, and not an ornament of the fragile carved work nor even a plate broken. Hardly had we gathered [Page 84] our senses together after this miraculous performance, when we heard again *someone* playing on the piano a loud and intelligible piece of music, a long *marche de bravoure* this time. As we rushed with lighted candles to the instrument (I mentally counting the persons to ascertain that all were present), we found, as we had anticipated, the piano locked, the last sounds of the final chords still vibrating in the air from beneath the heavy closed lid.

After this, notwithstanding the late hour, we placed ourselves around our large dining-table, and had a séance. The huge family dining-board began to shake with great force, and then to move, sliding rapidly about the room in every direction, even raising itself up to the height of a man. In short, we had all those manifestations that never failed when we were alone, *i.e.* when only those nearest and dearest to H. P. B. were present, and none of the strangers who came to us attracted by mere curiosity, and often with a malevolent and hostile feeling.

Among a mass of various and striking phenomena that took place on that memorable night, I will mention but two more.

And here I must notice the following question made in those days whenever my sister, Madame B sat, to please us, for "communications through raps". We were asked by her to choose what we would have. "Shall we have the mediumistic or spook raps, or *the raps by clairvoyant proxy* ? " she asked.

[To make this clearer and intelligible, I must give her (Mme. Blavatsky's) explanation of the difference.

She never made a secret that she had been, ever since her childhood, and until nearly the age of twenty-five, a very strong *medium*; though after that period, owing to a regular psychological and physiological training, she [Page 85] was made to lose this dangerous gift, and every trace of mediumship *outside her will*, or beyond her direct control, was overcome. She had two distinct methods of producing communications through raps. The one consisted almost entirely in her being passive, and permitting the *influences* to act at their will, at which time the brainless Elementals, (the shells would rarely, if ever, be allowed to come, owing to the danger of the intercourse) chameleon-like, would reflect more or less characteristically the thoughts of those present, and follow in a half-intelligent way the suggestions found by them in Madame Blavatsky's mind. The other method, used very rarely for reasons connected with her intense dislike to meddle with really departed entities, or rather to enter into their "*currents of thought*" is this: — She would compose herself, and seeking out, with eyes shut, in the astral light, that current that preserved the genuine impress of some well-known departed entity, she *identified* herself for the time being with it, and guiding the raps made them to spell out that which she had in her own mind, as

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reflected from the astral current. Thus, if the rapping spirit pretended to be a Shakespeare, it was not really that great personality, but only the echo of the genuine thoughts that had once upon a time moved in his brain and crystallized themselves, so to say, in his astral sphere whence even his shell had departed long ago — the imperishable thoughts alone remaining. Not a sentence, not a word spelt by the raps that was not formed first in her brain, in its turn the faithful copier of that which was found by her spiritual eye in the luminous Record Book of departed humanity. The, so to express it, crystallized essence of the mind of the once physical brain was there before her spiritual vision; her living brain photographed it, and her will dictated its expression by guiding the raps which thus became intelligent.]

And though few, if any, of us then understood clearly [Page 86] what she meant, yet she would act either one way or the other, never uniting the two methods.

We chose the former in this instance — the "spook-raps" — as the easiest to obtain, and affording us more amusement, and to her less trouble.

Thus, out of the many invisible and "distinguished" phantom visitors of that night, the most active and prominent among them was the alleged *spirit* of Poushkin.

I beg the reader to remember that we never for a moment believed that spook to be really the great poet, whose earthly remains rest in the neighbourhood of our Rougodevo, in the monk's territory known as the "holy mountain".

We had been warned by Mme. Blavatsky, and knew well how much we could trust to the communications and conversation of such unseen visitors. But the fact of our having chosen for that sƒ©ance the "spook raps", does not at all interfere with the truth of that other assertion of ours, namely, that, whenever we wanted something genuine, and resorted to the method of "clairvoyant proxy", we had very often communications of great power and vigor of thought, profoundly scientific and remarkable in every way; made not *by* but *in* the spirit of the great defunct personage in whose name they were given.

It is only when we resorted to the "spook raps" that, notwithstanding the world-known names of the eminent personages in which the goblins of the séance-room love to parade, we got answers and discourses that might do honor to a circus clown, but hardly to a Socrates, a Cicero, or a Martin Luther.
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CHAPTER 5

MM. DE JELIHOWSKY'S NARRATIVE -CONTINUED-

I REMEMBER that we were deeply interested in those days in reading aloud in our little family circle, the *Memoirs of Catherine Romanovna Dashkoff*, just then published. The interest of this remarkable historical work was greatly enhanced to us owing to the fact that our reading was very often interrupted by the alleged *spirit* of the authoress herself. The gaps and hiatuses of a publication, severely disfigured and curtailed by the censor's pen and scissors, were constantly filled up by comparing notes with her astral records.

By the means of *guided* raps — Mme. B. refusing, as usual, to help us by direct writing, preferring lazily to rest in her arm-chair — we received, in the name of the authoress, innumerable remarks, additions, explanations, and refutations. In some cases, her apparent and mistaken views in the days when she wrote her memoirs were corrected and replaced by more genuine thoughts. [The fact that many of the remarks and notes were different in their character from the original memoirs, and that errors and mistakes were corrected, can easily be explained. The old thoughts of Catherine Romanovna were expounded and corrected in the intellectual sphere of Madame B. The manner and nature of the expression would not cease to resemble that of the author, and, in the astral light, the original of the work, as conceived in the brain of the historian, would certainly be returned in preference to the mutilated views of the censor; while the brain of Madame B would supply the rest.] [Page 88] All such corrections and additional matter given, fascinated us deeply by their profundity, their wit and humor, often, indeed, with the natural pathos that was one of the prominent features of this remarkable historical character.

But I must return to my reminiscences of that memorable night. Thus, among other *post-mortem* visitors, we were entertained on that evening by A. Poushkin.

The poet seemed to be in one of his melancholy and dark moments; and to our queries, what was the matter, what made him suffer, and what we could do for him, he obliged us with an extemporary poem, which I preserved, although its character and style are beneath criticism.

The substance of it — which is hardly worth translation — was to the effect that there was no reason for us to know his secret sufferings. Why should we try to know what he may be wishing for ? He had but one desire: to rest on the bosom of Death, instead of which he was suffering in great darkness for his sins, tortured by devils, and had lost all hope of ever reaching the bliss of becoming a winged cherub, etc etc.. [In the recollection of Mme. Blavatsky, this was a genuine spirit-manifestation, *i.e.* a clumsy personification of the great poet by passing shells and spooks, allowed to merge into the circle for a few moments. The rhymed complaint speaking of hell and devils was the echo of the feelings and thoughts of a pious governess present ; most assuredly it was not any reflection from Madame Blavatsky's brain, nor would her admiring respect for the memory of the greatest Russian poet have ever allowed her to make such a blasphemous joke under the cover of his name.]

“Poor Alexander Sergeïtch!” exclaimed Colonel Hahn, upon hearing this wretched production read; and so saying he rose as though in search of something. [Page 89] “What are you looking for?” we asked. “My

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long pipe! I have had enough of these cigars, and I cannot find my pipe ; where can it be ? "

"You have just smoked it, after supper, father". I replied.

"I did; and now Helen's *spirits* must have walked off with it or hidden it somewhere."

"One, two, three! One, two, three! " affirmed triple raps around us, as though mocking the old gentleman.

"Indeed! Well, this is a foolish joke. Could not our friend Poushkine tell us where he has hidden it ? Do let us know, for life itself would be worthless on this earth without my old and faithful pipe."

"One, two, three ! One, two, three ! " knocked the table.

"Is this you, Alexander Sergei'tch ? " we asked.

At this juncture my sister frowned angrily, and the raps suddenly stopped.

"No", she said, after a moment's pause, "it is somebody else". And putting her hand upon the table she set the raps going again.

"Who is it, then ? "

"It is me; your old orderly, your honor: Voronof."

"Ah, Voronof! very glad to meet you again, my good fellow. . . . Now, try to remember old times: bring me my pipe."

"I would be very happy to do so, your honor, but I am not able; *somebody* holds me fast. But you can take it yourself, your honor. See, there it is *swinging over your head on the lamp.*"

We all raised our heads. Verily, where a minute before there was nothing at all, there was now the huge Turkish pipe, placed horizontally on the alabaster shade, and balancing over it with its two ends sticking [Page 90] out at both sides of the lamp which hung over the dining table.

This new physical demonstration filled with astonishment even those of us who had been accustomed to live in a world of marvels for months. Hardly a year before we would not have believed even in the possibility of what we now regarded as perfectly proved facts.

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In the early part of the year 1859, as above stated, soon after her return to Russia, Mme. Blavatsky went to live with her father and sister in a country house of a village belonging to Mme. Jelihowsky at Rougodevo. [In the district of Novorgeff, in the Government of Pskoff - about 200 versts from St Peterburg. It was at that time a private property, a village of several hundred serfs, but soon after emancipation of the land passed into other hands.]

It had been bought only a year before by my deceased husband from parties entirely unknown to us till then, and through an agent; and therefore no one knew anything of their antecedents, or even who they really were. It was quite unexpectedly that, owing to the sudden death of M. Yahontoff, I decided to settle in it for a time, with my two baby sons, our father, and my two sisters, H. P. Blavatsky and Lisa, the youngest, our father's only daughter by another wife.

I could therefore have no acquaintance with our neighbors or the landed proprietors of other villages, or with the relatives of the late owner of my property. All I knew was, that Rougodevo had been bought from a person named Statkovsky, the husband of the granddaughter of its late owners — a family named Shousherin. Who were those Shousherins, the hereditary proprietors of those picturesque hills and mountains, of the dense pine forests, the lovely lakes, our old park, and nearly as old a mansion, from the top of which one could take a [Page 91] sweeping view of the country for 30 versts around, its present proprietors could have no conception whatever; least of all, H. P. B., who had been out of Russia for over ten years, and had just then returned.

It was on the second or third evening after our arrival at Rougodevo. We were two of us walking along the side of the flower-beds, in front of the house.

The ground-floor windows looked right into the flower-garden, while those of its three other sides were surrounded with large, old, shaded grounds.

We had settled on the first floor, which consisted of nine or ten large rooms, while our elderly father occupied a suite of rooms on the ground floor, on the right-hand side of the long entrance hall. The rooms opposite to his, on the left side, were uninhabited, and in the expectation of future visitors, stood empty, with their doors securely locked. The rooms occupied by the servants were at the back of the mansion, and could not be seen from where we were. The windows of the empty apartment came out in bright relief, especially the room at the left angle ; its windows, reflecting the rays of the setting sun in full glory, seemed illuminated through and through with the effulgence of the bright sunbeams.

We were slowly walking up and down the gravel walk under the windows, and each time that we approached the angle of the house, my sister (H. P. B.) looked into the windows with a strange searching glance, and lingered on that spot, a puzzling expression and smile settling upon her face.

Remarking at last her furtive glances and smiles, I wanted to know what it was that so attracted her attention in the empty room ?

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"Shall I tell ? Well, if you promise not to be frightened, then I may", she answered hesitatingly. [Page 92]

"What reason have I to be frightened ! Thank heaven, I see nothing myself. Well, and what do you see? Is it, as usual, visitors from the other world ? "

"I could not tell you now, Vera, for I do not know them. But if my conjectures are right, they do seem, if not quite the dwellers themselves, at least the shadows of such dwellers from another, but certainly not from our, world. I recognize this by certain signs."

"What signs ? Are their faces those of dead men ? " I asked, very nervously, I confess.

"Oh, no! " she said; "for in such a case I should see them as dead people in their beds, or in their coffins. Such sights I am familiar with. But these men are walking about, and look just as if alive. They have no mortal reason to remind me of their death, since I do not know who they are, and never knew them alive. But they do look so very antiquated. Their dresses are such as we see only on old family portraits. One, however, is an exception."

"How does he look ? "

" Well, this one looks as though he were a German student or an artist. He wears a black velvet blouse, with a wide leather sash. . . . Long hair hanging in heavy waves down his back and shoulders. This one is quite a young man. ... He stands apart, and seems to look quite in a different direction from where the others are."

We had now again approached the angle of the house, and halting, were both looking into the empty room through the bright window panes. It was brilliantly lit up by the sunbeams of the setting sun, but the room was *empty* evidently, but only for one of us. For my sister it was full of the images probably of its long-departed late inmates.[Page 93]

Mme. Blavatsky went on looking thoughtfully, and describing what she saw.

"There, there, he looks in our direction. See ! " she muttered, " he looks as though he is startled at seeing us! Now he is there no longer. How strange! he seems to have melted away in that sunbeam ! "

"Let us call them out to-night, and ask them who they are", I suggested.

"We may, but what of that ? Can any one of them be relied upon or believed ? I would pay any price to be able to command and control as *they*, . . . some personages I might name, do; but I cannot. I must fail for years to come", she added, regretfully.

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"Who are *they* ? Whom do you mean ? "

"*Those who know and can* — not mediums", she contemptuously added. "But look, look, what a sight! Oh, see what an ugly monster! Who can it be ? "

"Now, what's the use in your telling me ' look, look' and see ? How can I look when I see nothing, not being a clairvoyant as you are. . . . Tell me, how does that other figure appear ? Only if it is something too dreadful, then you had better stop", I added, feeling a cold chill creeping over me. And, seeing she was going to speak, I cried out, "Now, pray do not say anything more if it is too dreadful".

Don't be afraid, there is nothing dreadful in it, it only seemed to me so. They are there now — one, however, I can see very hazily; it is a woman, and she seems to be always merging into and again emerging from that shadow in the corner. Oh, there's an old, old lady standing there and looking at me, as though she were alive. What a nice, kind, fat old thing she must have been. She has a white frilled cap on her head, a white kerchief crossed over her shoulders, a short grey narrow dress, and a checked apron." [Page 94]

"Why, you are painting some fancy portrait of the Flemish school", laughed I. "Now, look here, I am really afraid that you are mystifying me."

"I swear I am not. But I am so sorry that you cannot see."

"Thanks; but I am not at all sorry. Peace be upon all those ghosts ! How horrible ! "

"Not at all horrible. They are all quite nice and natural, with the exception, maybe, of that old man."

"Gracious ! what old man ? "

"A very, very funny old man. Tall, gaunt, and with such a suffering look upon his worn-out face. And then it is his nails, that puzzle me. What terrible long nails he has, or claws rather; why, they must be over an inch long!"

"Heaven help us! " I could not help shrieking out. "Whom are you describing? Surely it must be" — I was going to say, "the devil himself", but stopped short, overcome by a shudder.

Unable to control my terror, I hastily left the place under the window and stood at a safe distance.

The sun had gone down, but the gold and crimson flush of its departing rays lingered still, tinting everything with gold — the house, the old trees of the garden, and the pond in the background.

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The colors of the flowers seemed doubly attractive in this brilliant light; and only the angle of the old house, which cut the golden hue in two, seemed to cast a gloomy shadow on the glorious scene. H. P. Blavatsky remained alone behind that obscure angle, overshadowed by the thick foliage of an oak, while I sought a safe refuge in the glow of the large open space near the flower-beds, and kept urging her to come out of her nook and enjoy instead the lovely panorama, and look at the [Page 95] far-off wooded hills, with their tops still glowing in the golden hue, on the quiet smooth ponds and the large dormant lake, reflecting in its mirror-like waters the green chaotic confusion of its banks, and the ancient chapel slumbering in its nest of birch.

My sister came out at last, pale and thoughtful. She was determined, she said, to learn who it was whom she had just seen. She felt sure the shadowy figures were the lingering reflections of people who had inhabited at some time those empty rooms. "I am puzzled to know who the old man can be", she kept saying. "Why should he have allowed his nails to grow to such an extraordinary Chinese length ? And then another peculiarity, he wears a most strange-looking black cap, very high, and something similar to the *klobouk* of our monks." [The round tiara, covered with a long black veil, worn by the orthodox Greek monks.]

"Do let these horrid phantoms alone. Do not think of them! "

"Why ? It is very interesting, the more so *since I now see them so rarely*. I wish I were still a real medium, as the latter, I am told, are constantly surrounded by a host of ghosts, and that I see them now but occasionally, not as I used to years ago, when a child. . . . Last night, however, I saw in Lisa's room a tall gentleman with long whiskers."

"What! in the nursery room near the children ? Oh, please, drive him away from there, at least. I do hope the ghost has only followed *you* there, and has not made a permanent abode of that place. How you can keep so cool, and feel no fear when you see, is something I could never understand ! "

"And why should I fear them ? They are harmless in most cases, *unless encouraged*. Then I am too [Page 96] accustomed to such sights to experience even a passing uneasiness. If anything, I feel disgust, and a contemptuous pity for the poor spooks! In fact, I feel convinced that all of us mortals are constantly surrounded by millions of such shadows, the last mortal image left of themselves by their ex-proprietors."

"Then you think that these ghosts are all of them the reflection of the dead ? "

"I am convinced of it — in fact, *I know it !* "

" Why, then, in such a case, are we not constantly surrounded by those who were so near and dear to us, by our loved relatives and friends ? Why are we allowed to be pestered only by a host of strangers, to suffer the uninvited presence of the ghosts of people whom we never knew, nor do we care for them ? "

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"A difficult query to answer! How often, how earnestly, have I tried to see and recognize among the shadows that haunted me some one of our dear relatives, or even a friend! . . . Stray acquaintances, and distant relatives, for whom I care little, I have occasionally recognized, but they never seemed to pay any attention to me, and whenever I saw them it was always unexpected and independently of my will. How I longed from the bottom of my soul, how I have tried — all in vain ! As much as I can make out of it, it is not the living who attract the dead, but rather the localities they have inhabited, those places where they have lived and suffered, and where their personalities and outward forms have been most impressed on the surrounding atmosphere. Say, shall we call some of your old servants, those who have been born and lived in this place all their lives ? I feel sure that, if we describe to them some of the forms I have just seen, that they will recognize in them people they knew, and who have died here." [Page 97]

The suggestion was good, and it was immediately put to the test; we took our seats on the steps of the entrance door, and sent a servant to inquire who were the oldest serfs in the compound. An ancient tailor, named Timothy, who lived for years exempt from any obligatory work on account of his services and old age, and the chief gardener, Oulyan, a man about sixty, soon made their appearance. I felt at first a little embarrassed, and put some commonplace questions, asking who it was who built one of the outhouses near by. Then I put the direct query, whether there had ever lived in the house an old man, very strange to look at, with a high black head-gear, terribly long nails, wearing habitually a long grey coat, etc., etc.

No sooner had I given this description than the two old peasants, interrupting each other, and with great volubility, exclaimed affirmatively that they "Knew well who it was whom the young mistress described."

"Don't we know him ? of course we do — why, it is our late *barrin* (master)! Just as he used to be — our deceased master Nikolay Mihaylovitch ! "

"Statkowsky ? "

"No, no, mistress. Statkowsky was the young master, and he is not dead; he was our nominal master only, owing to his marriage with Natalya Nikolavna — our late master's, Nikolay Mihaylovitch Shousherin's granddaughter. And, as you have described him, it is him, for sure — our late master, Shousherin."

My sister and I interchanged a furtive glance. "We have heard of him", said I, unwilling to take the servants into our confidence, " but did not feel sure it was he. But why was he wearing such a strange-looking cap, and, as it seemed, never cut his nails ? "

"This was owing to a disease, mistress — an incurable [Page 98] disease, as we were told, that the late master caught while in Lithuania, where he had resided for years. It is called the Koltoun, [The "plica polonica", a terrible skin complaint, very common in Lithuania, and contracted only in its climate. The hair, as is well known, is grievously diseased, nor can nails on the fingers and toes be touched, their cutting leading to a bleeding to death] if you have heard of it. He could neither cut his hair nor pare his nails, and had to cover constantly his head with a tall velvet cap, like a priest's cap."

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"Well, and how did your mistress, Mrs Shousherin, look ? "

The tailor gave a description in no way resembling the Dutch-looking old lady seen by Mme. Blavatsky. Further cross-examination elicited, however, that the woman, in her semi-Flemish costume, was Mina Ivanovna, a German housekeeper, who had resided in the house for over twenty years; and the young man, who looked like a German student in his velvet blouse, was really such a student who had come from Göttingen. He was the youngest brother of Mr Statkowsky, who had died in Rougodevo, of consumption, about three years before our arrival. This was not all, moreover. We found out that the corner room in which H. P. B. had seen on that evening, as she has later on, on many other occasions, the phantoms of all these deceased personages of Rougodevo, had been made to serve for every one of them, either as a death-chamber when they had breathed their last, or had been converted for their benefit into a mortuary-chamber when they had been laid out awaiting burial. It was from this suite of apartments, in which their bodies had invariably passed from three to five days, that they had been [Page 99] carried away into yonder old chapel, on the other side of the lake, that was so well seen, and had been examined by us from the windows of our sitting-room.

Since that day, not only H. P. B., but even her little sister, Lisa, a child of nine years old, saw more than once strange forms gliding noiselessly along the corridors of the old house, so full of lingering events of the past, and of the images of those who had passed away from it. The child, strange to say, feared the restless ghosts no more than her elder sister; the former taking them innocently for living persons, and concerned but with the interesting problem, "where they had come from, who they were, and why no one except her ' old' sister and herself ever consented to notice them."

She thought this very rude — the little lady. Luckily for the child, and owing perhaps to the efforts of her sister, Mme. Blavatsky, the faculty left her very soon, never to return during her subsequent life. [The young lady is now over thirty, and was saying but last year how lucky it was for her that she no longer saw these trans-terrestrial visitors.] As for Helena Petrovna, it never left her from her very childhood. So strong is this weird faculty in her that it is a rare case when she has to learn of the death of a relative, a friend, or even an old servant of the family from a letter. We have given up advising her of any such sad events, the dead invariably precede the news, and tell her themselves of their demise; and we receive a letter in which she describes the way she saw this or that departed person, at the same time, and often before the post carrying our notification could have reached her, as it will be shown further on.

[The pamphlet already referred to, *Personal and Family Reminiscences*, by Mme. Jelihowsky, may here [Page 100] be laid under contribution in reference to incidents taking place at the period we are now dealing with.]

Having settled in our property at Rougodevo, we found ourselves as though suddenly transplanted into an enchanted world, in which we got gradually so accustomed to see self-moving furniture, things transferred from one place to another, in the most inexplicable way, and to the strong interference with, and presence in, our matter-of-fact daily life of some unknown to us, yet *intelligent* power, that we all ended by paying very little attention to it, though the phenomenal facts struck everyone else as being simply miraculous.

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Verily, habit becomes second nature with men! Our father, who had premised by saying that he gave permission to everyone to incarcerate him in a lunatic asylum on that day that he would believe that a table could move, fly, or become rooted to the spot at the desire of those present, now passed his days and parts of his nights talking with "Helen's spirits", as he called it. *They* informed him of numerous events and details pertaining to the lives of his ancestors, the Counts Hahn von Rottenstern Hahn; offered to get back for him certain title-deeds, and told us such interesting legends and witty anecdotes, that unbelievers as well as believers could hardly help feeling interested. It often happened that my sister, being occupied with her reading, we — our father, the governess, and myself — unwilling to disturb her, communicated with the invisible power, *mentally* and in silence, simply thinking out our questions, and writing down the letters rapped out either on the walls or the table near us. ... I remember having had a remarkable phenomenon of this kind, at a station in the *Swyatee Goree* (Holy Mountains), where the poet A. Poushkine is buried, and when my sister was fast **[Page 101]** asleep. Things were told to me, of which positively no one in this world could know anything, I alone being the depository of these secrets, together with an old gentleman living for years on his far-away property. I had not seen him for six years; my sister had never heard of him, as I had made his acquaintance two years after she had left Russia. During that mental conversation, names, dates, and the appellation of his property were given to me. I had thought and asked, Where is he who loved me more than anyone on this earth? Easy to know that I had my late husband in my mind. Instead of that, I received in answer a name I had long forgotten. First I felt perplexed, then indignant, and finally the idea became so comical that I burst out in a fit of laughter, that awoke my sister. How can you prove to me that you do not lie? I asked my invisible companions. *Remember the second volume of Byron's poetry*, was the answer I received. I became cold with horror! No one had ever been told of it, and I myself had forgotten for years that circumstance which was now told to me in all its details, namely, that being in the habit of sending books, and a series of English classics for me to read, that gentleman, old enough to be my grandfather, had thought of offering marriage to me, and found no better means for it than by inserting in Volume II. of Byron's works a letter to that effect. ... Of course my "informers", whoever they were, played upon me a wicked trick by reminding me of these facts, yet their omniscience had been brilliantly proven to me by them in this case.

It is most extraordinary that our *silent* conversations with that *intelligent* force that had ever manifested itself in my sister's presence were found by us the most successful during her sleep, or when she was very ill. **[Page 102]** Once a young physician, who visited us for the first time, got so terribly frightened at the noises, and the moving about of things in her room when she was on her bed lying cold and senseless, that he nearly fainted himself. Such tragi-comical scenes happened very often in our house, but the most remarkable of all such have already been told in the pages of the *Rebus*, in 1883, as having taken place during her two years' stay with us. As an eye-witness, I can only once more testify to all *the facts* described, without entering upon the question of the agency that produced them, or the nature of the agents. But I may recall some additional inexplicable phenomena that occurred at that time, testified to by other members of our family, though some of them I have not witnessed myself. All the persons living on the premises, with the household members, saw constantly, often in full noonday, vague human shadows walking about the rooms, appearing in the garden, in the flower-beds in front of the house, and near the old chapel. My father (once the greatest sceptic), Mademoiselle Leontine, the governess of our younger sister, told me many a time, that they had just met and seen such figures quite plainly. Moreover, Leontine found very often in her locked drawers, and her trunks, some very mysterious letters, containing family secrets known to her alone, over which she wept, reading them incessantly during whole weeks; and I am forced to confess that once or twice the events foretold in them came to pass as they had been prophesied to us.

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[Some comments on various parts of the foregoing narrative, furnished by Mme. Blavatsky herself, will here be read with interest. She says she has tried with the most famous mediums to evoke and communicate with those dearest to her, and whose loss she had deplored, but could never succeed. "Communications and messages" **[Page 103]** she certainly did receive, and got their signatures, and on two occasions their *materialized* forms, but the communications were couched in a vague and gushing language quite unlike the style she knew so well. Their signatures, as she has ascertained, were obtained from her own brain; and *on no* occasion, when the presence of a relation was announced and the form described by the medium, who was ignorant of the fact that Mme. Blavatsky could see as well as any of them, has she recognized the "spirit" of the alleged relative in the host of spooks and elementaries that surrounded them (when the medium was a genuine one of course). Quite the reverse. For she often saw, to her disgust, how her own recollections and brain-images were drawn from her memory and disfigured in the confused amalgamation that took place between their reflection in the medium's brain, which instantly sent them out, and the shells which *sucked them in* like a sponge and objectivised them — "a *hideous shape with a mask on* in my sight", she tells us. "Even the materialized form of my uncle at the Eddys' was the picture; it was I who sent it out from my own mind, as I had come out to make experiments without telling it to anyone. It was like an empty outer envelope of my uncle that I seemed to throw on the medium's astral body. I saw and followed the process, I knew Will Eddy was a genuine medium, and the phenomenon as real *as it could be*, and therefore, when days of trouble came for him, I defended him in the papers. In short, for all the years of experience in America, I never succeeded in identifying, in one single instance, those I wanted to see. It is only in my dreams and personal visions that I was brought in direct contact with my own blood relatives and friends, those between whom and myself there had been a strong mutual *spiritual* love". Her conviction **[Page 104]** therefore, based as much on her personal experience as on that of the teachings of the occult doctrine, is as follows: — "For certain psycho-magnetic reasons, too long to be explained here, *the shells of those spirits* who loved us best will not, with a very few exceptions, approach us. They have no need of it since, unless they were irretrievably wicked, they have us with them in Devachan, that state of bliss in which the *monads* are surrounded with all those, and that, which they have loved — objects of spiritual aspirations as well as human entities. ' Shells ' once separated from their higher principles have nought in common with the latter. They are not drawn to their relatives and friends, but rather to those with whom their terrestrial, sensuous affinities are the strongest. Thus the shell of a drunkard will be drawn to one who is either a drunkard already or has a germ of this passion in him, in which case they will develop it by using his organs to satisfy their craving; one who died full of sexual passion for a still living partner will have its shell drawn to him or her, etc.. We Theosophists, and especially occultists, must never lose sight of the profound axiom of the Esoteric Doctrine which teaches us that it is we, the living, who are drawn towards the spirits — but that the latter can never, even though they would, descend to us, or rather into our sphere." **[Page 105]**

CHAPTER 6

MM. DE JELIHOWSKY'S NARRATIVE - (CONTINUED)

THE quiet life of the sisters at Rougodevo was brought to an end by a terrible illness which befell Mme. Blavatsky. Years before, perhaps during her solitary travels in the steppes of Asia, she had received a remarkable wound. We could never learn how she had met with it. Suffice to say that the profound wound reopened occasionally, and during that time she suffered intense agony, often bringing on convulsions and a death-like trance. The sickness used to last from three to four days, and then the wound would heal as suddenly as it had reopened, as though an invisible hand had closed it, and there would remain no trace of her illness. But the affrighted family was ignorant at first of this strange peculiarity, and their despair and fear were great indeed. A physician was sent for to the neighboring town; but he proved of little use, not so much indeed through his ignorance of surgery, as owing to a remarkable phenomenon which left him almost powerless to act through sheer terror at what he had witnessed. He had hardly examined the wound of the patient prostrated before him in complete unconsciousness, when suddenly he saw a large, dark hand between his own and the wound he was going to anoint. The gaping wound was near the heart, and the hand kept slowly moving at several intervals [Page 106] from the neck down to the waist. To make his terror worse, there began suddenly in the room such a terrific noise, such a chaos of noises and sounds from the ceiling, the floor, window-panes, and every bit of furniture in the apartment, that he begged he might not be left alone in the room with the insensible patient.

In the spring of 1860 both sisters left Rougodevo for the Caucasus, on a visit to their grandparents, whom they had not seen for long years.

During the three weeks' journey from Moscow to Tiflis, performed in a coach with post horses, there occurred many a strange manifestation.

At Zadonsk — the territory of the Cossack army of the Don, a place of pilgrimage in Russia, where the holy relics of St Tihon are preserved — we halted for rest, and I prevailed upon my lazy sister to accompany me to the church to hear the mass. We had learned that on that day church service would be conducted near the said relics by the then Metropolitan [One of the three “Popes” of Russia, so to say, the highest of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Orthodox Greek Church] of Kiew (at present, in 1884, the Metropolitan of St Petersburg), the famous and learned Isidore, [Now a man past ninety years of age] whom both of us had well known in our childhood and youth at Tiflis, where he was for so many years the Exarch [The spiritual chief of all the archbishops, and the head of the Church in Georgia] of Georgia (Caucasus). He had been a friend of our family for years, and had often visited us. During service the venerable old man recognized us, and immediately dispatched a monk after us, with an invitation to visit him at the Lord Archbishop's house. He received us with great kindness. But hardly had we taken our seats in the drawing-room of the Holy [Page 107] Metropolitan than a terrible hubbub, noises, and loud raps in every conceivable direction burst suddenly upon us with a force to which even we were hardly accustomed; every bit of furniture in the big audience room cracked and thumped — from the huge chandelier under the ceiling, every one of whose crystal drops seemed to become endowed with self-motion, down to the table, and under the very elbows of his holiness who was leaning on it.

Useless to say how confused and embarrassed we looked — though truth compels me to say that my

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irreverent sister's embarrassment was tempered with a greater expression of fun than I would have wished for. The Metropolitan Isidore saw at a glance our confusion, and understood, with his habitual sagacity, the true cause of it. He had read a good deal about the so-called "spiritual" manifestations, and on seeing a huge armchair gliding toward him, laughed, and felt a good deal interested in this phenomenon. He inquired which of us two sisters had such a strange power, and wanted to know when and how it had begun to manifest itself. We explained to him all the particulars as well as we could, and after listening very attentively, he suddenly asked Mme. Blavatsky if she would permit him to offer her "invisible" a mental question. Of course, his holiness was welcome to it, she answered. We do not feel at liberty to publish what the question was. But when his very serious query had received an immediate answer — precise and to the very point he wanted it to be — his holiness was so struck with amazement, and felt so anxious and interested in the phenomenon, that he would not let us go, and detained us with him for over three hours. He had even forgotten his dinner. Giving orders not to be interrupted, the venerable gentleman continued to hold conversation with **[Page 108]** his unseen visitors, expressing all the while his profound astonishment at their "all-knowledge". [*Vseznaĭstvo* - the word used can hardly be translated by the term omniscience; it is an attribute of a less absolute character, and refers to the things of the earth.]

When bidding good-bye to us, the venerable old man blessed the travelers, and, turning to Mme. Blavatsky, addressed to her these parting words: —

"As for you, let not your heart be troubled by the gift you are possessed of, nor let it become a source of misery to you hereafter, for it was surely given to you for some purpose, and you could not be held responsible for it. Quite the reverse ! for if you but use it with discrimination, you will be enabled to do much good to your fellow-creatures."

These are the authentic words of His Holiness, Isidore, the Metropolitan of our Orthodox Greek Church of Russia, addressed by him in my presence to my sister Mme. Blavatsky. [The Russian Censor has not allowed this letter to appear in the *Rebus* in the original.]

At one of the stations where we had to change horses, the station-master told us very brutally that there were no fresh horses for us, and that we had to wait. The sun had not yet gone down, it was full moon, the roads were good, and with all this, we were made to lose several hours ! This was provoking. Nevertheless there was nothing to be done, the more so as the station-master, who was too drunk to be reasoned with, had found fit to disappear, and refused to come and talk with us. We had to take the little unpleasantness as easily as we could, and settle ourselves as best we knew how for the night; but even here we found an impediment. The small station-house had but one room for the travelers **[Page 109]** near a hot and dirty kitchen, and even that one was locked and bolted, and no one would open the door for us without special orders. Mme. Blavatsky was beginning to lose patience.

"Well, this is fine ! " she went on. "We are refused horses, and even the room we are entitled to is shut for us ! Why is it shut ? Now, I want to know and insist upon it". But there was no one to tell us the reason why, for the station-house seemed utterly empty, and there was not a soul to be seen about. H. P. B. approached the little low windows of the locked room, and flattened her face against the window panes. "A-ha!" she suddenly exclaimed; "that's what it is ! Very well, then, and now I can force the drunken brute to give us horses in five minutes."

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And she started off in search of the station-master. Curious to know what secret there was in the mysterious room, I approached the window in my turn, and tried to fathom its unknown regions. But although the inside of the room was perfectly visible through the window, yet my *uninitiated* eyes could see nothing in it save the ordinary furniture of a dirty station-house, dirty as they all are.

Nevertheless, to my delight and surprise, ten minutes had not passed when three excellent and strong post-horses were brought out, under the supervision of the station-master himself, who, pale and confused, had become, as though by magic, polite and full of obsequiousness. In a few minutes our carriage was ready, and we continued our journey.

To my question what sorcery had helped her to achieve such change in the drunken station-master, who but a moment before would pay no attention to us, Mme. Blavatsky only laughed. **[Page 110]**

"Profit, and ask no questions!" she said. "Why should you be so inquisitive ? " It was but on the following day that she condescended to tell me that the wretched station-master must have most certainly taken her for a witch. It appears that upon finding him in a back-yard, she had shouted to him that the person whose body had been just standing in a coffin in the "travelers' room" was there again, and asked him not to detain us, for we would otherwise insist upon our right to enter into the room, and would disturb her spirit thereby. And when the man upon hearing this opened his eyes, without appearing to understand what she was referring to, Mme. Blavatsky hastened then to tell him that she was speaking of his deceased wife, whom he had just buried, and who *was there*, and would be *there*, in that room until we had gone away. She then proceeded to describe the ghost in such a minute way that the unfortunate widower became as pale as death itself, and hurried away to order fresh horses !

Some interesting details concerning Mme. Blavatsky's family home at Tiflis have been published quite lately in a Russian memoir, "Reminiscences of Prince A. T. Bariatinsky", by General P. S. Nikolaeff, formerly his aide-de-camp at Tiflis. This memoir appears in the *Historical Vvestnick (Messenger)*, a Russian magazine of high repute, dedicated, as its name shows, to historical Notes, Memoirs, and Biographies. Referring to the family of the Fadeefs, General Nikolaeff, writing of a period coincident with that of Mme. Blavatsky's visit to Tiflis, says: —

"They were living in those years in the ancient mansion of the Princes Tchavtchavadze, the great building itself carrying the imprint of something weird or peculiar about it — something that carried one back to the epoch of Catherine the Great. A long, lofty, and **[Page 111]** gloomy hall was hung with the family portraits of the Fadeefs and the Princes Dolgorouky. Further on was a drawing-room, its walls covered with Gobelin tapestry, a present from the Empress Catherine, and near at hand was the apartment of Mademoiselle N. A. Fadeef — in itself one of the most remarkable of private museums. The collection gathered into this museum attracted attention by their great variety. There were brought together the arms and weapons from all the countries of the world; ancient crockery, cups, and goblets, archaic house utensils, Chinese and Japanese idols, mosaics and images of the Byzantine epoch, Persian and Turkish carpets, and fabrics worked with gold and silver, statues, pictures, paintings, petrified fossils, and, finally, a very rare and most precious library.

"The emancipation of the serfs had altered in no way the daily life of the Fadeefs. The whole enormous

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host of their *valetaille* (ex-serfs), [Forty men and women; and this for twenty-two years in Tiflis, where old General Fadeef was one of the three Imperial Councillors on the council under the Viceroys from Prince Porontzoff to the Grand Duke Michael] having remained with the family as before their freedom, only now receiving wages ; and all went on as before with the members of that family — that is to say, luxuriously and plentifully (it means in their usual hospitable and open way of living). I loved to pass my evenings in that home. At precisely a quarter to eleven o'clock, the old general, brushing along the *parquets* with his warmly muffled-up feet, retired to his apartments. At that same moment, hurriedly and in silence, the supper was brought in on trays, and served in the interior rooms; and immediately after this the drawing-room doors would be closely shut, and an animated conversation take place on every topic. Modern literature was reviewed and criticized, contemporary social questions from Russian life discussed; at one time it was the narratives of some visitor, a foreign traveler, or an account given of a recent skirmish by one of its heroes, some sunburnt officer just returned from the battlefield (in the Caucasian Mountains), would be **[Page 112]** eagerly listened to; at another time the antiquated old Spanish-mason (then an officer in the Russian army), Quartano, would drop in and give us thrilling stories from the wars of Napoleon the Great. Or, again, 'Radda Bay' — H. P. Blavatsky, the granddaughter of General A. M. Fadeef — would put in an appearance, and was made to call forth from her past some stormy episode of her American life and travels ; when the conversation would be sure to turn suddenly upon the mystic subjects, and she herself commence to ' evoke spirits.' And then the tall candles would begin to burn low, hardly flickering toward the end, the human figures on the Gobelin tapestry would seem to awaken and move, and each of us feel queer from an involuntary creeping sensation; and this generally lasted until the eastern portion of the sky began itself to pale, on the dark face of the southern night."

Mme. Blavatsky resided at Tiflis less than two years, and not more than three in the Caucasus. The last year she passed roaming about in Imeretia, Georgia, and Mingrelia. Throughout the Trans-Caucasian country, and all along the coasts of the Black Sea, the various peoples, notwithstanding that their Christian persuasion dates from the fourth century A.D., are as superstitious as any Pagan, especially the half-savage, warlike Apkhasians, the Imeretenes, and the Mingrelians — the descendants, perhaps, of those ancient Greeks who came with Jason in search of the Golden Fleece; for, according to historical legend, it is the site of the archaic Colchide, and the river Rion (Pharsis) rolled once upon a time its rapid waves upon golden sand and ore instead of the modern gravel and stones. Therefore it was but natural that the princes and the landed "noblemen", who live in their "castles" scattered through, and stuck like nests in thick foliage, in the dense woods and forests of Mingrelia and Imeretia, and who, hardly half a century back, were nearly all **[Page 113]** half-brigands when not full-blown highwaymen, who are fanatical as Neapolitan monks, and ignorant as Italian noblemen — that they should, we say, have viewed such a character as was then Mme. Blavatsky in the light of a witch, when not in that of a beneficent magician. As, later in life, wherever she went, her friends in those days were many, but her enemies still more numerous. If she cured and helped those who believed themselves sincerely bewitched, it was only to make herself cruel enemies of those who were supposed to have bewitched and spoiled the victims. Refusing the presents and "thanks" of those she relieved of the "evil eye" — she rejected, at the same time, with equal contempt, the bribes offered by their enemies. No one, at any rate, and whatever her other faults may be, has succeeded in showing her a mercenary character, or one bent upon money-making for any motive. Thus, while people of the class of the Princes Gouriel, and of the Princes Dadiani and Abashedsé, were ranked among her best friends, some others — all those who had a family hatred for the above named — were, of course, her sworn enemies. In those days, we believe even now, these countries — especially Mingrelia and Imeretia — were regular hot-beds of titled paupers; of princes, descendants of deposed and conquered sovereigns, and feud raged among them as during the Middle Ages. These were and have remained her enemies., Some years later, to these were added all the bigots, church-goers, missionaries, to say nothing of American and English spiritualists,

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French spiritists, and their host of mediums. Stories after stories were invented of her, circulated and accepted by all, except those who knew her well — as *facts*. Calumny was rife, and her enemies now hesitate at no falsehood that can injure her character. **[Page 114]**

She defied them all, and would submit to no restraint; would stoop to adopt no worldly method of propitiating public opinion. She avoided society, showing her scorn of its idols, and was therefore treated as a dangerous iconoclast. All her sympathies went toward, and with, that tabooed portion of humanity which society pretends to ignore and avoid, while secretly running after its more or less renowned members — the necromancers, the obsessed, the possessed, and such like mysterious personages. The native *Koodiani* (magicians, sorcerers), Persian thaumaturgists, and old Armenian hags — healers and fortune-tellers — were the first she generally sought out and took under her protection. Finally public opinion became furious, and society — that mysterious somebody in general, and nobody in particular — made an open levee of arms against one of its own members who dared to defy its time-hallowed laws, and act as no *respectable* person would — namely, roaming in the forests alone, on horseback, and preferring smoky huts and their dirty inmates to brilliant drawing-rooms and their frivolous denizens.

Her occult powers all this while, instead of weakening, became every day stronger, and she seemed finally to subject to her direct will every kind of manifestation. The whole country was talking of her. The superstitious Gooriel and Mingrelian nobility began very soon to regard her as a magician, and people came from afar off to consult her about their private affairs. She had long since given up communication through raps, and preferred — what was a far more rapid and satisfactory method — to answer people either verbally or by means of direct writing. [This was done always in full consciousness, and simply, as she explained, watching people's thoughts as they evolved out of their head in spiral luminous smoke, sometimes in jets of what might be taken for some radiant material, and settled in distinct pictures and images around them. Often such thoughts and answers to them would find themselves impressed in her own brain, couched in words and sentences in the same way as original thoughts do. But, so far as we are all able to understand, the former visions are always more trustworthy, as they are independent and distinct from the seer's own impressions, belonging to pure clairvoyance, not "thought transference", which is a process always liable to get mixed up with one's own more vivid mental impressions.] At times, during such process, Mme **[Page 115]** Blavatsky seemed to fall into a kind of coma, or magnetic sleep, with eyes wide open, though even then her hand never ceased to move, and continued its writing. ["Very naturally", she explains, "since it was neither magnetic sleep", nor coma, but simply a state of intense concentration, an attention only too necessary during such concentration, when the least distraction leads to a mistake. People knowing but of mediumistic clairvoyance, and not of our philosophy and mode of operation, often fall into such error".] When thus answering mental questions, the answers were rarely unsatisfactory. Generally they astonished the querists — friends and enemies.

Meanwhile sporadic phenomena were gradually dying away in her presence. They still occurred, but very rarely, though they were always very remarkable. We give one.

It must, however, be explained that, some months previous to that event, Mme. Blavatsky was taken very ill. From the verbal statements of her relatives, recorded under their dictation, we learn that no doctor could understand her illness. It was one of those mysterious nervous diseases that baffle science, and elude the grasp of everyone but a very expert psychologist. Soon after the commencement of that illness, she began — as she repeatedly told her friends — "to lead a double life". What she meant by it, no one of **[Page 116]** the good people of Mingrelia could understand, of course. But this is how she herself

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describes that state: —

"Whenever I was called by name, I opened my eyes upon hearing it, and was myself, my own personality in every particular. As soon as I was left alone, however, I relapsed into my usual, half-dreamy condition, and became *somebody* else (who, namely, Madame. B. will not tell). I had simply a mild fever that consumed me slowly but surely, day after day, with entire loss of appetite, and finally of hunger, as I would feel none for days, and often went a week without touching any food whatever, except a little water, so that in four months I was reduced to a living skeleton. In cases when I was interrupted, when in my other *self*, by the sound of my present name being pronounced, and while I was conversing in my dream life — say at half a sentence either spoken by me or those who were with my second *me* at the time — and opened my eyes to answer the call, I used to answer very rationally, and understood all, for I was never delirious. But no sooner had I closed my eyes again than the sentence which had been interrupted was completed by my other self, continued from the word, or even half the word, it had stopped at. When awake, and *myself*, I remembered well *who I was* in my second capacity, and what *I* had been and was doing. When *somebody else*, *i.e.* the personage I had become, I know I had no idea of who was H. P. Blavatsky! I was in another far-off country, a totally different individuality from myself, and had no connection at all with my actual life."

Such is Mme. Blavatsky's analysis of her state at that time. She was residing then at Ozoorgetty, a military settlement in Mingrelia, where she had bought a house. It is a little town, lost among the old forests and woods, which, in those days, had neither roads nor conveyances, save of the most primitive kind, and **[Page 117]** which, to the very time of the last Russo-Turkish war, was unknown outside of Caucasus. The only physician of the place, the army surgeon, could make nothing of her symptoms; but as she was visibly and rapidly declining, he packed her off to Tiflis to her friends. Unable to go on horseback, owing to her great weakness, and a journey in a cart being deemed dangerous, she was sent off in a large native boat along the river — a journey of four days to Kutais — with four native servants only to take care of her.

What took place during that journey we are unable to state precisely; nor is Mme. Blavatsky herself certain of it, since her weakness was so great that she lay like one apparently dead until her arrival. In that solitary boat, on a narrow river, hedged on both sides by centenarian forests, her position must have been precarious.

The little stream they were sailing along was, though navigable, rarely, if ever, used as a means of transit, at any rate not before the war. Hence the information we have got came solely from her servants and was very confused. It appears, however, that as they were gliding slowly along the narrow stream, cutting its way between two steep and woody banks, the servants were several times during three consecutive nights frightened out of their senses by seeing, *what they swore was their mistress*, gliding off from the boat, and across the water in the direction of the forests, while the body of that same mistress was lying prostrate on her bed at the bottom of the boat. Twice the man who towed the canoe, upon seeing the "form", ran away shrieking, and in great terror. Had it not been for a faithful old servant who was taking care of her, the boat and the patient would have been abandoned **[Page 118]** in the middle of the stream. On the last evening, the servant swore he saw two figures, while the third — his mistress, in flesh and bone — was sleeping before his eyes. No sooner had they arrived at Koutaġis, where Mme. Blavatsky had a distant relative residing, than all the servants, with the exception of the old butler, left her, and returned no more.

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It was with great difficulty that she was transported to Tiflis. A carriage and a friend of the family were sent to meet her; and she was brought into the house of her friends apparently dying.

She never talked upon that subject with anyone. But, as soon as she was restored to life and health, she left the Caucasus, and went to Italy. Yet it was before her departure from the country in 1863 that the nature of her powers seems to have entirely changed.

One afternoon, very weak and delicate still, after the illness just described, Mme. Blavatsky came in to her aunt's, N. A. Fadeef's, room. After a few words of conversation, remarking that she felt tired and sleepy, she was offered to rest upon a sofa. Hardly had her head touched her cushion when she fell into a profound sleep. Her aunt had quietly resumed some writing she had interrupted to talk with her niece, when suddenly soft but quite audible steps in the room behind her chair made her rapidly turn her head to see who was the intruder, as she was anxious that Mme. Blavatsky should not be disturbed. The room was empty! there was no other living person in it but herself and her sleeping niece, yet the steps continued audibly, as though of a heavy person treading softly, the floor creaking all the while. They approached the sofa, and suddenly ceased. Then she heard stronger sounds, as though someone was whispering near Mme. Blavatsky, and [Page 119] presently a book placed on a table near the sofa was seen by N. A. Padeef to open, and its pages kept turning to and fro, as if an invisible hand were busy at it. Another book was snatched from the library shelves, and flew in that same direction.

More astonished than frightened — for everyone in the house had been trained in and become quite familiar with such manifestations — N. A. Fadeef arose from her arm-chair to awaken her niece, hoping thereby to put a stop to the phenomena; but at the same moment a heavy arm-chair moved at the other end of the room, and rattling on the floor, glided toward the sofa. The noise it made awoke Mme. Blavatsky, who, upon opening her eyes, inquired of the invisible presence what was the matter. A few more whisperings, and all relapsed into quietness and silence, and there was nothing more of the sort during the rest of the evening.

At the date at which we write, every phenomenon independent of her will, except such as the one described, and that Mme. Blavatsky attributes to quite a different cause than spiritual manifestations, has for more than twenty years entirely ceased. At what time this complete change in her occult powers was wrought we are unable to say, as she was far away from our observation, and spoke of it but rarely — never unless distinctly asked in our correspondence to answer the question. From her letters we learnt that she was always traveling, rarely settling for any length of time in one place. And we believe her statements with regard to her powers to have been entirely true when she wrote to tell us, "Now (in 1866) I shall never be subjected to external influences." *It is not H. P. B. who was from that time forth victim to "influences" which would have without doubt triumphed over a less strong nature than was hers; [Page 120] but, on the contrary, it is she who subjected these influences — whatever they may be — to her will.*

"The last vestige of my psycho-physical weakness is gone, to return no more", writes Mme. Blavatsky in a letter to a relation. "I am cleansed and purified of that dreadful attraction to myself of stray spooks and ethereal *affinities*. I am free, free, thanks to THOSE whom I now bless at every hour of my life". "I believe in this statement", said, in a conversation in May 1884 at Paris, her sister, Mme. Jelihowsky, "the more so as for nearly five years we had a personal opportunity of following the various and gradual phases in the transformations of that force. At Pskoff and Rougodevo it happened very often that she could not

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control, nor even stop, its manifestations. After that she appeared to master it more fully every day, until after her extraordinary and protracted illness at Tiflis she seemed to defy and subject it entirely to her will. This was proved by her stopping any such phenomena at her will, and by previous arrangement for days and weeks at a time. Then, when the term was over, she could produce them at her command, and leaving the choice of what should happen to those present. In short, as already said, it is the firm belief of all that there, *where a less strong nature would have been surely wrecked in the struggle, her indomitable will found somehow or other the means of subjecting the world of the invisibles — to the denizens of which she has ever refused the name of "spirits" and souls — to her own control.* Let it be clearly understood, however, that H. P. B. has never pretended to be able to control real *spirits*, *i.e.* the spiritual monads, but only Elementals; as also to be able to keep at bay the *shells* of the dead." [Page 121]

CHAPTER 7

FROM APPRENTICESHIP TO DUTY

PROBABLY the years 1867 to 1870, if the story of these could be properly told, would be found by far the most interesting of Mme. Blavatsky's eventful life, but it is impossible for me to do more at present than indicate that they were associated with great progress in the expansion of her occult knowledge, and passed in the East. The two or three years intervening between her residence at Tiflis and the period I have named were spent indeed in European travel, and there would be no necessity for holding back any information concerning these — the latest of her relatively aimless wanderings — of which I might have gained possession, but no watchful relatives were with her to record what passed, and her own recollections give us none but bare outlines of her adventures.

In 1870 she came back from the East by a steamer via the then newly-opened Suez Canal, and after spending a short time in Piraeus took passage for Spezzia on board a Greek vessel, which met with a terrible catastrophe, and was blown up by an explosion of gunpowder and fireworks forming part of the cargo. Mme. Blavatsky was one of a very small number of passengers whose lives were saved. The castaways were rescued with no more than the clothes they wore when picked out of the **[Page 122]** water, and were momentarily provided for by the Greek Government, who forwarded them to various destinations. Mme. Blavatsky went to Alexandria and to Cairo, where, amid much temporary inconvenience, she waited till supplies of money reached her from Russia. I have headed this chapter "From Apprenticeship to Duty", because that is the great transition marked by the date of Mme. Blavatsky's return to Europe in 1870. Till that period her life had altogether been spent in the passionate search for occult knowledge, on which her inborn instincts impelled her from her earliest youth. This had now come upon her in ample measure. The natural-born faculties of mediumship which had surrounded her earlier years with a coruscation of wonders had given place now to attributes for which Western students of psychic mysteries at that date had no name. The time had not come for even the partial revelations concerning the great system of occult initiation as practised in the East, which has been embodied in books published within the last few years. Mme. Blavatsky already knew that she had a task before her — the task of introducing some knowledge concerning these mysteries to the world, — but she was sorely puzzled to decide how she should begin it. She had to do the best she could in making the world acquainted with the idea that the latent potentialities in human nature — in connection with which psychic phenomena of various kinds were already attracting the attention of large classes in both hemispheres — were of a kind which, properly directed, would lead to the infinite spiritual exaltation of their possessors, while wrongly directed they were capable of leading downward towards disastrous results of almost commensurate extent. She alone, at the period I refer to, appreciated the magnitude of her mission, and if she **[Page 123]** did not adequately appreciate the difficulties in her way, she had at all events no companion to share her sense of the fact that these difficulties were very great.

Probably she would be among those most willing to recognise, looking back now upon the steps she took in the beginning, that she went to work the wrong way, but very few people who have had a long and arduous battle in life to fight — especially when that fight has been chiefly waged against such moral antagonists as bigotry and ignorance — would be in a position at the close of their efforts to regard their earliest measures with satisfied complacency.

The only lever which, as the matter presented itself in the beginning to Mme. Blavatsky's mind, seemed

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available for her to work with, was the widespread and growing belief of large numbers of civilized people in the phenomena and somewhat too hastily formed theories of spiritualism. She set to work in Egypt — finding herself there for the moment — to found a society which should have the investigation of spiritualistic phenomena for its purpose, and which she designed to lead through paths of higher knowledge in the end. Some, among the many misrepresentations which have made her life one long struggle with calumny from this time onward, arose from this innocently intended measure. Because she set on foot her quasi-spiritualistic society, she has been regarded as having been committed at that date to an acceptance of the theory of psychic phenomena which spiritualists hold. It will have been seen, however, from the quotations I have given from her sister's narrative that, even on her first return from the East in 1858, she was emphatic in repudiating this view.

One of the persons who sought Mme. Blavatsky's acquaintance in connection with this abortive society **[Page 124]** was the subsequently notorious Mme. Coulomb, attached at that time to the *personnel* of a small hotel at Cairo, who afterwards finding her way with her husband, in a state of painful destitution, to India, fastened herself but too securely on Mme. Blavatsky's hospitality at Bombay — only to repay this in the end by rendering herself the tool of an infamous attack made upon the Theosophical Society in the person of its Founder by a missionary magazine at Madras. Of this I shall have occasion to speak again later on. The narrative of the period beginning in 1871, on which I am now entering, has been prepared, with a good deal of assistance from Mme. Blavatsky herself, from writings by relatives and intimate friends of her later years. It would be tedious to the reader if this were divided into separate fragments of testimony, and I shall therefore prefer — except in some special cases later on — to weld these narratives into one, and the use of the plural pronoun "we" will hereafter sufficiently identify passages which have a composite authorship.

In 1871 Mme. Blavatsky wrote from Cairo to tell her friends that she had just returned from India, and had been wrecked somewhere *en passant* (near Spezzia). She had to wait in Egypt for some time before she returned home, meanwhile she determined to establish a Société Spirite for the investigation of mediums and phenomena according to Allen Kardec's theories and philosophy, since there was no other way to give people a chance to see for themselves how mistaken they were. She would first give free play to an already established and accepted teaching and then, when the public would see that nothing was coming out of it, she would offer her own explanations. To accomplish this object, she said, she was ready to go to any amount of trouble — **[Page 125]** even to allowing herself to be regarded for a time as a helpless medium. "They know no better, and it does me no harm — for I will very soon show them the difference between a passive medium and an active doer". she explains.

A few weeks later a new letter was received. In this one she showed herself full of disgust for the enterprise, which had proved a perfect failure. She had written, it seems, to England and France for a medium, but without success. *En désespoir de cause*, she had surrounded herself with amateur mediums — French female spiritists, mostly beggarly tramps, when not adventuresses in the rear of M. de Lesseps' army of engineers and workmen on the canal of Suez.

"They steal the Society's money", she wrote, " they drink like sponges, and I now caught them cheating most shamefully our members, who come to investigate the phenomena, by bogus manifestations. I had very disagreeable scenes with several persons who held me alone responsible for all this. So I ordered them out. . . . The *Société Spirite* has not lasted a fortnight — it is a heap of ruins, majestic, but as suggestive as those of the Pharaoh's tombs. . . . To wind up the comedy with a drama, I got nearly shot by

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a madman — a Greek, who had been present at the only two public séances we held, and got possessed I suppose by some vile spook." [This literal translation of a letter written by Mme Blavatsky to her aunt fourteen years back shows that she never changed her way of viewing communication with "spirits" for *physical* phenomena, as she was accused of doing when in America.]

She broke off all connection with the "mediums", shut up her *Société*, and went to live in Boulak near the Museum. Then it seems, she came again in contact with her old friend the Copt of mysterious fame, of whom [Page 126] mention has been made in connection with her earliest visit to Egypt, at the outset of her travels. For several weeks he was her only visitor. He had a strange reputation in Egypt, and the masses regarded him as a magician. One gentleman, who knew him at this time, declared that he had outlined and predicted for him for twenty-five years to come nearly all his (the narrator's) daily life, even to the day of his death. The Egyptian high officials pretending to laugh at him behind his back, dreaded and visited him secretly. Ismail Pasha, the Khedive, had consulted him more than once, and later on would not consent to follow his advice to resign. These visits of an old man, who was reputed hardly ever to stir from his house (situated at about ten miles from town), to a foreigner were much commented upon. New slanders and scandals were set on foot. The sceptics who had, moved by idle curiosity, visited the *Société* and witnessed the whole failure, made capital of the thing. Ridiculing the idea of phenomena, they had as a natural result declared such claims to be fraud and charlatanry all round. Conveniently inverting the facts of the case, they even went the length of maintaining that instead of paying the mediums and the expenses of the Society, it was Mme. Blavatsky who had herself been paid, and had attempted to palm off juggler tricks as genuine phenomena. The groundless inventions and rumors thus set on foot by her enemies, mostly the discharged "French-women mediums", did not prevent Mme. Blavatsky from pursuing her studies, and proving to every honest investigator that her extraordinary powers of clairvoyance and clairaudience were *facts*, and independent of mere physical manifestations, over which she possessed an undeniable control. Also that her power, by simply looking at them, of setting objects in motion and vibration [Page 127] without any direct contact with them, and sometimes at a great distance, instead of deserting her or even diminishing, had increased with years. A Russian gentleman, an acquaintance of Mme. B., who happened to visit Egypt at that time, sent his friends the most enthusiastic letters about Mme. Blavatsky. Thus he wrote to a brother-officer in the same regiment a letter now in the possession of her relatives, and from which we translate: "She is a marvel, an unfathomable mystery. That which she produces is simply phenomenal; and without believing any more in spirits than I ever did, I am ready to believe in witchcraft. If it is after all but jugglery, then we have in Mme. Blavatsky a woman who beats all the Boscos and Robert Houdin's of the century by her address. . . . Once I showed her a closed medallion containing the portrait of one person and the hair of another, an object which I had had in my possession but a few months, which was made at Moscow, and of which very few know, and she told me without touching it, ' Oh ! it is your godmother's portrait and your cousin's hair. Both are dead,' and she proceeded forthwith to describe them, as though she had both before her eyes. Now, godmother, as you know, who left my eldest daughter her fortune, is dead fifteen years ago. How could she know ! " etc..

In an illustrated paper of the time there is a story told of Mme. Blavatsky by another gentleman. He met her at a *table d'hôte* with some friends in a hotel of Alexandria. Refusing to go with these to the theatre after dinner, they remained alone, sitting on a sofa and talking. Before the sofa there stood a little tea-tray, on which the waiter had placed for Mr N----- a bottle of liqueur, some wine, a wine-glass, and a tumbler. As he was carrying the glass with its contents to his mouth, without any visible cause, it broke in his hand into many pieces. She [Page 128] laughed, appearing overjoyed, and made the remark that she hated liqueurs and wine and could hardly tolerate those who used them too freely. The story goes on ...

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" ' You do not mean to infer that it is *you* who broke my wine-glass . . . ? It is simply an accident. . . . The glass is very thin ; it was perhaps cracked, and I squeezed it too strongly . . . !' I lied purposely, for I had just made the mental remark that it seemed very strange and incomprehensible, the glass being very thick and strong, just as a *verre à liqueur* would be."

But I wanted to draw her out."

She looked at me very seriously, and her eyes flashed. ' What will you bet,' she asked, ' that I do not do it again ?'

" Well, we will try on the spot. If you do, I will be the first to proclaim you a true magician. If not, we will have a good laugh at you or your spirits to-morrow at the Consulate. . . .' And saying so, I half-filled the tumbler with wine and prepared to drink it. But no sooner had the glass touched my lips than I felt it shattered between my fingers, and my hand bled, wounded by a broken piece in my instinctive act at grasping the tumbler together when I felt myself losing hold of it."

"*Entre les lèvres et la coupe, il y a quelquefois une grande distance,*" she observed sententiously, and left the room, laughing in my face most outrageously".

" During the latter years", Mme. de Jelihowsky states, "many were the changes that had taken place in our family: our grandfather and our aunt's husband, who had both occupied very high official positions in Tiflis, had died, and the whole family had left the Caucasus to settle permanently in Odessa. H. P. Blavatsky had not visited the country for years, and there remained in Tiflis but myself with my family and a number of old servants, formerly serfs of the family, who, once liberated, could not be kept without wages in the house they had been born in, and were gradually being sent away. These people, some of whom owing to old age were unable to work for their living, came constantly to me **[Page 129]** for help. Unable to pension so many, I did what I could for them ; among other things I had obtained a permanent home at the City Refuge House for two old men, late servants of the family: a cook called Maxim and his brother Piotre — once upon a time a very decent footman, but at the time of the event I refer to an incorrigible drunkard, who had lost his arm in consequence."

That summer we had gone to reside during the hot months of the year at Manglis — the headquarters of the regiment of Erivan — some thirty miles from town, and Mme. Blavatsky was in Egypt. I had just received the news that my sister had returned from India, and was going to remain for some time at Cairo. We corresponded very rarely, at long intervals, and our letters were generally short. But after a prolonged silence I received from H. P. B. a very long and interesting letter."

A portion of it consisted of fly-sheets torn out from a note-book, and these were all covered with pencil-writing. The strange events they recorded had been all put down on the spot — some under the shadow of the great Pyramid of Cheops, and some of them inside Pharaoh's Chamber. It appears that Mme. B. had gone there several times, once with a large company, some of whom were spiritualists. [Some most wonderful phenomena were described by some of her companions as having taken place in broad daylight in the desert when they were sitting under a rock; whilst other notes in Mme Blavatsky's writing

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recorded the strange sight she saw in the Cimmerian darkness of the King's Chamber, when she has passed a night alone comfortably settled inside a sarcophagus.]"

'Let me know, Vera', she wrote, 'whether it is true that the old Pietro is dead ? He must have died last night or at some time yesterday' (the date on the stamp of the envelope showed that it had left Egypt ten days previous to the day on which it was received). 'Just fancy what happened ! A friend of mine, a young English [Page 130] lady, and a medium, stood writing mechanically on bits of paper, leaning upon an old Egyptian tomb. The pencil had begun tracing perfect gibberish — in characters that had never existed here, as a philologist told us — when suddenly, and as I was looking from behind her back, they changed into what I thought were Russian letters. My attention having been called elsewhere, I had just left her, when I heard people saying that what she had written was now evidently in some existing characters, but that neither she nor anyone else could read them. I came back just in time to prevent her from destroying that slip of paper as she had done with the rest, and was rewarded. Possessing myself of the rejected slip, fancy my astonishment on finding it contained in Russian an evident apostrophe to myself!"

' "*Barishnya* (little or ' young miss '), dear *baryshnya!* " said the writer, "help, oh help me, miserable sinner! ... I suffer: *drink, drink, give me a drink!* . . . *I suffer, I suffer!*" From this term *baryshnya* — a title our old servants will, I see, use with us two even after our hair will have grown white with age — I understood immediately that the appeal came from one of our old servants, and took therefore the matter in hand by arming myself with a pencil *to record what I could myself see*. I found the name Piotre Koutcherof echoed in my mind quite distinctly, and I saw before me an indistinguishable mass of grey smoke — a formless pillar — and thought I heard it repeat the same words. Furthermore, I saw that he had died in Dr Gorolevitch's hospital attached to the City Refuge, the Tiflis workhouse where you had placed them both. Moreover, as I made out, it is you who placed him there in company with his brother, our old Maxim, who had died a few days before him. You had never written about poor Maxim's death. Do tell me whether it is so or not. . . .'

Further on followed her description of the whole vision as she had it, later on, in the evening when alone, and the authentic words pronounced by ' Piotre's spook' as she called it. The ' spirit' (?) was bitterly complaining of thirst and was becoming quite desperate. It was punishment, it said — and the spook seemed to know it [Page 131] well, — for his drunkenness during the lifetime of that personality ! . . . 'An agony of thirst that nothing could quench — an ever living fire,' as she explained it."

Mme. Blavatsky's letter ended with a postscript, in which she notified her sister that her doubts had been all settled. She saw the astral spooks of both the brothers — one harmless and passive, the other active and dangerous. [How dangerous is the latter kind was proved on the spot. Miss O - , the medium, a young lady of hardly twenty, governess in a rich family of bankers, an extremely modest and gentle girl, had hardly written the Russian words addressed to Mme Blavatsky, when she was seized with a trembling, and asked to drink. When water was brought she threw it away, and went on asking for a drink. Wine was offered her - she greedily drank it, and began drinking one glass after another until, to the horror of all, she fell into convulsions, and cried for "wine-a drink!" till she fainted away, and was carried home in a carriage. She had an illness after this that lasted several weeks. - [H.P.B.] Upon the receipt of this letter, her sister was struck with surprise. Ignorant herself of the death of the parties mentioned, she telegraphed immediately to town, and the answer received from Dr Gorolevitch corroborated the news announced by Mme. Blavatsky in every particular. Piotre had died on the very same day and date as given in H. P. Blavatsky's letter, and his brother two days earlier.

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Disgusted with the failure of her spiritist society and the gossip it provoked, Mme. Blavatsky soon went home *via* Palestine, and lingered for some months longer, making a voyage to Palmyra and other ruins, whither she went with Russian friends. Accounts of some of the incidents of her journey found their way into the French and even American papers. At the end of 1872 she returned in her usual way without warning, and surprised her family at Odessa. **[Page 132]**

CHAPTER 8
RESIDENCE IN AMERICA

[Page 132] IN the beginning of 1873 Mme. Blavatsky left Russia and went in the first instance to Paris. By this time the psychic relationship between herself and her occult teachers in the East was already established on that intimate footing which has rendered her whole subsequent life subject to its practical direction. It is unnecessary to inquire why she adopted this or that course; we shall rarely discover commonplace motives for her action, and frequently she herself would be no better able to say “why” she might be at any given moment arranging to go here or there than the merest stranger present. The immediate motive of her proceedings would be the direction she would receive through occult channels of perception, and for herself, rebellious and uncontrollable though she had been in earlier life, “an order” from “her master” was now enough to send her forward on the most uninviting errand, in patient confidence that good results would ensue, and that whatever might be thus ordered, would assuredly prove for the best.

The position is so unlike any which the experience of ordinary mundane life supplies that I may usefully endeavor to explain the relationship which exists in connection with, and arising out of, occult initiation in the East between a pupil, or chela, of the esoteric or [Page 133] occult doctrine and his teacher, master, or guru. I have known many chelas within the last few years, and I can speak on the subject from information that is not exclusively derived even from that source.

The primary motive which governs people who become chelas is the desire to achieve moral and spiritual exaltation that may lead directly to a higher state of being than can be hoped for by the unassisted operation of the normal law of nature. Referring back to the esoteric view of the human soul's progress, it will be seen that people may often be impelled, as Mme. Blavatsky was, for instance, from childhood, by an inborn craving for occult instruction and psychic development. Such people seek initiation under the guidance, as it were, of a commanding instinct, which is unlike the intellectually formed purpose to accomplish a spiritual achievement that I have assigned above to chelas as their primary motive. But in truth the motive would be regarded by occultists as the same at different stages of development. For the normal law of Nature is that a soul having accomplished a certain amount of progress — along the path of spiritual evolution — in one physical life (one incarnation), will be reborn without losing the attributes thus acquired. All these constitute what are loosely spoken of as inborn tendencies, natural tastes, inclinations, and so forth. And thus, whether a chela is then, for the first time, seeking initiation or watched over by a guru from his last birth, the primary motive of his effort is the same.

And this being his own spiritual advancement, it may be, that if circumstances do not require him to play an active part in any work in the world, his duty will, to a large extent, be concentrated on his own interior life. Such a man's chief obligation towards the public at large, therefore, will be to conceal the fact that he is a chela, [Page 134] for he has not yet, by the hypothesis, attained the right to choose who shall and who shall not be introduced to the “mysteries”. He merely has to keep the secrets entrusted to him as such. On the other hand, the exigencies of his service may require him to perform tasks in the world which involve the partial explanation of his relationship with his masters, and then a very much more embarrassing career lies before him. For such a chela — however perfect his occult communications may be, through the channel of his own psychic faculties, between himself and his masters — is never

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allowed to regard himself for an instant as a blind automaton in their hands. He is, on the contrary, a responsible agent who is left to perform his task by the light of his own sagacity, and he will never receive “orders” which seriously conflict with that principle. These will be only of a general character, or, where they refer to details, will be of a kind that do not, in occult phrase, interfere with Karma; that is to say, that do not supersede the agent's moral responsibility.

Finally, it should be understood in regard to “orders” among initiates in occultism, that the order of an occult guru to his chela differs in a very important respect from the order of an officer to his soldier. It is a direction that in the nature of things would never be enforced, for the disregard of which there could be no positive or prescribed penalty, and which is only imposed upon the chela by the consideration that if he gets an order and does not obey it, he is unlikely to get any more. It is to be regarded as an order because of the ardor of obedience on the side of the chela, whose aspirations, by the hypothesis, are wholly centered on the masters. The service thus rendered is especially of the kind which has been described as perfect freedom. [Page 135]

All this must be borne in mind by any reader who would understand Mme. Blavatsky and the foundation of the Theosophical Society, and must be rigorously applied to the narrative of her later life. A constant perplexity arises, for people who are slightly acquainted with the circumstances of her career, from the indiscretions in connection with the management of the Theosophical Society which she has frequently fallen into. How can it be that the Mahatmas — her occult teachers and masters, whose insight is represented as being so great, whose interest in the theosophical movement is said to be so keen, whose wisdom is vaunted so enthusiastically by their adherents — permit their agent Mme. Blavatsky, with whom it is alleged they are in constant communication, to make mistakes which most people in her place would have avoided, to trust persons almost obviously unworthy of her confidence, to associate herself with proceedings that tend to lower the dignity of her enterprise, to lose temper and time with assailants who might be calmly ignored, and to spend her psychic energy in the wrong places, with the wrong people, and at the wrong moments. The solution of the puzzle is to be found entirely in the higher spiritual aspects of the undertaking. The Theosophical Society is by a great way not the only instrument through which the Mahatmas are working in the world to foster the growth of spirituality among mankind, but it is the one enterprise that has been confided, in a large measure, to Mme. Blavatsky. If she were to fail with it, the Mahatma energy concerned would be spent not in trying to bolster up her failure, but in some quite different direction. If she succeeds with it, the principles of moral responsibility are best vindicated by leaving her to struggle through with her work in her own way. A general on a campaign sending [Page 136] an officer to perform a specific duty is mainly concerned with the result to be gained. If he thinks he can promote this by interfering with fresh orders, he does so. But by the hypothesis, a Mahatma interfering with *his* officer is throwing into confusion the operation of the laws of Nature which have to do with the causes — efficient on a plane above this of physical incarnation — that are generated by what we call moral responsibility. Of course it is open to people who know nothing of Eastern occultism, nor of superior planes in Nature and so forth, to put all this aside and judge Mme. Blavatsky's action by commonplace prosaic standards; but it is not reasonable for the considerable number of people who in various ways are quite ready to profess belief in the Mahatmas, and in the reality of that occult world in which Mme. Blavatsky is regarded by most theosophists as having been initiated, to say, in spite of these beliefs, that the action of the Mahatmas in leaving Mme. Blavatsky to make mistakes and trust the wrong people and so forth is unintelligible. It is not unintelligible in principle, even though, as I have indicated a page or two back, Mme. Blavatsky will sometimes receive orders the immediate motive of which she does not understand, but obeys none the less. This condition of things does not violate the rule about not converting a responsible chela into a blind automaton. Such interferences would never be

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found to take place under conditions which would discharge the agent of moral responsibility for the manner in which he might resume the guidance of his enterprise from the point to which obedience to the order received might have carried on or diverted him.

No special interest attaches to Mme. Blavatsky's brief residence in Paris in 1873, where she stayed with a cousin of hers, Nicolas Hahn, Rue de l'Université, for [Page 137] two months. She was directed to visit the United States, and make that place for a time the scene of her operations.

She arrived at New York on 7th July 1873, and resided in that city — with the exception of a few weeks and months when she had to visit other cities and places — for over six years, after which time she got her naturalization papers.

Although, as will have been seen from Mme. de Jelihowsky's testimony, she was emphatic, even in 1858, in claiming for most of the phenomena that took place in her presence a very different origin from that usually assigned to such phenomena by spiritualists, the experience of spiritualism and mediumship that she acquired in America greatly enlarged her views on this subject. In 1875 she wrote home: —

“The more I see of mediums — for the United States are a true nursery, the most prolific hot-bed for mediums and sensitives of all kinds, genuine and artificial — the more I see the danger humanity is surrounded with. Poets speak of the thin partition between this world and the other. They are blind: there is no partition at all except the difference of states in which the living and the dead exist, and the grossness of the physical senses of the majority of mankind. Yet, these senses are our salvation. They were given to us by a wise and sagacious mother and nurse — Nature; for, otherwise, *individuality* and even *personality* would have become impossible: the dead would be ever merging into the living, and the latter assimilating the former. Were there around us but one variety of 'spirits' — as well call the dregs of wine, spirits — the reliquae of those mortals who are dead and gone, one could reconcile oneself with it. We cannot avoid, in some way or other, *assimilating* our dead, and little by little, and unconsciously to ourselves, we become *they* — even physically, especially in the unwise West, where cremation is unknown. *We breathe and devour the dead* — men and animals — with every [Page 138] breath we draw in, as every human breath that goes out makes up the bodies and feeds the formless creatures in the air that will be men some day. So much for the physical process; for the mental and the intellectual, and also the spiritual, it is just the same; we interchange gradually our brain-molecules, our intellectual and even spiritual auras, hence — our thoughts, desires, and aspirations, with those who preceded us. This process is common to humanity in general. It is a *natural one*, and follows the economy and laws of nature, insomuch that one's son may become gradually his own grandfather, and his aunt to boot, imbibing their combined atoms, and thus partially accounting for the possible resemblance, or atavism. But there is another law, an exceptional one, and which manifests itself among mankind sporadically and periodically: the law of *forced* post-mortem assimilation, during the prevalence of which epidemic the dead invade the domain of the living from their respective spheres — though, fortunately, only within the limits of the regions they lived in, and in which they are buried. In such cases, the duration and intensity of the epidemic depends upon the welcome they receive, upon whether they find the doors opening widely to receive them or not, and whether the necromantic plague is increased by magnetic attraction, the desire of the mediums, sensitives, and the curious themselves; or whether, again, the danger being signaled, the epidemic is wisely repressed.

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“Such a periodical visitation is now occurring in America. It began with innocent children — the little Misses Fox — playing unconsciously with this terrible weapon. And, welcomed and passionately invited to 'come in,' the whole of the dead community seemed to have rushed in, and got a more or less strong hold of the living. I went on purpose to a family of strong mediums — the Eddys — and watched for over a fortnight, making experiments, which, of course, I kept to myself. . . . You remember, Vera, how I made experiments for you at Rougodevo, how often I saw the ghosts of those who had been living in the house, and described them to you, for you could never see them. . . . Well, it was the [Page 139] same daily and nightly in Vermont. I saw and watched these soulless creatures, the shadows of their terrestrial bodies, from which in most cases soul and spirit had fled long ago, but which throve and preserved their semi-material shadows at the expense of the hundreds of visitors that came and went, as well as of the mediums. And I remarked, under the advice and guidance of my Master, that (1) those apparitions which were genuine were produced by the 'ghosts' of those who had lived and died within a certain area of those mountains; (2) those who had died far away were less entire, a mixture of the real shadow and of that which lingered in the personal aura of the visitor for whom it purported to come; and (3) the purely fictitious ones, or as I call them, the reflections of the genuine ghosts or shadows of the deceased personality. To explain myself more clearly, it was not the spooks that assimilated the medium, but the medium, W. Eddy, who assimilated unconsciously to himself the pictures of the dead relatives and friends from the aura of the sitters. . . .

“It was ghastly to watch the process! It made me often sick and giddy; but I had to look at it, and the most I could do was to hold the disgusting creatures at arm's length. But it was a sight to see the welcome given to these *umbrae* by the spiritualists! They wept and rejoiced around the medium, clothed in these empty materialized shadows; rejoiced and wept again, sometimes broken down with an emotion, a sincere joy and happiness that made my heart bleed for them. 'If they could but see what I see', I often wished. If they only knew that these simulacra of men and women are made up wholly of the terrestrial passions, vices, and worldly thoughts, of the residuum of the personality that was; for these are only such dregs that could not follow the liberated soul and spirit, and are left for a second death in the terrestrial atmosphere, that can be seen by the average medium and the public. At times I used to see one of such phantoms, quitting the medium's astral body, pouncing upon one of the sitters, expanding so as to envelop him or her entirely, and then slowly disappearing within the living body as though sucked in by its every pore. [Page 140]

Under the influence of such ideas and thoughts, Mme. Blavatsky came out finally quite openly with her protest against being called a medium. She stoutly rejected the application of "Spiritist" that was being forced upon her by her foreign correspondents. Thus in 1877 she says in one of her letters:

"What kind of Spiritist can you see in, or make of me, pray? I have worked to join the Theosophical Society, in alliance offensive and defensive with the Arya Samaj of India (of which we are now forming a section within the parent Theosophical Society), it is because in India all the Brahmins, whether orthodox or otherwise, are terribly against the *bhoots*, [The simulacra or ghost of a deceased person, - an "Elementary", or spook.] the mediums, or any necromantic evocations or dealings with the dead in any way or shape. That we have established our Society in order to combat, under the banner of Truth and Science, every kind of superstitious and preconceived hobbies. That we mean to fight the prejudices of the Sceptics, as well as the abuse of power of the false prophets, ancient or modern, to put down the high priests, the Calchases, with their false Jupitorean thunders, and to show certain fallacies of the Spiritists. If we are anything, we are *Spiritualists*, only not on the modern American fashion, but on that of

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ancient Alexandria, with its Theodadiktoi, Hypatias, and Porphyries...."

[For the new edition of this book I must here interpolate a note warning the reader against too submissive an acceptance of the views set forth in the letter quoted above. I do not think Mme. Blavatsky would have endorsed them at a later stage of her occult education. However frequently it may happen that communication from the astral world may be confused and corrupted by the unconscious influence of imperfectly developed mediums, it does not by any means follow that in all cases the "spirits" of the seance room are "empty materialized shadows" or "simulacra of men and women made up of terrestrial passions and vices, etc.."It was not till long after the date of the letter quoted that Mme. Blavatsky shared with myself in India the fuller teaching concerning life on the astral and higher planes of consciousness which put an intelligible face on the variegated and often bewildering experiences of spiritualism. That great movement was as definitely designed by higher wisdom for the illumination of civilized mankind, as the far greater movement that has since put us in touch with the mysteries of the higher occultism — that it was simply designed to break down the materialistic drift of thinking that was prevalent in the middle of the last century. It; was designed simply to show us that there was another life for human beings after the death of the physical! body. Those who had passed on, and were living on the astral plane, were furnished with a means of making their continued existence known to friends still in incarnation. Of course these opportunities were available for great numbers of astral entities surviving from the ignoble varieties of mankind, and many of these may have flocked in during Mme. Blavatsky's investigations of current spiritualism, confirming impressions she had acquired concerning the characteristics of the astral plane life; [Page 141] but multitudes of spiritualists knew perfectly well that they often had touch with departed friends still maintaining the personalities of the earth life, and in this way it unfortunately happened that Mme. Blavatsky's sweeping condemnation of all spiritualism as delusive and unwholesome alienated large numbers of people who ought to have been the most ardent sympathizers with the Theosophical movement. All later students of occultism know now that the astral plane plays a much more important part in the future life of most people "passing on" than the misleading old "shell" theory led us to suppose in the beginning.]

The Theosophical Society was founded in October 1875 at New York, with Colonel Olcott as life president — Mme. Blavatsky preferring to invest herself with the relatively insignificant title of corresponding secretary.

Colonel Olcott's acquaintance with Mme. Blavatsky was formed at a farmhouse in Vermont — the house of two brothers, spiritualist mediums named Eddy, famous in the annals of American spiritualism — in October 1874. Referring to her in his book, called *People from the other World* , published in 1875, he says: —

"This lady has led a very eventful life. . . .

The adventures she has encountered, the strange people she has seen, the perils by sea and land she has passed through would make one of the most romantic stories ever told by a biographer. In the whole course of my experience I never met so interesting and, if I may say it without offence, eccentric a character."

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In the year that elapsed between his first introduction to Mme. Blavatsky and the inauguration of their joint enterprise, his intercourse with her was intimate and his personal experiences remarkable. These need not be reviewed here in detail, except so far as some of them [Page 142] will throw light upon the circumstances of Mme. Blavatsky's life at this period, and for the moment it is enough to say that they induced him to throw up his professional career as a "lawyer" (the distinctions between the different branches of the profession in England, it will be remembered, do not hold good in America) and devote his life to the pursuit of occult development as a "chela" of the same master to whom Mme. Blavatsky's allegiance is owing, and to the service of the theosophical movement.

As Colonel Olcott has shared some of the obloquy directed against Mme. Blavatsky in recent years, it may be worth while to add a paragraph concerning him written by Mr A. O. Hume, C.B., late Secretary to the Government of India in the Agricultural Department. This passage occurs in a letter by Mr Hume addressed to an English paper, and is quoted in the preface to *The Occult World*: —

As regards Colonel Olcott's title, the printed papers which I send by this same mail will prove to you that this gentleman is an officer of the American army, who rendered good service during the war (as will be seen from the letter of the Judge Advocate-General, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Assistant Secretaries of War and of the Treasury), and who was sufficiently well known and esteemed in his own country to induce the President of the United States to furnish him with an autograph letter of introduction and recommendation to all Ministers and Consuls of the United States on the occasion of his leaving America for the East at the close of 1878."

In introducing some notes put together for the service of the present memoir, Colonel Olcott writes :—

"A strange concatenation of events brought us together, and united our lives for this work, under the superior [Page 143] direction of a group of Masters, especially of One, whose wise teaching, noble example, benevolent patience, and paternal solicitude have made us regard him with the reverence and love that a true Father inspires in his children. I am indebted to H. P. Blavatsky for making me know of the existence of these Masters and their Esoteric Philosophy; and later, for acting as my mediator before I had come into direct personal intercourse with them."

The earliest records of the Theosophical Society reveal the motives for its formation which the fuller information since made public concerning the character of Mme. Blavatsky's mission show to have been present in her mind from the first, though the means by which she should work them out lay before her then in a very nebulous and hazy condition. She seems to have been embarrassed by the difficulty of making her position intelligible to people who knew nothing of the existence even, still less of the nature and powers, of those proficient in occult science since so widely talked about — the Adepts and Mahatmas. Her policy seems to have been to imitate, by means of the occult powers which she either possessed herself or could borrow from her masters from time to time, the phenomena of spiritualism which then seemed to absorb the attention of all persons in America having any natural leanings towards mysticism, trusting to the sagacity of observers to show them that the circumstances with which she would surround such phenomena were quite unlike those to which they were used. In this way she seems to have aimed at cutting the ground from under the feet of people inclined to theorize too hastily on the basis of spiritualistic observation — at persuading them that the evidence on which they relied for the maintenance of their opinions did not afford adequate justification for these, and at leading them into

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the path [Page 144] of a more legitimate philosophical or theosophical research. The policy was undeniably a bad one, and was carried out with little discretion and with a waste of psychic energy which cannot but be deplored in the retrospect by occult students who realize the consequences of such waste. However, I merely wish to be sufficiently critical of Mme. Blavatsky's proceedings, as this narrative advances, to elucidate the operations in which we find her engaged, and I refrain from the consideration here of the policies that might have been more triumphant.

A vast array of unattainable purposes was set before themselves by the little group of friends who organized the new society in 1875. These were enumerated in one of the earlier codes of rules as follows:—

- (a) To keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions.
- (b) To oppose and counteract — after due investigation and proof of its irrational nature — bigotry in every form, whether as an intolerant religious sectarianism or belief in miracles or anything supernatural.
- (c) To promote a feeling of brotherhood among nations, and assist in the international exchange of useful arts and products, by advice, information, and co-operation with all worthy individuals and associations; provided, however, that no benefit or percentage shall be taken by the Society for its corporate services.
- (d) To seek to obtain knowledge of all the laws of Nature, and aid in diffusing it; and especially to encourage the study of those laws least understood by modern people, and so termed the occult sciences. Popular superstition and folk-lore, however fantastical when sifted, may lead to the discovery of long-lost but important secrets of Nature. The Society, therefore, aims to pursue this line of inquiry in the hope to widen the field of scientific and philosophical observation.
- (e) To gather for the Society's library and put into written forms correct information upon the various ancient philosophic traditions and legends, and, as the [Page 145] council shall decide it permissible, disseminate the same in such practicable ways as the translation and publication of original works of value, and extracts from and commentaries upon the same, or the oral instruction of persons learned in their respective departments.
- (f) To promote in every practicable way in countries where needed the spread of non-sectarian education.
- (g) Finally and chiefly, to encourage and assist individual fellows in self-improvement, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. But no fellow shall put to his selfish use any knowledge communicated to him by any member of the First Section: violation of this rule being punished by expulsion. And before any such knowledge can be imparted, the person shall bind himself by a solemn oath not to use it to selfish purposes, nor to reveal it except with the permission of the teacher.

One can readily discern in this formidable array of objects the inarticulate purpose which Mme. Blavatsky

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had really in view — the communication to the world at large of some ideas concerning the Esoteric Doctrine or great “Wisdom Religion” of the East, shining obscurely through the too ambitious programme of her new disciples, which might be summed up as contemplating the reformation and guidance of all nations generally — a programme which could hardly have been floated in sober earnest elsewhere than in America, where the mere magnitude of undertakings seems neither to daunt the courage of their promoters nor touch their sense of the ludicrous.

This volume is indebted to Mr W. Q. Judge, one of the friends Mme. Blavatsky made in the early part of her residence in America, for an account of the miscellaneous marvels of which he was a witness during the period with which we are now dealing. He writes: —

“My first acquaintance with H. P. Blavatsky began in the winter of the year 1874. She was then living in [Page 146] apartments in Irving Place, New York City, United States. She had several rooms *en suite*. The front rooms looked out on Irving Place, and the back upon the garden. My first visit was made in the evening, and I saw her there among a large number of persons who were always attracted to her presence. Several languages were to be heard among them, and Mme. Blavatsky, while conversing volubly in Russian, apparently quite absorbed, would suddenly turn round and interject an observation in English into a discussion between other persons upon a different topic to the one she was engaged with. This never disturbed her, for she at once returned to her Russian talk, taking it up just where it had been dropped.

“Very much was said on the first evening that arrested my attention and enchained my imagination. I found my secret thoughts read, my private affairs known to her. Unasked, and certainly without any possibility of her having inquired about me, she referred to several private and peculiar circumstances in a way that showed at once that she had a perfect knowledge of my family, my history, my surroundings, and my idiosyncrasies. On that first evening I brought with me a friend, a perfect stranger to her. He was a native of the Sandwich Islands, who was studying law in New York, and who had formed all his plans for a lifelong stay in that city. He was a young man, and had then no intention of marrying. But she carelessly told him, before we left for home, that before six months he would cross the continent of America, then make a long voyage, and, stranger yet to him, that before all of this he would marry. Of course, the idea was pooh-poohed by him. Still fate was too much for him. In a few months he was invited to fill an official position in his native land, and before leaving for that country he married a lady who was not in America at the time the prophecy was uttered.

“The next day I thought I would try an experiment with Mme. Blavatsky. I took an ancient scarabaeus that she had never seen, had it wrapped up and sent to her through the mails by a clerk in the employment of a [Page 147] friend. My hand did not touch the package, nor did I know where it was posted. But when I called on her at the end of the week the second time, she greeted me with thanks for the scarabaeus. I pretended ignorance. But she said it was useless to pretend, and then informed me how I had sent it, and where the clerk had posted it. During the time that elapsed between my seeing her and the sending of the package no one had heard from me a word about the matter.

“Very soon after I met her, she moved to 34th Street, and while there I visited her very often. In those rooms I used to hear the raps in furniture, in glasses, mirrors, windows, and walls, which are usually the accompaniment of dark 'spiritist' *séances*. But with her they occurred in the light, and never except when

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ordered by her. Nor could they be induced to continue once that she ordered them to stop. They exhibited intelligence also, and would at her request change from weak to strong, or from many to few at a time.

“She remained in 34th Street only a few months, and then removed to 47th Street, where she stayed until her departure to India in December 1878. I was a constant visitor, and know, as all others do who were as intimate with her as I was, that the suspicions which had been breathed about her, and the open charges that have from time to time been made, are the foulest injustice or the basest ingratitude. At times she has been incensed by these things, and declared that one more such incident would forever close the door against all phenomena. But over and over again she has relented and forgiven her enemies.

“After she had comfortably settled herself in 47th Street, where, as usual, she was from morning till night surrounded by all sorts of visitors, mysterious events, extraordinary sights and sounds, continued to occur. I have sat there many an evening, and seen in broad gas light, large luminous balls creeping over the furniture, or playfully jumping from point to point, while the most beautiful liquid bell sounds now and again burst out from the air of the room. These sounds often imitated either the piano or a gamut of sounds whistled by either myself [Page 148] or some other person. While all this was going on, H. P. Blavatsky sat unconcernedly reading or writing at *Isis Unveiled*.

“It should be remarked here that Madame. Blavatsky never exhibited either hysteria or the slightest appearance of trance. She was always in the full possession of all her faculties — and apparently of more than those of average people — whenever she was producing any phenomena.

“In the month of November or the beginning of December of the same winter, a photograph was received from a correspondent at Boston by Colonel Olcott, which was the occasion of two very striking phenomena. It purported to be the portrait of a person said to have written the books called *Art Magic and Ghost Land*. The sender required Colonel Olcott to return it almost immediately; which he did on the following evening, and I myself, being there as a caller, posted it in the nearest post-box. Two or three days later a demand was made upon Mme. Blavatsky for a duplicate of the picture, in the belief that it would be beyond even her powers, since she had no model to copy from. But she actually did it; the process consisting merely in her cutting a piece of cardboard to the requisite size, laying it under a blotting-paper, placing her hand upon it, and in a moment producing the copy demanded. Colonel Olcott took possession of this picture, and laid it away in a book that he was then reading, and which he took to bed with him. The next morning the portrait had entirely faded out, and only the name, written in pencil, was left. A week or two later, seeing this blank card lying in Colonel Olcott's room, I took it to Mme. Blavatsky, and requested her to cause the portrait to reappear. Complying, she again laid the card under another sheet of paper, placed her hand upon it, and presently the face of the man had come back as before; this time indelibly imprinted.

“In the front room where she wrote, there was a bookcase that stood for some time directly opposite her writing-desk. Upon its top stood a stuffed owl, whose glassy, never - closing eye frequently seemed to follow your [Page 149] movements. Indeed, I could relate things *a propos* of that same defunct bird, but — in the words of Jacolliot — ' We have seen things such as one does not relate for fear of making his readers doubt his sanity. . . . Still we have seen them.' Well, over the top of the doors of the bookcase

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was a blank space, about three inches wide, and running the breadth of the case. One evening we were sitting talking of magic as usual, and of 'the Brothers', when Madame said, 'Look at the bookcase!'

"We looked up at once, and as we did so, we could see appear, upon the blank space I have described, several letters apparently in gold, that came out upon the surface of the wood. They covered nearly all of the space. Examination showed that they were in gold, and in a character that I had often seen upon some of her papers.

This precipitation of messages or sentences occurred very frequently, and I will relate one which took place under my own hand and eyes, in such a way as to be unimpeachable for me.

"I was one day, about four o'clock, reading a book by P. B. Randolph, that had just been brought in by a friend of Colonel Olcott. I was sitting some six feet distant from H. P. Blavatsky, who was busy writing. I had carefully read the title-page of the book, but had forgotten the exact title. But I knew that there was not one word of writing upon it. As I began to read the first paragraph I heard a bell sound in the air, and looking saw that Mme. Blavatsky was intently regarding me.

" 'What book do you read ? ' said she.

"Turning back to the title-page, I was about to read aloud the name, when my eye was arrested by a message written in ink across the top of the page which, a few minutes before, I had looked at and found clear. It was a message in about seven lines, and the fluid had not yet quite dried on the page — its contents were a warning about the book. I am positive that when I took the volume in my hand, not one word was written in it.

"On one occasion the address of a business firm in Philadelphia was needed for the purpose of sending a [Page 150] letter through the mail, and no one present could remember the street or number, nor could any directory of Philadelphia be found in the neighborhood. The business being very urgent, it was proposed that one of us should go down nearly four miles to the General Post Office, so as to see a Philadelphia directory. But H. P. B. said: ' Wait a moment, and perhaps we can get the address some other way.' She then waved her hand, and instantly we heard a signal bell in the air over our heads. We expected no less than that a heavy directory would rush at our heads from the empty space, but no such thing took place. She sat down, took up a flat tin paper-cutter japanned black on both sides and without having any painting on it. Holding this in her left hand, she gently stroked it with her right, all the while looking at us with an intense expression. After she had rubbed thus for a few moments, faint outlines of letters began to show themselves upon the black, shining surface, and presently the complete advertisement of the firm whose address we desired was plainly imprinted upon the paper-cutter in gilt letters, just as they had had it done on slips of blotting paper such as are widely distributed as advertising media in America — a fact I afterwards found out. On a close examination, we saw that the street and number, which were the doubtful points in our memories, were precipitated with great brilliancy, the other words and figures being rather dimmer. Mme. Blavatsky said that this was because the mind of the operator was directed almost entirely to the street and number, so that their reproduction was brought about with much greater distinctness than the rest of the advertisement, which was, so to speak, dragged in in a rather accidental way.

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“About any object that might be transported mysteriously around her room, or that came into it through the air by supermundane means, there always lingered for a greater or less space of time, a very peculiar though pleasant odour. It was not always the same. At one time it was sandal-wood mixed with what I thought was otto of roses; at another time some unknown Eastern perfume, and again it came like the incense burnt in temples. [Page 151]

“One day she asked me if I would care to smell again the perfume. Upon my replying affirmatively, she took my handkerchief in her hand, held it for a few moments, and when she gave it back to me it was heavy with the well-known odour. Then, in order to show me that her hand was not covered with something that would come off upon the handkerchief, she permitted me to examine both hands. They were without perfume. But after I had convinced myself that there was no perfumery or odoriferous objects concealed in her hands, I found from one hand beginning to exhale one peculiar strong perfume, while from the other there rolled out strong waves of the incense.

“On the table at which *Isis Unveiled* was written stood a little Chinese cabinet with many small drawers. A few of the drawers contained some trifles, but there were several that were always kept empty. The cabinet was an ordinary one of its class, and repeated examination showed that there were no devices or mechanical arrangements in it, or connected with it; but many a time has one of those empty drawers become the vanishing point of various articles, and as often, on the other hand, was the birthplace of some object which had not before been seen in the rooms. I have often seen her put small coins or a ring or amulet, and have put things in there myself, closed the drawer, almost instantly reopening it, and nothing was visible. It had disappeared from sight. Clever conjurers have been known to produce such illusions, but they always require some confederacy, or else they delude you into believing that they had put the object in, when in reality they did not. With H. P. B. there was no preparation. I repeatedly examined the cabinet, and positively say that there was no means by which things could be dropped out of sight or out of the drawer; it stood on four small legs, elevated about two inches above the desk, which was quite clear and unbroken underneath. Several times I have seen her put a ring into one of the drawers and then leave the room. I then looked in the drawer, saw the ring in it, and closed it again. She then returned, and without coming near the cabinet showed me the same ring on her finger. I then [Page 152] looked again in the drawer before she again came near it, and the ring was gone.

“One day Mrs Elizabeth Thompson, the philanthropist, who had a great regard for H. P. B., called to see her. I was present. When about to leave, the visitor asked Madame to lend her some object which she had worn, as a reminder and as a talisman. The request being acceded to, the choice was left to the lady, who hesitated a moment; Madame then said, 'Take this ring,' immediately drawing it off and handing it to her friend, who placed it upon her finger, absorbed in admiring the stones. But I was looking at H. P. B.'s fingers, and saw that the ring was yet on her hand. Hardly believing my eyes, I looked at the other. There was no mistake. There were now two rings; but the lady did not observe this, and went off satisfied she had the right one. In a few days she returned it to Madame, who then told me that one of the rings was an illusion, leaving it to me to guess which one. I could not decide, for she pushed the returned ring up along her finger against the old one, and both merged into one.

“One evening several persons were present after dinner, all, of course, talking about theosophy and occultism. H. P. B. was sitting at her desk. While we were all engaged in conversation somebody said that he heard music, and went out into the hall where he thought it came from. While he was examining the hall, the person sitting near the fireplace said that instead of being in the hall, the music, which was

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that of a musical box, was playing up in the chimney. The gentleman who had gone into the passage then returned and said that he had lost the music, but at once was thoroughly amazed to find us all listening at the fireplace, when he in turn heard the music plainly. Just as he began to listen, the music floated out into the room, and very distinctly finished the tune in the air over our heads. I have on various occasions heard this music in many ways, and always when there was not any instrument to produce it.

“On this evening, a little while after the music, Madame opened one of the drawers of the Chinese [Page 153] cabinet and took from it an Oriental necklace of curious beads. This she gave to a lady present. One of the gentlemen allowed to escape him an expression of regret that he had not received such a testimonial. Thereupon H. P. B. reached over and grasped one of the beads of the necklace which the lady was still holding in her hands, and the bead at once came off in Madame's hand. She then passed it to the gentleman, who exclaimed that it was not merely a bead but was now a breast-pin, as there was a gold pin fastened securely in it. The necklace meanwhile remained intact, and its recipient was examining it in wonder that one of its beads could have been thus pulled off without breaking it.

“I have heard it said that when H. P. B. was a young woman, after coming back to her family for the first time in many years, everyone in her company was amazed and affrighted to see material objects such as cups, books, her tobacco pouch and match-box, and so forth, come flying through the air into her hand, merely when she gazed intently at them. The stories of her early days can be readily credited by those who saw similar things done at the New York headquarters. Such aerial flights were many times performed by objects at her command in my presence. One evening I was in a hurry to copy a drawing I had made, and looked about on the table for a paper-cutter with which to rub the back of the drawing so as to transfer the surplus carbon to a clean sheet.

“As I searched, it was suggested by someone that the round smooth back of a spoon bowl would be the best means, and I arose to go to the kitchen at the end of the hall for a spoon. But Mme. Blavatsky said, 'Stop, you need not go there; wait a moment.' I stopped at the door, and she, sitting in her chair, held up her left hand. At that instant a large table-spoon flew through the air across the room from out of the opposite wall and into her hand. No one was there to throw it to her, and the dining-room from which it had been transported was about thirty feet distant; two brick walls separating it from the front room.

“In the next room — the wall between being solid — [Page 154] there hung near the window a water-color portrait in a frame with glass. I had just gone into that room and looked at the picture. No one was in the room but myself, and no one went there afterwards until I returned there. When I came into the place where H. P. B. was sitting, and after I had been sitting down a few moments, she took up a piece of paper and wrote upon it a few words, handing it over to me to put away without looking at it. This I did. She then asked me to return to the other room. I went there, and at once saw that the picture which, a few moments before, I had looked at, had in some way been either moved or broken. On examining it I found that the glass was smashed, and that the securely fastened back had been opened, allowing the picture within to fall to the floor. Looking down I saw it lying there. Going back to the other room I opened and read what had been written on the slip of paper, it was :—

“ ' The picture of ----- in the dining-room has just been opened; the glass is smashed and the painting is on the floor.'

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“One day, while she was talking with me, she suddenly stopped and said, 'So-and-so is now talking of me to ----, and says, etc.' I made a note of the hour, and on the first opportunity discovered that she had actually heard the person named saying just what she told me had been said at the very time noted.

“My office was at least three miles away from her rooms”: One day, at about 2 P.M., I was sitting in my office engaged in reading a legal document, my mind intent on the subject of the paper. No one else was in the office, and in fact the nearest room was separated from me by a wide opening, or well, in the building, made to let light into the inner chambers. Suddenly I felt on my hand a peculiar tingling sensation that always preceded any strange thing to happen in the presence of H. P. B., and at that moment there fell from the ceiling upon the edge of my desk, and from there to the floor, a triangularly-folded note from Madame to myself. It was written upon the clean back of a printed Jain *sutra* or text. The message was in her handwriting, [Page 155] and was addressed to me in her writing across the printed face.

“I remember one phenomenon in connection with the making of a water-color drawing of an Egyptian subject for her, which also illustrates what the Spiritualists call *apport*, or the bringing phenomenally of objects from some distant place. I was in want of certain dry colors which she could not furnish me from her collection, and as the drawing must be finished at that sitting, and there was no shop nearby where I could purchase them, it seemed a dilemma until she stepped towards the cottage piano, and, holding up the skirt of her *robe de chambre* with both hands, received into it seventeen bottles of Winsor & Newton dry colors, among them those I required. I still wanted some gold-paint, so she caused me to bring her a saucer from the dining-room, and to give her the brass key of the door. She rubbed the key upon the bottom of the saucer for a minute or two, and then, returning them to me, I found a supply of the paint I required coating the porcelain.”

I should hardly venture to communicate the foregoing narrative to the public if it were not for the obvious impossibility, in editing memoirs of Mme. Blavatsky, of keeping the various experiences recorded of her within the limits of that which is generally held to be credible. Certainly no one person of those who have had opportunities of observing the phenomena occurring in her presence could hope to be regarded by the world at large as both sane and truthful in relating his experience. But fortified as each witness is in turn by the testimony of all the others, the situation must be recognised as involving difficulties for critics who contend that one and all, near relations, old friends, casual acquaintances, or intimates of her later years, are all possessed with a mania for trumping up fictitious stories about Mme. Blavatsky, or all in different parts of the world, and at [Page 156] widely different periods, sharing in an epidemic hallucination in regard to her, while in no other respects exhibiting abnormal conditions of mind.

The first incident during her stay in America which seems to have drawn the attention of the newspapers to Mme. Blavatsky was the death and cremation, under the auspices of the Theosophical Society, of an eccentric personage known in New York as “the Baron de Palm”. Among other eccentricities that he committed, he made a will shortly before his death professing to bequeath a considerable fortune to the Theosophical Society, but on inquiry it turned out that the property referred to in this document existed in his imagination alone. The newspapers credited the Society with having acquired great wealth by seducing the sympathies of this guileless millionaire, when in reality his effects did not meet the cost of the ceremonies connected with burning his body. However, the Society and Mme. Blavatsky suddenly sprang into local notoriety.

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“Fancy my surprise . . .” she wrote about this time to her sister.

“I am — heaven help us ! — becoming fashionable, as it seems I am writing articles on Esotericism and Nirvana, and paid for them more than I could have ever expected, though I have hardly any time for writing for money. . . . Believe me, and you will, for *you* know me, I cannot make myself realize that I have ever been able to write decently. . . . If I were unknown, no publisher or editor would have ever paid any attention to me. . . . It's all vanity and fashion. . . . Luckily for the publishers, I have never been *vain*.”

In the course of another family letter she writes: —

“Upon my word, I can hardly understand why you and people generally should make such a fuss over my [Page 157] writings, whether Russian or English! True, during the long years of my absence from home, I have constantly studied and have learned certain things. But when I wrote “/sis”, I wrote it so easily that it was certainly no labor, but a real pleasure. Why should I be praised for it? Whenever I am *told* to write, I sit down and obey, and then I can write easily upon almost anything — metaphysics, psychology, philosophy, ancient religions, zoology, natural sciences, or what not. I never put myself the question: ‘Can I write on this subject? . . .’ or, ‘Am I equal to the task?’ but I simply sit down and *write*. Why? Because *somebody who knows all* dictates to me. . . . My MASTER, and occasionally others whom I knew in my travels years ago. . . . Please do not imagine that I have lost my senses. I have hinted to you before now about them . . . and I tell you candidly, that whenever I write upon a subject I know little or nothing of, I address myself to *Them*, and one of Them inspires me, *i.e.* He allows me to simply copy what I write from manuscripts, and even printed matter that pass before my eyes, in the air, during which process I have never been *unconscious* one single instant. . . . It is that knowledge of His protection and faith in His power that have enabled me to become mentally and spiritually so strong . . . and even He (the Master) is not always required; for, during His absence on some other occupation, He awakens in me His substitute in knowledge. At such times it is no more / who write, but my *inner Ego*, my ‘*luminous self*,’ who thinks and writes for me. Only see . . . you who know me. When was I ever so learned as to write such things? . . . Whence all this knowledge? . . .”

On another occasion again she wrote also to her sister: —

“You may disbelieve me, but I tell you that in saying this I speak but the truth; I am solely occupied, not with writing *Isis*, but with “/sis” herself. I live in a kind of permanent enchantment, a life of visions and sights with open eyes, and no trance whatever to deceive my senses! I sit and watch the fair goddess constantly.[Page 158] And as she displays before me the secret meaning of her long lost *secrets*, and the veil, becoming with every hour thinner and more transparent, gradually falls off before my eyes, I hold my breath and can hardly trust to my senses! . . . For several years, in order not to forget what I have learned elsewhere, I have been made to have permanently before my eyes all that I need to see. Thus night and day, the images of the past are ever marshaled before my inner eye. Slowly, and gliding silently like images in an enchanted panorama, centuries after centuries appear before me, . . . and I am made to connect these epochs with certain historical events, and *I know* there can be no mistake. Races and nations, countries and cities, emerge during some former century, then fade out and disappear during some other one, the precise date of which I am then told by . . . Hoary antiquity gives room to historical periods; myths are explained by real events and personages who have really existed ; and every important, and often unimportant event, every revolution, a new leaf turned in the book of life of nations

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— with its incipient course and subsequent natural results — remains photographed in my mind as though impressed in indelible colours. . . . When I think and watch my thoughts, they appear to me as though they were like those little bits of wood of various shapes and colors in the game known as the *casse tête*: I pick them up one by one, and try to make them fit each other, first taking one, then putting it aside, until I find its match, and finally there always comes out in the end something geometrically correct. . . . I certainly refuse point-blank to attribute it to my own knowledge or memory, for I could never arrive alone at either such premises or conclusions. . . . I tell you seriously *I am helped*. And He who helps me is my GURU. . . .”

As belonging to the period of Mme. Blavatsky's residence in America, mention may here be made of a remarkable incident with which she was closely concerned, though it was not accomplished by the exercise of her own abnormal powers.[Page 159]

Prince Emile Wittgenstein, a Russian officer, and an old friend who had known her from childhood, was in correspondence with her at the time of the formation of the Theosophical Society. In consequence of certain warnings addressed to him at spiritual seances concerning fatalities which would menace him if he took part in the war on the Danube then impending, Mme. Blavatsky was instructed by her unseen spiritual chief to inform him that on the contrary he would be specially taken care of during the campaign, and that the spiritualistic warning would be confuted. The course of subsequent events will best be described by the quotation of a letter afterwards addressed by the Prince to an English journal devoted to spiritualism. This was as follows: —

“ TO THE EDITOR OF THE ' SPIRITUALIST'.

“Allow me, for the sake of those who believe in spirit predictions, to tell you a story about incidents which happened to me last year, and about which I, for months past, have wished to talk to you, without, till now, finding time to do so. The narrative may perhaps be a warning to some of the too credulous persons to whom every medial message is a gospel, and who too often accept as true what are perhaps the lies of some light spirit, or even the reflection of their own thoughts or wishes. I believe that the fulfilment of a prediction is such an exceptional thing that in general one ought to set no faith in such prophecies, but should avoid them as much as possible, lest they have undue influence upon our mind, faith, and free-will.

“A year and some months ago, while getting ready to join our army on the Danube, I received first one letter, and afterwards a few more, from a very kind friend of mine and a powerful medium in America, beseeching me, in very anxious words, not to go to the war — a spirit had predicted that the campaign would be fatal to me, and having ordered my correspondent to write to me the [Page 160] following words, ' Beware of the war saddle ! It will be your death, or worse still!'

“I confess that these reiterated warnings were not agreeable, especially when received at the moment of starting upon such a journey; but I forced myself to disbelieve them. My cousin, the Baroness Adelina von Vay, to whom I had written about the matter, encouraged me in doing so, and I started.

“Now it seems that this prediction became known also to some of my theosophical friends at

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New York, who were indignant at it, and decided to do their utmost to make it of no avail. And especially one of the leading brethren of the Society, and residing far away from America, promised by the force of his will to shield me from every danger.

“The fact is, that during the whole campaign, I did not see one shot explode near me, and that, so far as danger was concerned, I could just as well have remained at Vevey. I was quite ashamed of myself, and sought occasion now and then, to hear at least once the familiar roar and whistle which, in my younger years, were such usual music to me. All in vain I Whenever I was near a scene of action, the enemy's fire ceased. I remember having once, during the third bloody storming of Plevna, with my friend, your Colonel Wellesley, stolen away from the Emperor's staff, in order to ride down to a battery of ours which was exchanging a tremendous fire with the redoubt of Grivitsa. As soon as we, after abandoning our horses further back in the brushwood, arrived at the battery, the Turkish fire ceased as by enchantment, to begin again only when we left it half-an-hour later, although our guns kept on blazing away at them without interruption. I also tried twice to see some of the bombarding of Guirgiewo, where all the windows were broken, doors torn out, roofs broken down at the Railway Station by the daily firing from Rustchuk. I stopped there once a whole night, and another time half a day, always in the hope of seeing something. As long as I was there, the scene was quiet as in the times of peace, and the firing recommenced as soon as I had left the place. Some days after my last visit to Guirgiewo, [Page 161] Colonel Wellesley passed it, and had part of his luggage destroyed by a shell, which, breaking through the roof into the gallery, tore to pieces two soldiers who were standing near.

“I cannot believe all this to be the sole result of chance. It was too regular, too positive to be explained thus. It is, I am sure of it, magic — the more so as the person who protected me thus efficaciously is one of the most powerful masters of the occult science professed by the theosophists. I can relate, by way of contrast, the following fact, which happened during the war on the Danube, in 1854, at the siege of Silistria. A very distinguished Engineer General of ours, who led our approaches, was a faithful spiritualist, and believed every word which he wrote down by the help of a psychograph as a genuine revelation from superior spirits. Now these spirits had predicted to him that he would return from the war unhurt, and covered with fame and glory. The result of this was that he exposed himself openly, madly, to the enemy's fire, till at last a shot tore off his leg, and he died some weeks later. This is the faith we ought to have in predictions, and I hope my narrative may be welcome to you, as a warning to many.

Truly yours,

“(PRINCE) E. WITTGENSTEIN (F.T.S.).

“VEVEY, SWITZERLAND, ”

18th June 1878.”

Apart from the intrinsic interest of this narrative it is important as showing definitely — what indeed is notorious for all who knew Mme. Blavatsky at the period to which it refers — that she had already, while the Theosophical Society was still in its infancy in New York, declared the existence of “the Brothers”, whom she has been so absurdly accused by her recent critics of inventing at a far later date.

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The Countess Wachtmeister, whose name will reappear in this narrative later on, sends me another independent account of Mme. Blavatsky's doings in America, communicated [Page 162] to her by the gentleman concerned. She writes: —

“Mr Felix Cunningham, a young American of large fortune, describes a scene which took place one evening when visiting Mme. Blavatsky in America. For some time past he had been terribly annoyed by certain manifestations which took place in his own presence : chairs would suddenly begin to hop about the room, knives and forks would dance upon the tables, and bells would ring all over the house; in fact, such a carillon would sometimes be set going that the landlord would politely request him to depart, and he would have to go in quest of another apartment, where, after a few days' sojourn, the same comedy would be repeated, until he felt like a wandering Jew, nearly driven wild by his invisible foes. Having heard of Mme. Blavatsky's great abnormal powers, he hoped through her to get a relief to his sufferings, and it was with a feeling of intense curiosity that, having been fortunate in obtaining an introduction to that lady, he one evening entered her drawing-room, to find her surrounded by a circle of admiring friends. When at last he was able to approach her, she invited him to sit on the sofa near her, and patiently listened to the long recital of his misfortunes. Mme. Blavatsky then explained to him that these phenomena were the result partly of his own psychic force and partly the work of elementals, and she explained to him the process through which he might either rid himself of such disturbances for the future, or else how he could obtain complete control over these powers of nature, and produce phenomena at will. This seemed, to Mr Cunningham as so utterly incredible that, though he kept his feelings to himself, he classed Mme. Blavatsky in his own mind as either a charlatan or a victim to her delusions. What was his astonishment, then, when a few moments later she turned to him in the midst of an animated discourse she was holding with some professor on ' Darwin's System of Evolution,' and said, ' Well, Mr Cunningham, so you think it is all a sham ? I will give you a proof that it is not, if you like. Tell me, what would you like to have ? [Page 163] Desire something without mentioning it aloud, and you shall have it.' He thought of a rose, there being no flowers in the room, and as the thought fastened itself on his mind, his gaze was directed upwards, and there to his astonishment he saw a large full-blown rose suddenly appear near the ceiling; it descended swiftly but surely towards him, the stalk going right through his buttonhole, and when he took out the rose to examine it, he found that it had been freshly plucked, and that the dew was hanging to the petals and leaves. Mme. Blavatsky, who had never moved from her corner of the sofa, looked at his bewilderment with amusement, and explained to him that when once man has obtained control over the elementals, such a phenomenon is simple as child's play.”

Some interesting reminiscences of Mme. Blavatsky's New York residence are contained in an article published recently by the *New York Times* in its issue of 2nd January 1885. The writer, noticing some then current news illustrating the progress in India of the Theosophical Society, says: —

““This intelligence is interesting to the general reader, mainly as it serves to recall a most curious phase of modern thought. Its development nearly ten years ago in New York attracted much attention. The doings of the strange society mentioned in the French flat at Eighth Avenue and Forty-seventh Street, where they had their headquarters, were widely noticed by the press, and some influence on the thought of certain classes of men and women undoubtedly emanated from the small circle who gathered there.

“This influence was beyond a question the result of the strange personal power of Mme. Blavatsky — a woman of as remarkable characteristics as Cagliostro himself, and one who is today as differently judged by different people as the renowned Count was in his day. The *Pall Mall Gazette* recently devoted a half-

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column to the lady. By those who knew her only slightly in this country she [Page 164] was invariably termed a charlatan. A somewhat better acquaintance developed the thought that she was a learned, but deluded enthusiast. And those who knew her intimately and enjoyed her friendship were either carried away into a belief in her powers or profoundly puzzled, and the longer and more intimate the friendship was, the firmer the faith or the deeper their perplexity became. The writer was one of the last class. The closest study of a trained New York reporter failed for over two years to convince him that she was either a fraud or self-deluded, or that her seeming powers were genuine. That she wrought miracles will be denied flatly, of course, by all persons whom the world calls sober-minded, yet there are scores of people who will swear today that she did work them in New York.

“A lady whose brother was an enthusiastic believer in the wonderful Russian, but who was herself a devout Methodist and thoroughly antagonistic to Theosophy (as the new system of thought was then beginning to be called), was induced to make Mme. Blavatsky's acquaintance. They became friends, though they continued widely opposed in belief. One day Mme. Blavatsky gave the other lady a necklace of beautifully carved beads of some strange substance that looked like, but was not, hard wood. 'Wear them yourself', she said. 'If you let anyone else have them, they will disappear'. The lady wore them constantly for over a year. Meantime she moved out of the city. One day her little child, who was sick and fretful, cried for the beads. She gave them to him, half laughing at herself for hesitating. The child put them around his neck and seemed pleased with his new toy, while the mother turned away to attend to some domestic duty. In a few minutes the child began crying, and the mother found him trying to take the beads off. She removed them herself and found that they were nearly one-third melted away and were hot, while the child's neck showed marks of being burned. She tells the story herself, and in the same breath denies that she believes in 'any such things'.

“Such stories could be repeated by dozens, and for each one a reputable witness could be produced to swear to [Page 165] the truth of it. It was not, however, by the working of tricks or miracles, whichever the reader may choose to regard them, that Mme. Blavatsky made the impress she certainly made on the thought of the day. It was by the power of her own personality, vigor of her intellect, freedom and breadth of her thought, and the fluency and clearness of her powers of expression. Her mental characteristics were as remarkable as her appearance. A more impetuous or impulsive person than she never lived. She was generous and hospitable to a fault. To her intimate friends her house was Liberty Hall, and while there was nothing sumptuous or pretentious about her mode of life, she lived well and entertained constantly. She seemed physically indolent, but this was on account of her size, which made bodily exertion onerous. Nothing like mental indolence could be noticed in her conversation, and if such a trait had ever been attributed to her, the publication of *Isis Unveiled*, her work on Eastern mysteries and religions, would have exonerated her from the charge. Without discussing the merits of the book, it may be asserted that the labor involved in its production was very great.

“As a friend Mme. Blavatsky was steadfast and devoted to an unusual degree. Credulous by nature, she had been imposed upon by so many that she learned to limit her circle, but up to the time she left America she was always liable to imposition on the part of any designing person.

“She was unconventional, and prided herself on carrying her unconventionally to the utmost extremes. She would swear like a dragoon when in anger, and often used in pure levity expressions which served no other purpose than to emphasize her contempt for common usages. Born, so it is said, of the best lineage in Russia, she had been bred and educated not only as a lady but as an aristocrat. Discarding,

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as she did, the traditional belief of her family, she discarded at the same time the entire system of European civilization. During her residence in America at least, for the writer claims to know no more about her than was developed here, she protested against our civilization vigorously. . . . The criticism she [Page 166] drew on herself by this course was merciless, and from a civilized standpoint was certainly deserved.

“Those who knew her best believe her to have been entirely incapable of a mean act or a dishonest one.”

The writer goes on to quote the views which Mme. Blavatsky was in the habit of expressing on the subject of spiritualism.

“ 'The phenomena that are presented are perhaps often frauds. Perhaps not one in a hundred is a genuine communication of spirits, but that one cannot be judged by the others. It is entitled to scientific examination, and the reason the scientists don't examine it is because they are afraid. The mediums cannot deceive me. I know more about it than they do. I have lived for years in different parts of the East and have seen far more wonderful things than they can do. The whole universe is filled with spirits. It is nonsense to suppose that we are the only intelligent beings in the world. I believe there is latent spirit in all matter. I believe almost in the spirits of the elements. But all is governed by natural laws. Even in cases of apparent violation of these laws the appearance comes from a misunderstanding of the laws. In cases of certain nervous diseases it is recorded of some patients that they have been raised from their beds by some undiscoverable power, and it has been impossible to force them down. In such cases It has been noticed that they float feet first with any current of air that may be passing through the room. The wonder of this ceases when you come to consider that there is no such thing as the law of gravitation as it is generally understood. The law of gravitation is only to be rationally explained in accordance with magnetic laws as Newton tried to explain it, but the world would not accept it.

“ 'The world is fast coming to know many things that were known centuries ago, and were discarded through the superstition of theologians,' she continued. ' The church professes to reprobate divination, and yet they chose their four canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, [Page 167] Luke, and John by divination. They took some hundred or so of books at the Nicene Council, and set them up, and those that fell down they threw aside as false, and those that stood being those four, they accepted as true, being unable to decide the question in any other way. And out of the 318 members of the Council only two — Eusebius, the great forger, and the Emperor Constantine — were able to read.'

“Talking thus by hours together, when the right listener was present, and speaking always 'as one having authority', it is small wonder that Mme. Blavatsky made her modest apartments a common meeting-ground for as strange a group of original thinkers as New York ever held. Not all who visited her agreed with her. Indeed, there were only a few who followed her teachings with implicit faith. Many of her friends, and many who joined the Theosophical Society which she formed, were individuals who affirmed little and denied nothing.

“The marvels which were discussed and manifested in Mme. Blavatsky's rooms were to the most of them merely food for thought. If the bell-tones of the invisible 'attendant sprite' Pou Dhi were heard, as they were heard by scores of different persons, this phenomenon, so minutely described by Mr Sinnett in *The*

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Occult World, was as likely to be chaffed good-naturedly by an obstinate sceptic as it was to be wondered at by a believer. But even the sceptic would shrug his shoulders and say, when hard pushed, 'It may be a spirit. I can't tell what it is.' If the discussion turned on some marvel of Eastern magic, or some fanciful doctrine of Eastern mythology, there was always a witness to the magic and a believer in the mythology present, and there was no one bold enough to deny what was affirmed, however much it might be laughed at. Sensitive as Mme. Blavatsky was to personal ridicule and to slander, she was truly liberal in matters of opinion, and allowed us as great latitude in the discussion of her beliefs as she took in discussing the beliefs of others.

"The apartment she occupied was a modest flat of seven or eight rooms in West Forty-seventh Street. It was furnished plainly but comfortably, but of the furniture [Page 168] properly so called, it was hard to get an exact idea, for the rooms, especially the parlors, were littered and strewn with curios of most varied description. Huge palm leaves, stuffed apes, and tigers' heads, Oriental pipes and vases, idols and cigarettes, Javanese sparrows, manuscripts and cuckoo clocks were items only in a confusing catalogue of things not to be looked for ordinarily in a lady's parlor." [Page 169]

CHAPTER 9
ESTABLISHED IN INDIA

JUDGED by ordinary standards of common sense, Mme. Blavatsky's long stay in America was not a good preparation for her residence in India. And yet her Theosophic mission appears to have had India as its objective point from the outset. It is just possible, therefore, that her alienation from the English population of India in the first instance, due to the unreasonable prejudices against them which she came possessed with, may have served the cause she had in view in one way more than it told unfavorably in another. Unhappily there is no good understanding widely diffused as yet amongst the two races in India. Each sees the worst features in the character of the other, and ill appreciates the best. The responsibility for this state of things would, I think, be found very equally divided, but at all events it is possible, that in wishing to secure the hearty good-will of the natives, Mme. Blavatsky did not find herself really so much impeded as I have sometimes been inclined to think, by starting on terms which may almost be said to have cultivated the ill-will of the Europeans. The too readily enlisted sentiment of race antagonism may thus have put the natives all the more on her side, when it was seen that she was not on intimate or friendly relations with the Anglo-Indian community.[Page 170]

However this may be, Mme. Blavatsky came to India to plant the Theosophical Society in the soil where she believed, not quite correctly as subsequent events proved, that it was destined chiefly to flourish, armed for her task (for good or evil as we like to look at the matter) with a flourishing stock of misconceptions concerning the social conditions of the country. She was guiltless of any inclination to concern herself practically with politics, and indeed, on the subject of politics, though greatly misconceiving the true character of the English government at that time, was less prejudiced than in other ways, for at any rate she consistently recognized the theory that, bad though it might be, the English Government was immeasurably the best India could acquire in the present state of her degeneration, as compared with the era of ancient Aryan grandeur. But her sympathies were always ready to flame up on behalf of individual native wrongs, and since the organs of native interests are apt in India to circulate stories too hastily, if they seem to be flavored with native wrongs, Mme. Blavatsky, living almost entirely at first in native society, imbibed a good many ideas, on her first establishment in the country, which used to be the subject of warm argument between her and myself, when I first made her acquaintance.

This acquaintance was formed at the close of the year 1879, during the earlier part of which she reached Bombay, accompanied by Colonel Olcott and two persons who were supposed to be Theosophists in the beginning, but fell off from the Society at an early date, under circumstances which constituted the first of the long series of troubles that have attended the progress of the Theosophical movement. I never knew either of them, but they do not appear to have been persons whom [Page 171] anyone of soberer judgment, in Mme. Blavatsky's place, would have brought over as companions in an enterprise like that she had in hand. The four strangely assorted travelers settled down in one of the native quarters of Bombay, and were very naturally objects of some suspicion with the authorities. Their movements about the country and into the neighboring native states were not of a kind that the ordinary habits of Europeans would account for, and as a matter of course, in a country where great interests have to be guarded from possible foreign intrigue, they were put under surveillance.

But Englishmen are not clever at the tricks of police surveillance — no more so in India than elsewhere

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— and the watch set upon the movements of Mme. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott was absurdly apparent to the persons who — if it had been really required — should never have been allowed to suspect it. Mme. Blavatsky fretted under the sense of insult this *espionage* inflicted on her, with the intensity of feeling she carries into everything. For my own part, I used often to tell her, when we laughed over the narrative of her adventures afterwards, I pitied the unhappy police officer, her spy, a great deal more than herself. She pursued this officer with sarcasms all the while that he, in the performance of his irksome duty, pursued her in her vague and erratic wanderings. She would offer him bags or letters to examine, and address him condolences on the miserable fate that condemned him to play the part of a *mouchard*. I suspect from what I heard at Simla at the time, that the Bombay Government must have been treated by the superior authorities to remarks that were anything but complimentary on the manner in which they conducted this business. At any rate, the mistake concerning the objects of the Theosophists was speedily seen through, [Page 172] and the local government instructed to trouble itself no more about them.

I had been in correspondence with Colonel Olcott and Mine. Blavatsky, partly about this business, during the summer. Their arrival in India had been heralded with a few newspaper paragraphs dimly indicating that Mme. Blavatsky was a marvelous person, associated with a modern development of “magic”, and I had seen her great book, *Isis Unveiled*, which naturally provoked interest on my part in the authoress. From some remarks published in the *Pioneer*, of which I was at that time the editor, the first communications between us arose. In accordance with arrangements made by letter during the summer, she came to Allahabad to visit my wife and myself at our cold weather home at that station in December 1879.

I well remember the morning of her arrival, when I went down to the railway station to meet her. The trains from Bombay used to come into Allahabad in those days at an early hour in the morning, and it was still but just time for *chota hazree*, or early breakfast, when I brought our guests home. She had evidently been apprehensive, to judge from her latest letters, lest we might have formed some ideal conception of her that the reality would shatter, and had recklessly painted herself as a rough, old, “hippopotamus” of a woman, unfit for civilized society; but she did this with so lively a humor that the betrayal of her bright intelligence this involved more than undid the effect of her warnings. Her rough manners, of which we had been told so much, did not prove very alarming, though I remember going into fits of laughter at the time when Colonel Olcott, after the visit had lasted a week or two, gravely informed us that Madame was under “great self-restraint” so far. This had not [Page 173] been the impression my wife and I had formed about her, though we had learned already to find her conversation more than interesting.

I would not venture to say that our new friends made a favorable impression all round, upon our old ones, at Allahabad. Anglo-Indian society is strongly colored with conventional views, and Mme. Blavatsky was too violent a departure from accepted standards in a great variety of ways to be assimilated in Anglo-Indian circles with readiness. At the same time, the friends she made among our acquaintances while under our roof were the best worth having, and all who came to know her, and were gifted with the faculty of appreciating bright and versatile talk, sparkling anecdote, and first-rate dinner-table qualifications, were loud in her praises and eager for her society. Her dinner-table qualifications it will, of course, be understood did not include those of the *bon vivant*, for her dislike of alcohol in all forms amounted to a kind of mania, and led her to be vexatious sometimes in her attack on even the most moderate wine-drinking on the part of others. An illustration, by-the-by, of the manner in which Mme. Blavatsky is

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constantly made the subject of the most extravagant falsehoods is afforded by a statement which has, I hear, been made quite recently in London by some ex-Anglo-Indian. He or she — I am glad to say I do not know who the he or she is, and do not seek to know — told my informant that he or she had actually seen Mine. Blavatsky *intoxicated* at Simla. As I know her to be a total abstainer, not merely on principle (in connection with her occult training), but by predilection as well — by virtue indeed, as I have described, of an absolute horror of alcohol — and as she has never resided at Simla under any roof but my own and one other, beneath which I was myself at the same [Page 174] time a guest — the statement is for me exactly as if it asserted that, during her Simla visit, Mme. Blavatsky was double-headed like the famous “Nightingale”.

I want to give my readers an idea of Mme. Blavatsky, as I have known her, that shall be as nearly complete as I can make it, and I shall not hesitate to put in the shadows of the picture. The first visit she paid us was not an unqualified success in all respects. Her excitability, sometimes amusing, would sometimes take an irritating shape, and she would vent her impatience, if anything annoyed her, by vehement tirades in a loud voice directed against Colonel Olcott, at that time in an early stage of his apprenticeship to what she would sometimes irreverently speak of as the “occult business”. No one with the least discernment could ever fail to see that her rugged manners and disregard of all conventionalities were the result of a deliberate rebellion against, not of ignorance or unfamiliarity with, the customs of refined society. Still the rebellion was often very determined, and she would sometimes color her language with expletives of all sorts, some witty and amusing, some unnecessarily violent, that we should all have preferred her not to make use of. She certainly had none of the superficial attributes one might have expected in a spiritual teacher ; and how she could at the same time be philosopher enough to have given up the world for the sake of spiritual advancement, and yet be capable of going into frenzies of passion about trivial annoyances, was a profound mystery to us for a long while, and is only now partially explainable, indeed, within my own mind, by some information I have received relating to curious psychological laws under which initiates in occult mysteries, circumstanced as she is, inevitably come. By slow degrees only, and in spite of herself — in spite of [Page 175] injudicious proceedings on her part that long kept alive suspicions she might easily have allayed, if she could have kept calm enough to understand them, — did we come to appreciate the reality of the occult forces and unseen agencies behind her.

It is unnecessary for me to give an elaborate account here of occult wonders performed by Mme. Blavatsky during her various visits to us at Allahabad and Simla. These are, most of them, recorded in *The Occult World*. Those which took place during her first visit were not of great importance, and some of them were so little protected by the conditions that would have been required to guarantee their *bona fide* character that they were worse than useless. My wife and I were patient observers, and by not jumping to any conclusions too precipitately, were enabled in the long run to obtain the satisfaction we desired; but guests, especially if they happened to be of a very materialistic temperament, would regard anything Mme. Blavatsky might do of an apparently abnormal character as so much juggling, and hardly disguise these impressions from her. The result in such cases would be a stormy end to our evening after such guests had gone. To be suspected as an impostor deluding her friends with trickery, would sting her at any time with a scorpion smart, and bring forth a flood of passionate argument as to the cruelty and groundlessness of such an imputation, the violence of which would really have tended with most hearers to confirm suspicions rather than to allay them.

Recollection of this time supplies me with a very varied assortment of memory portraits of Madame,

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taken during different conditions of her nerves and temper. Some recall her flushed and voluble, too loudly declaiming against some person or other who had misjudged her or [Page 176] her Society; some show her quiet and companionable, pouring out a flood of interesting talk about Mexican antiquities, or Egypt, or Peru, showing a knowledge of the most varied and far-reaching kind, and a memory for names and places and archaeological theories she would be dealing with, that was fairly fascinating to her hearers. Then, again, I remember her telling anecdotes of her own earlier life, mysterious bits of adventure, or stories of Russian society, with so much point, vivacity, and finish, that she would simply be the delight for the time being of everyone present.

I never could clearly make out her age at this time, and was led partly by the look of things, for the hard life she has led has told upon her complexion and features, and partly by her own vague reference to remote periods in the past, to overestimate it by several years. She has always had a dislike to telling her age with exactitude, which does not spring in her case from the vanity which operates with some ladies, but has to do with occult embarrassment. The age of the body in which a given human entity may reside or function, is held by occult initiates to be sometimes a very misleading fact, and chelas under strict rules are, I believe, forbidden to tell their ages. In Mme. Blavatsky's case the problem was somewhat complicated by the fact that she had, within the few years previous to my first knowledge of her, grown to somewhat unwieldy proportions.

Mr A. O. Hume, whose name has been a good deal mixed up in very different ways, both with the early beginnings of the Theosophical movement in India and with some of its latest phases, was at Allahabad when Mme. Blavatsky first came there, holding an appointment for the time on the Board of Revenue in the N. W. P., and he took great interest in our remarkable guest. He [Page 177] presided one afternoon at a public meeting which was held at the Mayo Hall to give Colonel Olcott an opportunity of delivering an address on Theosophy, and a passage from his brief speech on that occasion may fitly find a place here as showing in graceful language the manner in which, at that time, the subject was opening up: —

“This much I have gathered about the Society, viz. that one primary and fundamental object of its existence is the institution of a sort of brotherhood in which, sinking all distinction of race and nationality, caste and creed, all good and earnest men, all who love science, all who love truth, all who love their fellowmen, may meet as brethren, and labor hand in hand in the cause of enlightenment and progress. Whether this noble ideal is ever likely to germinate and grow into practical fruition ; whether this glorious dream, shared in by so many of the greatest minds in all ages, is ever destined to emerge from the shadowy realms of Utopia into the broad sunlight of the regions of reality, let no one now pretend to decide. Many and marvelous are the changes and developments that the past has witnessed; the impossibilities of one age have become the truisms of the next; and who shall venture to predict that the future may not have as many surprises for mankind as has had the past, and that this may not be one amongst them. Be the success, however, great or little of those who strive after this grand ideal, one thing we know, that no honest efforts for the good of our fellowmen are ever wholly fruitless. It may be long before that fruit ripens ; the workers may have passed away long ere the world discerns the harvest for which they wrought; nay, the world at large may never realize what has been done for it, but the good work itself remains, imperishable, everlasting. They who wrought it have necessarily been by such efforts purified and exalted, the community in which they lived and toiled has inevitably benefitted directly or indirectly, and through it, the world at large. On this ground, if on no other, we must necessarily sympathize with the Theosophists. [Page 178]

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The Theosophists in those days had all their troubles before them in an unsuspected future, and the movement seemed to be advancing gaily with many friendly hands stretching out to aid it, and nothing but petty squabbling among the members at the Bombay headquarters to disturb the peace of its chiefs. But Mme. Blavatsky's temperament always magnified the annoyance of the moment, whatever it might be, till it overshadowed her whole sky. Colonel Olcott spoke at the meeting which Mr Hume opened with the remarks just quoted, but one of his hearers, at all events — his distinguished colleague, — was not altogether pleased with his address, and no sooner were we clear of the Hall compound on our drive back than she opened fire upon him with exceeding bitterness. To hear her talk on this subject at intervals during the evening one might have thought the aspirations of her life compromised, though the meeting and the speech — about which I do not remember that there was anything amiss — were not important to the progress of the Society in any serious degree. Colonel Olcott bore all these tantrums with wonderful fortitude, taking them as all so much probation to be set down to the account of his occult chelaship; and with all this exasperating behavior Mme. Blavatsky nevertheless had a strange faculty of winning affection. Her own nature was exceedingly warm-hearted and affectionate, as it is still, and must remain as long as she lives, in spite of the cruel disappointments and trials, the sickness and suffering of later years, the poignant regret she has spent over irremediable mistakes that have compromised the success of her cause, and the passionate sense of wrong under which she fumes, as the unteachable world complacently listens to the tales of her traducers, or as flippant newspapers make fun of the wonderful stories told about her, [Page 179] as though she were a mountebank or impostor. Thus the prestige of her occult power, uncertain and capricious though it has latterly become, invests her with so much interest for people who have emerged from the bog of mere materialistic incredulity about her, that anyone with a tendency towards mysticism is apt to become possessed with something like reverence for her attributes, in spite of the strangely unattractive shell with which she sometimes surrounds them. Thus, in one way and another, large numbers of people in India, who came to know her through ourselves, learned to regard her with a very friendly feeling, rugged manners and stormy temper notwithstanding.

Mme. Blavatsky visited us again at Simla in the autumn of 1880, when most of the phenomena described in *The Occult World* took place. She was much better inclined now than on her first arrival in India to conciliate European sympathy and support for the movement on which she was engaged. She had learned the lesson which the best friends of native interests in India must always learn sooner or later, if they come in contact with the realities of the situation, that for any practical *work* to be done, the natives want a European lead. Even when the task in hand has to do with the revival of Indian philosophy, its administration languishes when confided too exclusively to native direction. Mme. Blavatsky therefore came to Simla prepared for society. She would protest against the “flap-doodle” of “Mrs Grundy” — favorite phrases often on her lips, — but to serve her cause she would even condescend to put off occasionally the red flannel dressing-gown in which she preferred to robe herself, and sit down in black silk amid the uncongenial odors of champagne and sherry. Of course, beyond a very narrow circle, the wonders she [Page 180] wrought were quite ineffective in kindling that zeal for intelligent inquiry into the higher psychic laws of nature by virtue of which they were accomplished, which it was the intention of their promoters to awaken. No one could understand Mme. Blavatsky without studying her by the light of the hypothesis — even if it were only regarded as such — that she was the visible agent of unknown occult superiors. There was much in her character on the surface as I have described it, which repelled the idea that she was an exalted moralist trying to lead people upward towards a higher spiritual life. The internal excitement, superinduced by the effort to accomplish any of her occult feats, would, moreover, render her too passionate in repudiating suspicions which could not but be stimulated by such protests on her part. Conscious of her failure very often to do more than leave people about her puzzled and vaguely wondering how she did her “tricks”, she would constantly abjure the whole attempt, profess

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violent resolutions to produce no more phenomena under any circumstances for a sneering, undiscerning, materialistic generation; and as often be impelled by her love of wielding the strange forces at her command to fall into her old mistakes, to hurriedly rush into the performance of some new feat as she felt the power upon her, without stopping to think of the careful conditions by which it ought to be surrounded, if she meant to do more than aggravate the mistrust which drove her into frenzies of suffering and wrath. Once, however, recognize her as the flighty and defective, though loyal and brilliantly-gifted representative of occult superiors in the background, making through her an experiment on the spiritual intuitions of the world in which she moved, and the whole situation was solved, the apparent incoherence of her character [Page 181] and acts explained, and the best attributes of her own nature properly appreciated.

So much exasperation and trouble have been brought about in recent years by the disputes which have arisen concerning the authenticity of Mme. Blavatsky's phenomena, that the general opinion of Theosophists has been apt to condemn the whole policy under which such displays have been associated with the attempt to recommend the exalted spiritual philosophy of the "Esoteric Doctrine" to the outer world. It is easy to be wise after the event; it is easy now to see that in Europe, at all events, where sympathy with new or unfamiliar ideas can best be courted by purely intellectual methods, the Theosophical position, as now understood by its most devoted representatives, would be stronger without, than with the record of Mme. Blavatsky's phenomena behind it. Still I am very far myself from thinking that the idea of awakening the attention of the world in regard to the possibilities for all men of greatly elevating and expanding their own inner nature and capabilities along the lines of occult study, by the display of some of the powers which such study was capable of bringing about, was in itself an injudicious idea. It is plain, of course, that Mme. Blavatsky has to bear the responsibility of having often misapplied that idea; that she is suffering from the prompt retribution of circumstances in the ignominy that has been heaped upon her of late, is also apparent. But cool observation of the whole position will show that, with all her mistakes, she has infused into the current of the world's thinking a flood of ideas connected with the possibilities of man's spiritual evolution, that many thinkers are at work with now in profound disregard of, not to say ingratitude for, the source from which they have come. Mme. Blavatsky's [Page 182] failures and mistakes are glaring in the sight of us all; trumpeted in every newspaper that mocks her as an impostor, and proclaimed (by the irony of fate) in the proceedings of a Society that has stultified its own name by investigating an episode in her career, as if psychical developments were so much ironmongery, and the depth of nature's mysteries could be expressed — by a sufficiently acute observer — in decimals of an inch. But her *successes* are only apparent to those who have eyes to see, and an enlightened understanding to comprehend.

And just as the history of Mme. Blavatsky's work is a party-colored page, so her personality, her external character, is equally variegated. I have said a good deal of her impetuosity and indiscretions of speech and manner and of the way in which she will rage for hours, if allowed, over trifles which a more phlegmatic, not to speak of a more philosophical temperament would barely care to notice. But it must be understood that, almost at any time, an appeal to her philosophical intellect will turn her right off into another channel of thinking, and then, equally for hours, may any appreciative companion draw forth the stores of her information concerning Eastern religions and mythology, the subtle metaphysics of Hindu and Buddhist symbolism, or the esoteric doctrine itself, so far as in later years some regions of this have been opened out for public treatment. Even in the midst of passionate lamentations — appropriate in vehemence to a catastrophe that might have wrecked the fruits of a life-time — over some offensive sneer in a newspaper article or letter, an allusion to some unsolved problem in esoteric cosmogony, or misinterpretation by a European orientalist of some Eastern doctrine, will divert the flow of her intense

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mental activity, and sweep all recollection of the current annoyance, for the moment, from her mind.
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The record of Mme. Blavatsky's residence in India is, of course, intimately blended with the history of the Theosophical Society, on which all her energies are spent, directly or indirectly, and indirectly in so far only as she was obliged during this period to do what literary work she could for Russian magazines to earn her livelihood, and supplement the narrow resources on which the headquarters of the Society were kept up. *The Theosophist*, the monthly magazine devoted to occult research, which she set on foot in the autumn of her first year in India, paid its way from the beginning, and gradually came to earning a small profit, subject to the fact that its management was altogether gratuitous, and all its work, in all departments, performed by the little band of Theosophists at the headquarters ; but all the while that sneering critics of the movement in the papers would be suggesting, from time to time, that the founders of the Society were doing a very good business with "initiation fees", and living on the tribute of the faithful, Mme. Blavatsky was really at her desk from morning till night, slaving at Russian articles, which she wrote solely for the sake of the little income she was able to make in this way, and on which, in a far greater degree than on the proper resources of the Society, the headquarters were supported, and the movement kept on foot.

Thus energetically promoted, the Society continued to make steady progress. Colonel Olcott travelled about the country with indefatigable perseverance, founding new branches in all directions, and Mme. Blavatsky herself went with him and some others to Ceylon during the cold weather, 1880-81, where the theosophical party was *fêted* by large and enthusiastic native audiences. The movement took firm root in the island at once, and flourished with wonderful vigor. [Page 184]

Here, of course, Madame Blavatsky's open profession of Buddhism as her religion was all in her favour, though it had been rather against her in India, as exoteric Hindus and Buddhists are not at all in sympathy, though the esoteric doctrines of the *initiates* of both schools are practically identical. The Singalese welcomed, with delight, a lead which showed them how to set up schools in which their children could be taught the essentials of secular education without coming into contact with European missionaries.

During the autumn of 1881 I returned to India from a visit to England, and on landing at Bombay spent a few days with Madame Blavatsky at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society, then established at Breach Candy, in a bungalow called the Crow's Nest, perched up on a little eminence above the road. It had been unoccupied for some time I heard, discredited by a reputation for snakes and ghosts, neither of which encumbrances greatly alarmed the new tenants. The building was divided into two portions — the lower given over to the Society service and to Colonel Olcott's Spartan accommodation ; the upper part, reached by a covered stairway, corresponding to the slope of the hill, to Mme. Blavatsky and the office work of the *Theosophist*. There was also a spare room in this upper portion, all the rooms of which were on one level, and opening on to a broad covered-in verandah, which constituted Mme. Blavatsky's sitting, eating, and reception room all in one. Opening out of it at the further end she had a small writing-room. On the whole she was more comfortably housed than, knowing her wild contempt for the luxuries of European civilisation, I had expected to find her ; but the establishment was more native than Anglo-Indian in its organisation, and the covered verandah was all day long, and up [Page 185] to late hours in the evening, visited by an ebb and flow of native guests, admiring Theosophists who came to pay their respects to Madame. She used to like to get half a dozen or more of them round her talking on any topic

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connected with the affairs of the Society that might arise in a desultory, aimless way, that used to be found rather trying by her European friends. The latest embarrassment or little difficulty or annoyance, whatever it might be, that had presented itself, used to fill her horizon for the moment, and give her fretful anxiety out of keeping with its importance, and there has rarely been a period during the five or six years I have had to do with the Society when there has not been some situation to be saved — in Mme. Blavatsky's estimation, — some enemy to be guarded against, some possible supporter to be conciliated. How it was possible for any nervous system to stand the wear and tear of the perpetual agitation and worry in which — largely in consequence of the peculiarities of her own temperament, of course — Mme. Blavatsky spent her life, persons of calmer nature could never understand. But she would generally be up at an early hour writing at her Russian articles or translations, or at the endless letters she sent off in all directions in the interest of the Society, or at articles for the *Theosophist*; then during the day she would spend a large part of her time talking with native visitors in her verandah room, or hunting them away and getting back to her work with wild protests against the constant interruption she was subject to, and in the same breath calling for her faithful “Babula”, her servant, in a voice that rang all over the house, and sending for some one or other of the visitors she knew to be waiting about below and wanting to see her. Then in the midst of some fiery argument with a pundit about a point of [Page 186] modern Hindu belief that she might protest against as inconsistent with the real meaning of the Vedas, or a passionate remonstrance with one of her aides of the *Theosophist* about something done amiss that would for the time overspread the whole sky of her imagination with a thundercloud, she would perhaps suddenly “hear the voice they did not hear” — the astral call of her distant Master, or one of the other “Brothers”, as by that time we had all learned to call them, — and forgetting everything else in an instant, she would hurry off to the seclusion of any room where she could be alone for a few moments, and hear whatever message or orders she had to receive.

She never wanted to go to bed when night came. She would sit on smoking cigarettes and talking — talking with a tireless energy that was wonderful to watch — on Eastern philosophy of any sort, on the mistakes of theological writers, on questions raised (but not settled) in *Isis*, or, with just as much intensity and excitement, on some wretched matter connected with the administration of the Society, or some foolish sarcasm levelled against herself and the attributes imputed to her in one of the local newspapers. To say that she never would learn to estimate occurrences at their proper relative value, is to express the truth so inadequately that the phrase does not seem to express it at all. Her mind seemed always like the exhausted receiver of an air-pump, in which a feather or a guinea let fall, drop with apparently the same momentum.

Of society in the European sense of the term she had absolutely none at Bombay. She never paid visits, and as the custom of the English communities in the East requires the new-comer to make the first calls, she, ignoring this necessity, was left almost absolutely without [Page 187] acquaintances of her own kind in that station of India where she was supposed to be most at home. I often wondered that none of the English residents at Bombay had the curiosity to break through the conventionalities of the situation and take advantage of the opportunity lying within reach of their hands for making friends with one of, at all events, the most remarkable and intellectually-gifted women in the whole country — rugged eccentricities and cigarettes notwithstanding. But certainly at first the quarters where Madame Blavatsky established herself, and the habits of her heterogeneous native household, and the wild tales which I have no doubt from the first were circulated about her, may have intimidated any but the most adventurous of the English ladies accustomed to the decorous routine of Anglo-Indian etiquette. She herself may have fretted occasionally against her isolation, but at all events did not regret the loss of European “society” in the special sense of the word; she would have found it a terrible burden to go out to formal parties of any

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kind, to forego the ease of the nondescript costumes — loose wrappers — that she wore, to put herself in any position in which her fingers would be restrained from reaching, whenever the impulse prompted them to do so, for her tobacco pouch and cigarette papers. Rebel as she had been in her childhood against the customs of civilized life, so equally was she a rebel against the usages of English society in India; and the strange discipline of her occult training that had rendered her spirit devoted and submissive to the one kind of control she had learned to reverence, left the fierce independence of her outer nature quite unaltered.

She joined me at Allahabad a few months after my return to India in 1881, and went up to Simla with me [Page 188] to be the guest for the remainder of that season of Mr A. O. Hume. She was far from well at the time, and the latter part of the journey — a trying one for the most robust passenger — was an ordeal that brought out the peculiar characteristics of her excitable temper in an amusing way, I remember; for the “tongas” in which the eight-hours' drive up the mountain roads from Kalka at the foot of the hills to the elevated sanatorium is accomplished, are not luxurious conveyances. They are low two-wheeled carts hung on a crank axle, so that the foot-boards are only about a foot above the road, with seats for four persons, including the driver, two and two back to back — just accommodation enough in each for one passenger with his portmanteau (equivalent, if he has one with him, to a passenger), and a servant. We had two tongas between us, putting our servants with some of the luggage in one, while Madame Blavatsky and I occupied the back seat of the other with a *porte manteau* on the seat beside the driver. The only recommendation of a tonga is that it gets over the ground rapidly, and the ponies, frequently changed, trot or canter up all but the steepest gradients. The traveler is jolted frightfully, but he is not likely to be capsized, though even that happens sometimes, for the mountain roads are very rough, and the ponies apt to be troublesome. The general character of the tonga pony may be appreciated from the fact that I have known a driver apologize to a passenger for a particularly flighty pair, on the ground that they had never been in harness before. The animals are attached to the vehicle by a strong cross-bar resting in sockets on saddles they carry for the purpose, and though on this system ponies and cart are as firmly united as a bunch of keys by its steel ring, still they are no less loosely linked together, and a nervous passenger is liable to be disturbed by the extraordinary positions into which they get during any little disagreement between the team and the driver. One such disagreement arose soon after our start on the journey of which I am speaking, and Madame's impassioned anathemas directed against the whole service of the tonga dak and the civilization of which it formed a part, ought not, I remember thinking at the time, to have had their comicality wasted upon an audience of one. Then, as the day and the dreary drive wore on, Madame's indignation at the annoyance of the situation only waxed more vehement, instead of settling down into the dogged despair with which the more phlegmatic Briton as a rule accepts the disagreeables of a tonga drive. Especially she used to be incensed whenever the driver sounded his ear-piercing horn close behind us. She would break off whatever she was talking about to launch invectives at this unfortunate “trumpet” whenever it was blown, and as often, up to the end of the journey; and, seeing that a tonga driver for self-preservation's sake must blow his horn whenever he approaches a turn in the road (which may conceal another tonga coming the other way); also that the road from Kalka to Simla, the whole fifty or sixty miles of it, consists chiefly of turns all the way up, the trumpet was more effectually cursed by the time we got to our destination than the jackdaw of Rheims himself.

I do not think it worth while to add to the wonderful records of Mme. Blavatsky's “phenomena”, contained in other portions of this volume, any description of the relatively insignificant incidents of that kind, which were all that occurred at the period to which I have now come. The manifestations of abnormal occult power which had been displayed so freely in the summer of 1880 had given rise to a good deal of

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acrimonious [Page 190] discussion. Whatever policy had been under trial, by the mysterious authorities whom Madame Blavatsky spoke of as her Masters, when she was freely permitted to exercise whatever abnormal gifts she possessed, and even helped to achieve results beyond her own reach, had now fallen into discredit. The days of phenomena working were all but over. All that occurred now were concerned merely with the despatch and receipt of letters, or in some way incidental to the work of the Theosophic movement. It would rarely happen that even these presented themselves under conditions that rendered the transaction complete enough to be described as a wonder; though with the experience of Madame Blavatsky that most of us about her at this time had had on other occasions, incidents that were incomplete as tests of occult power, would necessarily share the retrospective credit attaching to other similar incidents that had been complete in the past. However, the *mot d'ordre* in the Theosophical Society was now coming to be unfavorable to the craving for phenomena as such, that each new set of acquaintances Madame Blavatsky might make would necessarily feel at first. Mr Hume — who at that time was greatly interested in the information I had begun to obtain shortly before in reference to the views of Nature entertained by the adepts of Indian occultism — and I, were far more intent now on enlarging our comprehension of this “Esoteric Doctrine” than on witnessing further displays of a mysterious power of which we could not fathom the secrets. We used to spend long hours together, day after day, in trying to develop the unmanageable hints we obtained in the form of written answers to questions, with the help of Mme. Blavatsky; but the task she had to perform in endeavoring to elucidate these hints, was almost hopelessly embarrassing; [Page 191] for though her own knowledge was very great, it had not been originally implanted in her own mind on European methods; it was not readily recast in a European mould, and above all, she had no clear idea as to what she was at liberty to tell us, and how far her general obligations of secrecy still applied. It was an uphill and not very profitable beginning that was made at this time with an enterprise that assumed considerable proportions in the end, and it was not till a later period, when I had returned to my own house at Allahabad, that my instruction in occult philosophy, leading up to the subsequent development of the book called *Esoteric Buddhism*, began to make real progress. By that time, to my lasting regret, Mr Hume's sympathies had been alienated from the undertaking.

It has been, in this way, Mme. Blavatsky's fate, throughout her work on the Theosophical Society, to make and lose many friends. The peculiarities of her character, which these memoirs will have disclosed, sufficiently account for this checkered record of success and failure. No personal demeanor could be imagined worse calculated than hers to retain the confidence of people earnestly pursuing exalted spiritual ideas, during that intermediate stage of acquaintanceship intervening between the first kindling of an interest in her general theories of occultism, and the establishment of a profound intimacy. It is only people who know her hardly at all, or only through her writings, and, at the other end of the scale, those who knew her so thoroughly that she herself cannot mislead them, by external roughness and indiscretion, into distrusting the foundations of her character, who do her justice. People who are familiar with her without being closely intimate and long acquainted with the conflicting elements of her nature, [Page 192] can hardly escape some shock to their confidence, sooner or later, some uncomfortable suspicion about her code of truthfulness, of right or wrong, which once planted in their minds, and *not* immediately brought forward and frankly discussed with her, will be sure to rankle and grow. It is easy for people whose work lies altogether on the physical plane of existence, who deal with one another by the light of principles which are perfectly well understood all round, to remain beyond the reach of all moral reproach, to regulate their conduct so that all men recognize the purity of their intentions, and the high standards of right by which they are governed. The course of life before an occult chela endeavoring to carry out a work of spiritual philanthropy amongst people on the “physical plane” — “in the world” — (as the occult phrase would express it, distinguishing between the normal community of human kind at large, and the secluded organization in contact with other modes of human existence, besides those of ordinary

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living flesh) is immeasurably more embarrassing. Such a person is entangled, to begin with, in a network of reserve. He cannot but be cognizant of a great many facts connected with the occult life which he is not at liberty to disclose, which, indeed, he is bound to guard even from the betrayal which an indiscreet silence in face of indiscreet questioning might sometimes bring about. There would be no difficulty in his way if he were simply a chela of the ordinary kind concerned as such merely with his own spiritual and psychic development ; but when he has to make some disclosures, and must not go too far with these — when he is not allowed, withal, to be judge of what information he shall communicate and what keep back, — his task may often be one that is replete with the most serious embarrassment. [Page 193]

These embarrassments would, of course, be least for a person of naturally cool and taciturn temperament, but amongst occultists, as amongst people “in the world”, temperaments vary. Of course Mme. Blavatsky's excitable and passionate disposition has been a frightful stumbling-block in her way: but what is the use in an orchard of the most gracefully shaped tree that bears no fruit ? She might have been born with the manners of Mme. Récamier, and the sedate discretion of an English judge, and have been perfectly useless in her generation. Whereas, with all her defects, the possession of her splendid psychic gifts, of her indomitable courage — which carried her through the ordeals of initiation in the mysteries of occult knowledge, and again held her up against the protracted antagonism of materialistic opinion when she came back into the world with an onerous mission to discharge, — and of her spiritual enthusiasm, which made all suffering and toil as dust in the balance compared with her allegiance to her unseen “Masters”, the possession, in short, of her occult attributes has rendered her an influence in the world of great potency. The tree may not have assumed a shape that passing strangers would admire, but the fruit it has borne has been a stupendous harvest.

When I say that suffering and toil have been with Mme. Blavatsky as dust in the balance compared to her duty, I say that with deliberate conviction; but, of course, the phrase must not be taken to mean that she bears suffering and privation with philosophical calm or equanimity. She is not capable of bearing the annoyance of a pin-prick with equanimity. She cannot help fuming and fretting over every annoyance, great or small, and when, as so often happens inevitably, considering the stories told of her wonder working, and the occasional [Page 194] manifestation of her powers in this respect up to a recent date, she is suspected of trickery, her indignation and misery and incoherent protests are so vehement and unwise in their expression that they only serve to strengthen unjust conclusions to her disadvantage.

During the Simla visit of 1881, we established the Simla Eclectic Theosophical Society — a branch which it was hoped at the time would attract Anglo-Indian members. Mr Hume was its president for the first year, and I myself for its second; but the movement never took root firmly in Anglo-Indian society, and indeed at that time there was nothing before the world that could give the movement an adequate *raison d'être* for Europeans at large.

The record of Mme. Blavatsky's life in India for the next year or two would be mainly a narrative of tiresome episodes connected with attacks of one kind or another on the Theosophical Society. A Calcutta newspaper called the *Statesman* made her and her Society the object of frequent sarcasms, and sometimes of grave misrepresentation, so that in December 1881 it was driven under a threat of legal proceedings to publish a letter from solicitors on Mme. Blavatsky's behalf. This may be usefully reproduced here as illustrating at once the offensive nature and the groundlessness of the attacks of which she was the object.

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“CALCUTTA, *December 16, 1881.*

“SIR, —

In the *Statesman* of Tuesday, the 6th instant, there appears an article having reference, among other matters, to Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, the founders of the Theosophical Society. In the course of that article it is stated: —

“ 'It is now asserted not only that the resources of both (Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott) are exhausted, but that they are largely in debt, on account, it is alleged, [Page 195] of the expenses of the Society. It is not difficult for any one to arrive at the conclusion that it would be highly desirable and expedient for the founders of the Theosophical Society to have these debts paid off. This is a simple and not unpraiseworthy instinct. The question that remains is, as regards the means by which this consummation is to be effected.'

“The remainder of the article, which we need not quote at length, is an elaborate insinuation that Madame Blavatsky is endeavoring to procure from a gentleman named, by spurious representations, the payment of her debts.

“Now, the allegation about Madame Blavatsky being in debt is, we are instructed, absolutely false to begin with ; nor is the Society which she helped to found in debt, unless, indeed, it be to *herself*. The accounts of the Society, published in the THEOSOPHIST for last May, show that the outlay incurred on behalf of the Society up to that date had exceeded the receipts (consisting of ' initiation fees ' Rs. 3900, and a few donations) by a sum of Rs. 19,846, but this deficit was supplied from the private resources of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott.

“We may further explain that Madame Blavatsky is a Russian lady of high rank by birth (though since naturalized in the United States), and has never been in the penniless condition your article insultingly ascribes to her — whatever mistakes may have arisen from the improper publication of a private letter by Colonel Olcott to a friend in America, the careless exaggerations of which, designed merely for a correspondent familiar with the real state of the affairs to which these referred, have given you occasion for some offensive remarks.

“We therefore, duly instructed on behalf of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, now require of you that you should publish this letter together with an apology for the scandalous libel to which you have been misled into giving currency.

“We also require that in further refutation of these, and in general reply to the insulting language of your article, you should publish the enclosed explanations extracted from the *Pioneer* of the 10th instant.[Page 196]

“In the event of your failure forthwith to comply with our request, or to give up the name of the writer of the article in question, we are instructed to proceed against you in the High Court for recovery of damages for the libelous attacks of which our clients complain. —

Yours faithfully,

SANDERSON & Co.”

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The publication of this letter was accompanied by a quasi-apology, and the matter dropped. But next month the Theosophists were engaged in another war of words with a Mr Joseph Cook, a missionary preacher, who attacked the Society in certain lectures he gave at Poona. All standards of European good sense applied to such a matter would, of course, have required Mme. Blavatsky to remain perfectly quiescent in face of such assailants, but her temperament forbade this, and possibly the native Indian feeling on such subjects, very unlike the European feeling in corresponding cases, may have made it impossible for the leaders of the Theosophical Society to refuse an answer to any charges made against them. At all events, poor Mme. Blavatsky was never dragged out of one pool of hot water without forthwith finding herself in another.

In the autumn of 1882, of which she spent the greater part at Bombay, she became seriously ill, and was at length summoned to an interview with her occult superiors across the Sikkim frontier, near Darjeeling. In a note I had from her shortly before her departure from Bombay, written in the middle of September, she bade my wife and myself good-bye, in the expectation, apparently, that the term of her physical life was nearly over. The note is so characteristic that I give it here with only a few private allusions suppressed.

“MY DEAR FRIENDS, MRS AND MR SINNETT,

I am afraid you will have soon to bid me good-bye. This time [Page 197] I have it well and good. Bright's disease of the kidneys, and the whole blood turned into water, ulcers breaking out in the most unexpected spots, blood, or whatever it may be, forming into bags *à la* kangaroo, and other pretty extras and *et ceteras*. This all, *primo*, brought on by Bombay dampness and heat; and, *secundo*, by fretting and bothering. I have become so stupidly nervous that the unexpected tread of Babula's naked foot near me makes me start with the most violent palpitations of the heart. Dudley says — I *forced* him to tell me this — that I can last a year or two, and perhaps but a few days, for I can die at any time in consequence of an emotion. Ye lords of creation ! of such emotions I have twenty a day. How can I last then ? I give all the business over to -----; ----- (meaning her Master) wants me to prepare and go somewhere for a month or so toward end of September. He sent a chela here from Nilgerri Hills, and he is to take me off, where, I don't know, but, of course, somewhere in the Himalayas.

“ ... I can hardly write, I am really too weak. Yesterday they drove me down to the Fort to the doctor. I got up with both my ears swollen thrice their natural size, and I met Mrs ----- and sister, her carriage crossing mine slowly. She did not salute nor make a sign of recognition, but looked very proud and disdainful. Well, I was fool enough to resent it. I tell you I am very sick. Yes, I wish I could see you once more, and dear ----- and -----.

“Well, good-bye all, and when I am gone, if I go before seeing you, do not think of me too much as an 'impostor', for I swear I told you *the truth*, however much I have concealed of it from you. I hope Mrs ----- will not dishonor by *evoking* me with some medium. Let her rest assured that it will never be my *spirit*, nor anything of me — not even *my shell*, since this is gone long ago.

Yours in life yet,

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H. P. B.”

Some particulars of her journey up to Darjeeling, made shortly after this, are given in a narrative by an enthusiastic candidate for chelaship, Mr S. Ramaswamier, [Page 198] who endeavored to accompany Mme. Blavatsky, scenting the probability that she was really going to meet one of the higher adepts or “Mahatmas”. I take a portion of this narrative from the *Theosophist* of December 1882. It took the form of a letter addressed by the writer to a brother Theosophist.

“... When we met last at Bombay I told you what had happened to me at Tinnevely. My health having been disturbed by official work and worry, I applied for leave on medical certificate, and it was duly granted. One day in September last, while I was reading in my room, I was ordered by the audible voice of my blessed Guru, M -----, to leave all and proceed immediately to Bombay, whence I had to go in search of Mme. Blavatsky wherever I could find her and follow her wherever she went. Without losing a moment, I closed up all my affairs and left the station. For the tones of that voice are to me the divinest sound in nature; its commands imperative. I travelled in my ascetic robes. Arrived at Bombay, I found Mme. Blavatsky gone, and learned through you that she had left a few days before; that she was very ill; and that, beyond the fact that she had left the place very suddenly with a *Chela*, you knew nothing of her whereabouts. And now, I must tell you what happened to me after I had left you.

“Really not knowing whither I had best go, I took a through ticket to Calcutta; but, on reaching Allahabad, I heard the same well-known voice directing me to go to Berhampore. At Azimgunge, in the train, I met, most *providentially* I may say, with some Babus (I did not then know they were also Theosophists, since I had never seen any of them), who were also in search of Mme. Blavatsky. Some had traced her to Dinapore, but lost her track and went back to Berhampore. They knew, they said, she was going to Tibet, and wanted to throw themselves at the feet of the Mahatmas to permit them to accompany her. At last, as I was told, they received from her a note, informing them to come if they so desired it, but that she herself was prohibited from [Page 199] going to Tibet just now. She was to remain, she said, in the vicinity of Darjeeling, and would see the BROTHERS on the Sikkim Territory, where they would not be allowed to follow her. . . . Brother Nobin, the President of the Adhi Bhoutic Bhratru Theosophical Society, would not tell me where Mme. Blavatsky was, or perhaps did not then know it himself. Yet he and others had risked all in the hope of seeing the Mahatmas. On the 23rd, at last, I was brought by Nobin Babu from Calcutta to Chandernagore, where I found Mme. Blavatsky, ready to start, five minutes after, with the train. A tall, dark-looking hairy *Chela* (not Chunder Cusho), but a Tibetan I suppose by his dress, whom I met after I had crossed the river with her in a boat, told me that I had come too late, that Mme. Blavatsky had already seen the Mahatmas, and that he had brought her back. He would not listen to my supplications to take me with him, saying he had no other orders than what he had already executed, namely — to take her about 25 miles beyond a certain place he named to me, and that he was now going to see her safe to the station, and return. The Bengalee brother-Theosophists had also traced and followed her, arriving at the station half-an-hour later. They crossed the river from Chandernagore to a small railway station on the opposite side. When the train arrived, she got into the carriage, upon entering which I found the *Chela*! And, before even her own things could be placed in the van, the train — against all regulations and before the bell was rung — started off, leaving Nobin Babu, the Bengalees, and her servant behind. Only one Babu and the wife and daughter of another — all Theosophists and candidates for *Chelaship* — had time to get in. I myself had barely the time to jump in, into the last carriage.

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All her things — with the exception of her box containing the Theosophical correspondence — were left behind, together with her servant. Yet, even the persons that went by the same train with her did not reach Darjeeling. Babu Nobin Banerjee, with the servant, arrived five days later; and they who had time to take their seats were left five or six stations behind owing to another unforeseen accident (?) at another further [Page 200] place, reaching Darjeeling also a few days later! It requires no great stretch of imagination to know that Mme. Blavatsky had been, or was perhaps, being again taken to the BROTHERS, who, for some good reasons best known to them, did not want us to be following and watching her. Two of the Mahatmas, I had learned for a certainty, were in the neighborhood of British territory, and one of them was seen and recognized, by a person I need not name here, as a high chutuku of Tibet.”

Mme. Blavatsky was only two or three days across the frontier with her occult superiors, but she returned practically well again, and cured for the time of the formidable diseases by which her life had been menaced. On the 16th of December 1882, a farewell entertainment was given by native friends to the founders of the Theosophical Society, just before their departure from Bombay to take up their residence at Adyar, Madras, where a house had been purchased for the Society by subscription. At this entertainment an address was read as follows:—

“On the eve of your departure for Madras, we, the members of the Bombay Branch, beg most respectfully to convey to you our heartfelt and sincere acknowledgment for the benefit which the people of this Presidency in general, and we in particular, have derived from your exposition of the Eastern philosophies and religions during the past four years. Although the exigencies of the Society's growing business make it necessary to remove the headquarters to Madras, we assure you that the enthusiasm for Theosophical studies and universal Brotherhood which you have awakened in us will not die out, but will be productive of much good in future. By your editorial efforts and public lectures, you have done much to awaken in the hearts of the educated sons of India a fervent desire for the study of their ancient literature, which has so long been neglected; and though you have never undervalued the system of Western [Page 201] education for the people of India, which to a certain extent is necessary for the material and political advancement of the country, you have often justly impressed upon the minds of young men the necessity of making investigations into the boundless treasures of Eastern learning as the only means of checking that materialistic and atheistic tendency engendered by an educational system unaccompanied by any moral or religious instruction.

“You have preached throughout the country temperance and universal brotherhood, and how far your attempts in that direction have been successful during the brief period of four years was perfectly manifest at the last anniversary of the Parent Society, just held in Bombay, when on one common platform brave hearts from Lahore and Simla to Ceylon, from Calcutta to Kattiawar, from Gujerat and Allahabad — Parsees, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Mahomedans, and Europeans — assembled under the banner of Theosophy, and advocated the regeneration of India, under the benign influence of the British rule. Such a union of different communities, with all the prejudices of sects, castes, and creeds set aside, the formation of one harmonious whole, and the combining together for any national object, in short, a grand national union, are indispensable for the moral resuscitation of Hindustan.”

Your endeavors have been purely unselfish and disinterested, and they therefore entitle you to our warmest sympathy and best respects. We shall most anxiously watch your successful

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progress, and take an earnest delight in the accomplishment of the objects of your mission, throughout the *Aryawart*.

“As a humble token of our sense of appreciation of your labours of love, and as a keepsake from us, we beg most respectfully to offer for your acceptance, on behalf of our Branch, an article of Indian make, with a suitable inscription.”

Thus by words as well as by deeds the native Theosophists of India were showing their appreciation of the good work done by Mme. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott [Page 202] in spite of the perpetually renewed slights they received all the while from the Anglo-Indian newspapers.

The house at Madras in which Mme. Blavatsky was next established was a great improvement on the cramped and comfortless bungalow at Bombay from which she removed. Madras is a station of enormous extent, straggling along seven or eight miles of the sea-shore. Adyar is a suburb at the southern extremity, through which a small stream finds its way to the sea, and just before it reaches the beach spreads out into a broad shallow expanse of water, beside which the Theosophical House stands in extensive grounds. Here we found Mme. Blavatsky and her heterogeneous household comfortably installed when my wife and I visited her on our way home from India in March 1883. She was looking forward to final rest there, and was hoping she had at last found the tranquil retreat in which she would spend the remainder of her life. Her occult gifts have not included the power of forecasting the vicissitudes of her own career, and she was very far at that time from suspecting the renewed disturbance of her destinies, which the next two or three years were preparing to bring forth. The upper rooms of the house were her own private domain. These did not cover the whole area of the lower storey, but even with an addition that had just been made, stood on the roof like the poop of a ship upon its deck. The new room just built had been hurried forward that we might see it complete, and was destined by Madame to be her “occult room”, her own specially private sanctum, where she would be visited by none but her most intimate friends. It came to be sadly desecrated by her worst enemies a year or two later. In her ardor of affection for all that concerned the “Masters”, she had especially devoted herself to decorating a certain hanging cupboard to be [Page 203] kept exclusively sacred to the communications passing between these Masters and herself, and already bestowed upon it the designation under which it became so sadly celebrated subsequently — the shrine. Here she had established some simple occult treasures — relics of her stay in Tibet — two small portraits she possessed of the Mahatmas, and some other trifles associated with them in her imagination. The purpose of this special receptacle was, of course, perfectly intelligible to everyone familiar with the theory of occult phenomena — held by Theosophists to be as rigidly subject to natural laws as the behavior of steam or electricity. A place kept pure of all “magnetism” but that connected with the work of integrating and disintegrating letters, would facilitate the process, and the “shrine” was used a dozen times for the transaction of business between the Masters and the chelas connected with the Society for every once it was made to subserve the purpose of any show phenomenon.

At Madras Mme. Blavatsky was not quite so much neglected by the European society of the place, in the beginning of her residence there at all events, as she had been at Bombay. Some of the leading Anglo-Indian residents went to see her and became her fast friends. With some of these she spent part of the autumn at Ootacamund, the hill station of Madras. An incident which took place during this visit excited much local interest at the time, and is described by the lady chiefly concerned, Mrs Carmichael, as follows: —

“I went to see Mme. Blavatsky, who was at that time on a visit to General and Mrs Morgan,

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who live at Ootacamund. After some interesting conversation with her I left, expressing a desire to see her again soon, and on my third visit the following incident occurred.

“It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when I [Page 204] called on Mme. Blavatsky, and was received by her in the drawing-room. I sat beside her on the sofa, and took off my driving gloves.”

I had already several times expressed to Madame Blavatsky my great desire to see some occult phenomenon, and also to be convinced by some token of the presence of the Mahatmas.“

After a short time spent in conversation on this and other subjects, in course of which I said how much I should like to have a ring duplicated in the same way that Mrs Sinnett had, Mme. Blavatsky took my hand, and withdrawing from her hand a ring which she called her occult ring, took off also two rings from my hand, one a blue sapphire, single stone. She held the three rings for a short time in her right hand, and then returned me one saying — ' I can do nothing with this; it has not your influence' (it was a ring of my husband's which I had put on accidentally that day). She then proceeded to manipulate in her right hand my blue sapphire and her own occult ring, at the same time holding my right hand with her left."

After an interval of a minute or two she extended her right hand saying —“

'Here is your ring' — showing me at the same instant two sapphire rings, my own and another identical in every respect, except that the second was larger and a better cut stone than my own. ' Why do you give me this? ' I asked in surprise.“

' I have not done it; it is a gift from the Mahatmas,' answered Mme. Blavatsky. ' Why should I be so favored ?' I asked. ' Because,' said Mme. Blavatsky, ' the Mahatmas have allowed you to have this as a token that they recognize and thank you and your husband for the deep interest you have always shown to the natives.' ”

About two months after, on my return to Madras, I took the duplicated sapphire ring to Messrs Orr & Son, jewelers, and I was told by them that they valued the stone at 150 rupees, calling it a party-colored sapphire.

(Signed) “ Sara M. CARMICHAEL.

“LONDON, August 14th, 1884.” [Page 205]

CHAPTER 10

A VISIT TO EUROPE

At the Convention of the Theosophical Society, held in December, it was stated that there were then seventy-seven branches in India and eight in Ceylon. The anniversary celebration went off with *éclat* as usual, in spite of some sparring in print between the President and the Bishop of Madras, foreshadowing a fiercer conflict between the Society and the local missionaries at a later date; and early in the spring the leaders of the movement came on a visit to Europe. Colonel Olcott had arranged to come some time previously on some business connected with a case before the Colonial Office, in which the interests of the Ceylon Buddhists were involved, and at the last moment it was decided that Mme. Blavatsky should accompany him. Her rescue, during the visit to the Sikkim frontier, from the death that seemed awaiting her during the autumn of 1882, had not done more than patch up physical machinery that was thoroughly out of order. She was again falling into very bad health, and it was supposed that the sea voyage to Europe and a few months' change would do her good. It was not contemplated, in the beginning, that she should come as far as London, and on her arrival at Nice, where she had friends, in the beginning of March she wrote, in reply to various invitations from London: — [Page 206] “

I have received the kind invitations of yourselves, of -----, and -----, and others. I am deeply touched by this proof of the desire to see my unworthy self, but see no use to kick against fate and try to make the realisable out of the unrealisable. I am sick, and feel worse than I felt when leaving Bombay. At sea I had felt better, and on land I feel worse. I was laid up for the whole day on first landing at Marseilles, and am laid up now. At the former place it was, I suppose, the vile emanations of a European civilised first-class hotel, with its pigs and beef, and here — well, anyhow I am falling to pieces, crumbling away like an old sea biscuit, and the most I will be able to do, will be to pick up and join together my voluminous fragments, and gluing them together, carry the ruin to Paris. What's the use asking me to go to London? What shall I, what can I, do amidst your eternal fogs and the emanations of the highest civilisation? I left Madras *à mon corps défendant*. I did not want to go — would return this minute if I could. Had not ----- ordered it, I would not have stirred from my rooms and old surroundings. I feel ill, miserable, cross, unhappy. ... I would not have come to Nice but for Madame -----, our dear Theosophist from Odessa. Lady C ----- is the embodiment of kindness. She does everything in creation to humor me. I came for two days, but I reckoned without my host, the mistral of Provence, and the cold winds of Nice. As soon as I am better, we mean to join the 'secretaries' in Paris, only to begin fidgeting as soon as I am there, and wishing myself sooner in Jericho than Paris. What kind of company am I to civilized beings like yourselves? . . . I would become obnoxious to them in seven minutes and a quarter were I to accept it and land my disagreeable, bulky self in England. Distance lends its charms, and in my case my presence would surely ruin every vestige of it.

“The London Lodge is in its sharpest crisis. ... I could not (especially in my present state of nervousness) stand by and listen calmly to the astounding news that Sankaracharya was a theist, and Sabba Row knows not what he is talking about, without kicking myself to [Page 207] death; or that other still more astounding declaration that Masters are evidently 'Swabhavikas.' And shall I begin contending against the Goughs and Hodgsons who have disfigured Buddhism and Adwaiticism even in their exoteric sense, and risk bursting a blood-vessel in London upon hearing their arguments reiterated? . . . Let me die in peace if I have to die, or return to my Lares and Penates in Adyar, if I am ever doomed to see them again.”

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In spite of the reluctance thus expressed, she ultimately came to London and stayed for several months, but meanwhile she remained in Paris for a few weeks and was there joined by some of her Russian relatives and friends. Mme. de Jelihowsky, whose writings have been quoted so largely in the earlier chapters of this memoir, again took pen in hand to describe some phenomena that occurred during this period.

In an article contributed to a Russian newspaper, she says: — “When, about the middle of May, we arrived in Paris for an interview with Mme. Blavatsky, we found her surrounded by a regular staff of members of their Society who had gathered at Paris, coming from Germany, Russia, and even America, to see her after her five years' absence in India ; and by a crowd of the curious who had heard of the thaumaturgic atmosphere always around her, and were anxious to become eye-witnesses to her occult powers. Truth compels me to say that H. P. Blavatsky was very reluctant to satisfy idle curiosity. She has her own way of looking very contemptuously at any physical phenomena, hates to waste her powers in a profitless manner, and was, moreover, at the time quite ill. Every phenomenon produced *at her will* invariably costs her several days of sickness. “ I say ' at her will,' for phenomena, independent of her, took place far more frequently in their midst than those produced by herself. She attributes them to that [Page 208] mysterious being whom they all call their ' Master.' Such manifestations of forces (to us) unknown leave her unhurt. Every time that an *accord* or *arpeggio* of some invisible chords resounded in the air, wherever she was, and with whatever occupied, she used to hasten to her room, from whence she emerged with some order or news. Most of the ' secretaries' of the Society received very often such summons quite independently of her. ... I give one instance. On May the 18th, Colonel Olcott returned from London and showed to us a curious Chinese envelope with a similar paper in it, a letter he had received personally, as he tells us, from one of the Masters on April 6th, in a railway carriage, in the presence of witnesses. The letter had dropped on his knees, and warned him of a grave treason that was being prepared for them all at Adyar (their Madras headquarters) by persons whom they had trusted, and who owed to them all during their five years' long stay in their house. Every detail in the letter was corroborated two months after. Mme. Blavatsky paid little attention to it at the time. But when the news corroborative of the prophecy arrived, she felt extremely hurt. . . .”

As to phenomena produced at will, this is what Professor Thurmann heard in company of several persons, myself included.”

He was telling us one night of some musical sounds he had heard at a spiritual *séance in the dark*. H. P. Blavatsky, who was sitting in her arm-chair, quietly laying out a Russian patience with cards, laughed at the narrative, and remarked, ' Why should *darkness* be necessary for such manifestations ? When there is no *deception* there is no need of darkness. . . . ' And upon saying this, with one hand upon the table, she lifted the other in the air as though throwing off some current, and said: ' Now, listen !”

At the same instant we heard, in that corner of the room towards which she had waved her hand, the harmonious sound as though of a harp or zither. . . . The scale of melody resounded clear and sharp, and then died away in the air. Again she lifted her hand, moving it in an opposite direction, and the same phenomenon was [Page 209] produced! . . . We all started from our seats, struck with amazement. For the third time she moved her hand in a third direction, as though cutting the air through with her arm — this time toward a large bronze chandelier over our heads — and, at the same instant, the chandelier emitted a sound, as if in every one of its jets lay concealed a musical chord, which had vibrated in response to her command. ...”

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Mme. de Jelihowsky also recounts the following incident: — “

We were, four of us, at Rue Notre Dame des Champs, 46 — Mme. N. A. Fadeeff, Mme. Blavatsky, the eminent Russian author, M. Soloviof, and I, — having tea at the same table of the little drawing-room, about 11 P.M. . Mme. B. was asked to narrate something of her ' Master,' and how she had acquired from him her occult talents. While telling us many things which would be out of place in public print, she offered us to see a portrait of his in a gold medallion she wore on a chain round her neck, and opened it. It is a perfectly flat locket, *made to contain but one miniature and no more*. It passed from hand to hand, and we all saw the handsome Hindu face in it, painted in India."

Suddenly our little party felt disturbed by something *very strange*, a sensation which it is hardly possible to describe. It was as though the air had suddenly changed, was rarefied, the atmosphere became positively oppressive, and we three could hardly breathe. . . . H. P. B. covered her eyes with her hand and whispered:—

“ 'Attention !'...! feel that something is going to happen. . . . Some phenomenon. . . . *He* is preparing to do it. . . .' ”

She meant by 'He', her *guru-master*, whom she considers so powerful. . . .

" At that moment M. Soloviof fixed his eyes on a corner of the room, saying that he saw something like a ball of fire, of oval form, looking like a radiant golden and bluish egg. ... He had hardly pronounced these words when we heard, coming from the farthest end of the [Page 210] corridor, a long melodious sound, as if some one had brushed the chords of a harp — a melody far fuller and more definite than any of the musical sounds we had previously heard.

" Once more the clear notes were repeated, and then died away. Silence reigned again in the rooms." I left my seat and went into the passage hall, brightly lighted with a lamp. Useless to say that all was quiet, and that it was empty. When I returned to the drawing-room I found H. P. Blavatsky sitting quietly as before at the table between Mme. Fadeeff and M. Soloviof. At the same time, I saw as distinctly as can be, the figure of a man, a greyish, yet quite clear form, standing near my sister, and who, upon my looking at him, receded from her, paled, and disappeared in the opposite wall. This man — or perhaps his astral form — was of a slight build, and of middle size, wrapped in a kind of mantle, and with a white turban on his head. The vision did not last more than a few seconds, but I had all the time to examine it, and to tell everyone what I distinctly saw, though, as soon as it had disappeared I felt terribly frightened and nervous. . . . Hardly come back to our senses, we were startled with another wonder, this one palpable and objective. H. P. B. suddenly opened her locket, and instead of one portrait of a Master, there were two — her own facing his!

“ *Firmly* set inside the other half of the *medallion*, under its oval glass, there was her own miniature likeness, which she had just casually mentioned."

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The locket was once more carefully examined by the three witnesses, and passed from hand to hand.

" This was not the *finale*. A quarter of an hour later the magical locket, *from which we three literally never took off our eyes for one second, was opened at the desire of one of us — her portrait was no more to be found in it. . . .* It had disappeared."The statement that follows, relating to another incident of Mme. Blavatsky's stay in Paris, was published in *Light* for July 12, 1884: — [Page 211]

"The undersigned attest the following phenomenon:

"On the morning of the 11th of June, instant, we were present in the reception room of the Theosophical Society at Paris, 46 Rue Notre Dame des Champs, when a letter was delivered by the postman. The door of the room in which we were sitting was open, so that we could see into the hall; and the servant who answered the bell was seen to take the letter from the postman and bring it to us at once, placing it in the hands of Mme. Jelihowsky, who threw it before her on the table round which we were sitting. The letter was addressed to a lady, a relative of Mme. Blavatsky's, who was then visiting her, and came from another relative in Russia. There were present in the room, Mme. de Morsier, secretary-general of the ' Société Théosophique d'Orient et d'Occident'; M. Soloviof, son of the distinguished Russian historian, and attaché of the Imperial Court, himself well known as a writer; Colonel Olcott, Mr W. Q. Judge, Mohini-Babu, and several other persons. Mme. Blavatsky was also sitting at the table. Mme. Jelihowsky, upon her sister (Mme. Blavatsky) remarking that she would like to know what was in the letter, asked her, on the spur of the moment, to read its contents before its seal was broken, since she professed to be able so to do.

"Thus challenged, Mme. Blavatsky at once took up the closed letter, held it against her forehead, and read aloud what she professed to be its contents. These alleged contents she further wrote down on a blank page of an old letter that lay on a table. Then she said she would give those present, since her sister still laughed at and challenged her power, even a clearer proof that she was able to exercise her psychic power *within* the closed envelope. Remarking that her own name occurred in the course of the letter, she said that she would underline this through the envelope in red crayon. In order to effect this she wrote her name on the old letter (on which the alleged copy of the contents of the sealed letter had been written), together with an interlaced double triangle or ' Solomon's seal' below the signature, which she had copied as well as the body of the letter. This was done in spite of her sister remarking that her correspondent hardly ever signed her [Page 212] name in full when writing to relatives, and that in this at least Mme. Blavatsky would find herself mistaken. 'Nevertheless,' she replied, 'I will cause these two red marks to appear in the corresponding places within the letter.'" She next laid the closed letter beside the open one upon the table, and placed her hand upon both, so as to make (as she said) a bridge, along which a current of psychic force might pass. Then, *with her features settled into an expression of intense mental concentration*, she kept her hand quietly thus for a few moments, after which, tossing the closed letter across the table to her sister, she said, 'Tiens, c'est fait.' ('The experiment is successfully finished.')

Here it may be well to add, to show that the letter could not have been tampered with in transit — unless by a Government official, — that the stamps were fixed on the flap of the envelope, where a seal is usually placed."

Upon the envelope being opened by the lady to whom it was addressed, it was found that *Mme. Blavatsky had actually written out its contents ; that her name was there; that she had really underlined it*

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in red, as she had promised; and that the double triangle was reproduced below the writer's signature, which was in full, as Mme. Blavatsky had described it."

Another fact of exceptional interest we noted. *A slight defect in formation of one of the two interlaced triangles, as drawn by Mme. Blavatsky, had been faithfully reproduced within the closed letter."* This experiment was doubly valuable, as at once an illustration of clairvoyant perception, by which Mme. Blavatsky correctly read the contents of a sealed letter, and of the phenomenon of precipitation, or the deposit of pigmentary matter in the form of figures and lines previously drawn by the operator in the presence of observers.

(Signed)

“VERA JELIHOWSKY.
VSEVOLOD SOLOVIOF.
NADEJDAA. FADÉEFF.
EMILIE DE MORSIER.
WILLIAM Q. JUDGE.
H. S. OLCOTT. PARIS,

Paris, June 21st, 1884.” [Page 213]

In the St Petersburg *Rebus* (a periodical of psychological sciences) of July 1, 1884, No. 26, the same account appeared over the signature of V. Soloviof, an eye-witness to the above fact, under the title of

INTERESTING PHENOMENON

[Since then the author, between whom and Mme Blavatsky there have been personal differences, tried to throw a doubt over the genuineness of this phenomenon, saying it may have been due to psychological glamour thrown over the witnesses. On that hypothesis, the bare fact of Mme Blavatsky possessing the power of collectively mesmerizing a group of people in full daylight, so that they thought they saw a series of occurrences that they did not see, is to say the least, sufficiently astonishing.]

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

“Several persons, among that number myself, met casually H. P. Blavatsky (the founder of the Theosophical Society, then on a visit to Paris) about 10 A.M. in the forenoon. A postman entered and brought, among others, a letter for a relative of Mme. B., then on a visit to the latter, but owing to the early morning hour still absent in her bedroom. *From the hands of the postman the letter passed on, in the presence of all present, upon the table in the parlour, where we were all gathered.* Glancing at the postmark and the address of that particular letter,

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both Mme. Blavatsky and her sister, Mme. Jelihowsky, remarked that it came from a mutual relative then at Odessa. The envelope was not only completely closed on all its flaps, but the post-stamp itself was glued on the place where the seal is habitually placed — as I got convinced by carefully examining it myself. H. P. Blavatsky, who was on that morning, as I had remarked, in very high spirits, undertook, unexpectedly for all of us, with the exception of her sister, who was the first one to propose it and to defy Mme. B. to do it, to read the letter in its closed envelope. After this she placed it on her forehead, and with visible efforts began to read it out, writing down the pronounced sentences on a sheet of [Page 214] paper. When she finished, her sister expressed her doubts as to the success of the experiment, remarking that several of the expressions read out and written down by Mme. B. could hardly be found in a letter from the person who had written it. Then H. P. B. became visibly irritated by this, and declared that in such case she would do still more. Taking the sheet of paper again she traced upon it with red pencil, at the foot of the sentences supposed to be contained in the closed letter, noted down by her, a *sign*, then she underlined a word, after which, with a visible effort on her face, she said : ' This sign that I make must pass into the envelope at the end of the letter, and this word in it be found underlined, as I have done it here.' . .

." When the letter was opened, its contents were found identical with what Mme. Blavatsky had written down, and, at the end of it, we all saw the sign in red pencil correctly repeated, and the word underlined by her on her paper was not only there, but equally underlined in red pencil."

After that an exact description of the phenomenon was drawn up, and all of us, the witnesses present, signed our names under it."

The circumstances under which the phenomenon occurred in its smallest details, carefully checked by myself, do not leave in me the smallest doubt as to its *genuineness* and reality. Deception or fraud in this particular case are *entirely out of question*.

Vs. SOLOVIOF.

PARIS, 10 (22) June 1884.

The Theosophical movement in London, when Mme. Blavatsky ultimately came over from Paris on the 7th of April — arriving unexpectedly on the evening of a meeting of the "London Lodge", — was already established on a footing which was leading many of its most prominent representatives to look with no sympathetic eye on such "phenomena" as have just been described, illustrative of occult power operating on the physical plane of Nature. [Page 215]And no one acquainted in any degree with the course that movement has taken — ever since a sufficient volume of philosophical teaching has been given out by the "adepts" to show how very elevated a purpose lies in reality before the students of Esoteric Theosophy — will make the mistake of imagining that the London Society consists of people attracted to it by the mere rumor of Mme. Blavatsky's wonder-working power. But wherever Mme. Blavatsky may be, abnormal occurrences, even in recent years, when they have been practically suppressed as compared with the abundance of the manifestation at an earlier period of her life, have been more or less frequently observed. And the present volume, concerned as it is with her own personal history in a greater degree than with that of the movement with which the latter part of her career has been so ultimately blended, must maintain its character to the end. Mme. Blavatsky and her most attached friends in the Theosophical movement have, as I have just said, come to feel a very great distaste for all phenomenal stories, owing to the strife of words they have evoked and the hostile incredulity they have excited. They

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are now in a position to rely entirely in recommending Theosophic study to the world, on the intrinsic, intellectual, and philosophical claims of the esoteric doctrine, and it cannot be too strongly or frequently emphasized that the final purpose of Mme. Blavatsky's life, since her return from India in 1870, has been to convey something of this doctrine, of this spiritual philosophy, to the world, and not to dazzle the narrow circle of people immediately around her at any given time with displays of occult power.

Still, partly owing to the principle on which, as the reader will have seen, she has endeavoured all along to carry out her task — partly because her love of exercising [Page 216] her abnormal faculties continually overcomes her irritation at the annoyances for her to which their exercise has often given rise — she has displayed these from time to time up to a recent period.

She stayed with us for a week only on her first arrival in London and then returned to Paris. She came over to London again on the 29th of June, and stayed with friends in Elgin Crescent, Notting Hill, where she remained till early in August, going over then to Germany with a party of Theosophists on a visit to friends in Elberfeld. Her presence in London during the period referred to became rather widely known, and large numbers of people contrived to make her acquaintance. Streams of visitors were constantly pouring in to see her, and with her usual *abandon* of manner she would receive her callers in any costume, in any room which happened to be convenient to her for the moment — in her bedroom, which she also made her writing-room and study, or in her friends' drawing-room thick with the smoke of her innumerable cigarettes, and of those which she hospitably offered to all who cared to accept them.

Occasionally it happened that some manifestations of her occult powers would be given on these occasions, as, for example, on the evening referred to in the following letter: —

HOLLOWAY'S HOTEL,

48 DOVER STREET, PICCADILLY, LONDON,

August 9, 1884.“

MY DEAR MR-----,—

I see no difficulty whatever in telling you what happened in my presence a few days ago at Mrs Arundale's house, where I had been dining with Mme. Blavatsky.

”In the midst of the conversation, referring to various subjects, Mme. Blavatsky became silent, and we all [Page 217] distinctly heard a sound that might be compared to that produced by a small silver bell.”

The same phenomenon was produced later on in the drawing-room, adjoining the dining-room.

” I was naturally surprised at this manifestation, but still more by the following incident. I had been singing a Russian song that I had brought with me that evening, and which seemed to give much pleasure to my audience. After the last chord of the accompaniment had died away,

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Mme. Blavatsky said, ' Listen!' and held up her hand, and we distinctly heard the last full chord, composed of five notes, repeated in our midst."

I have, of course, not the slightest means for giving any kind of explanation, but the facts were such as I have stated.

(Signed)

" OLGA NOVIKOFF, *née* KIRÉEF."

The "phenomena" wrought during this period, however, were not of an important character, and are scarcely worth recording after those that have been already described; but for obvious reasons it is worth while to include mention of one incident which, though quite disconnected from Mme. Blavatsky's influence, is all the more worth notice on that account, as throwing light upon the assurance she constantly gives that a great many of the wonders worked in her presence are really performed by the agency of her "Masters". Dr Hübbe Schleiden, who writes the following letter, became president of the branch of the Theosophical Society which was formed in Germany. He says, addressing Mme. Blavatsky:

"ELBERFELD, August, 1884.

" *DEAR MADAM,*

You requested me to state to you the particular circumstances under which I received my first communication from Mahatma K. H.. I have much pleasure in doing so.

"On the morning of the first of this month Colonel [Page 218] Olcott and I were travelling by an express train from here to Dresden. A few days before I had written a letter to the Mahatmas, which Colonel Olcott had addressed and enclosed to you, which, however, as I now hear, never reached you, but was taken by the Masters while it was in the hands of the post officials. At the time mentioned I was not thinking of this letter, but was relating to Colonel Olcott some events of my life, expressing also the fact that since my sixth or seventh year I had never known peace nor joy, and asking Colonel Olcott's opinion on the meaning of some striking hardships I have gone through.

"In this conversation we were interrupted by the railway guard demanding our tickets. When I moved forward and raised myself partly from the seat, in order to hand over the tickets, Colonel Olcott noticed something white lying behind my back on that side of me which was opposite to the one where he was sitting. When I took up that which had appeared there, it turned out to be a Tibetan envelope, in which I found a letter from Mahatma K. H., written with blue pencil in his well-known and unmistakable handwriting. As there were several other persons unacquainted with us in the compartment, I suppose the Master chose this place for depositing the letter near me where it was the least likely to attract the unwelcome attention and curiosity of outsiders.

"The envelope was plainly addressed to me, and the communication contained in the letter was a consoling reflection on the opinion which I had five or ten minutes ago given on the dreary events of my past life. The Mahatma explained that such events and the mental misery

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attached to it were beyond the ordinary sum of life, but that hardships of all kinds would be the lot of one striving for higher spiritual development. He very kindly expressed his opinion that I had already achieved some philanthropic work for the good of the world.

“In this letter were also answered some of the questions which I had put in my first-mentioned letter, and an assurance was given me that I was to receive assistance and advice when I should be in need of it.

“I dare say it would be unnecessary for me to ask you [Page 219] to inform the Mahatma of the devoted thankfulness which I feel towards him for the great kindness shown to me, for the Master will know of my sentiments without my forming them into more or less inadequate words.

“I am, dear Madam, in due respect, yours faithfully,

(Signed) " Dr HUBBE SCHLEIDEN.

“To MM. BLAVATSKY,

ELBERFELD.”

At Elberfeld, Mme. Blavatsky was the guest of Mr and Mrs Gebhard, and one of their sons, Mr Rudolph Gebhard writes as follows:—

“I have always taken a great interest in conjuring tricks. When in London I had an opportunity of taking lessons from Professor Field, a most skilful sleight-of-hand conjurer, who very soon made me quite proficient in his art. From that time forward I have given performances wherever I went (as an *amateur*, of course), and made the acquaintance of nearly all our renowned 'wizards,' with whom I exchanged tricks. As every conjurer has some favourite sleight in which he excels, I was bound to be very careful in watching them in order to make myself perfect in all the different lines of card or coin conjuring, or the famous mediumistic feats. This, of course, made me in good time a pretty close observer as far as *tricks* are concerned; and I feel justified in giving here an opinion on the phenomena which came under my observation.

“Two of them occurred in our house in Elberfeld, during the stay in it of Mme. Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott, and a small party of friends and Theosophists.

“The first one was a letter from Mahatma K. H. to my father, and took place one evening in the presence of a number of witnesses, partly members of our Society, and of Major-General D. O. Howard, of the U.S. Army. It was about nine P.M. We were sitting in the drawing-room discussing different topics, when Mme. Blavatsky's attention was suddenly attracted by something unusual taking place in the room. After a while she said that she [Page 220] felt the presence of the 'Masters'. That they had, perhaps, the intention of doing something for us, and so she asked us to think of what we should like to occur. Then a little discussion took place as to what would be the best thing, and finally it was unanimously resolved that a letter should be asked for, addressed to my father, Mr G. Gebhard, on a subject on which he should mentally

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decide himself.

“Now my father had, at the time being, great anxiety about a son in America, my elder brother, and was very eager to get advice from the Master concerning him.

“Meanwhile, Mme. B., who, on account of her recent illness, was resting on a sofa, and had been looking around the room, suddenly exclaimed that there was something going on with a large oil painting hanging over the piano in the same room, she having seen like a ray of light shooting in the direction of the picture. This statement was immediately corroborated by Mrs H-----, and then by my mother also, who, sitting opposite a looking-glass and turning her back to the picture, had also observed in the mirror like a faint light going towards the painting. Mme. B. then required Mrs H----- to see, and say what was going on, when Mrs H-----said that she saw something forming over the picture, but could not distinctly make out what it was.

“Everybody's attention was now fixed in the direction of the wall high above and under the ceiling, where so many saw bright lights. But, I must confess, that for my part, not being clairvoyant, I could neither see lights nor any other thing except what I had always seen on that wall. And when Mme. Blavatsky said she now felt absolutely sure that there was something going on. I got up (we had kept our seats all this while) and climbing on the piano lifted the picture right off the wall, but not off the hook, shook it well and looked behind it — nothing! The room was well lit up, and there was not an inch of the picture which I could not see. I dropped the frame, saying that I could see nothing; but Mme. Blavatsky told me that she felt sure that there must be something, so up I climbed once more and tried again.

“The picture in question was a large oil painting, [Page 221] suspended from the wall by a hook and a rope, which made it hang over at the top, so that when the lower part of the frame was lifted off the wall, there was a space of fully six inches between the wall and the back of the picture, the latter being virtually entirely off the wall. There being a wall gas-bracket fixed on each side of the painting, the space between the latter and the wall was well lit up. But the second time, no better than the first, was I able to detect anything, though I looked very close. It was in order to make perfectly sure that I got up on the piano, and passed my hand twice very carefully along the frame, which is about three inches thick, up and down — nothing. Letting the picture drop back, I then turned round to Mme. Blavatsky to ask her what was to be done further, when she exclaimed: ' I see the letter; there it is !' I turned quickly back to the picture, and saw at that moment a letter dropping from behind it on to the piano. I picked it up. It was addressed to ' Herrn Consul G. Gebhard,' and contained the information he had just asked for. I must have made rather a perplexed face, for the company laughed merrily at the ' family juggler.'

“Now for me this is a most completely demonstrated phenomenon. Nobody had handled the picture but myself ; I was careful to examine it very closely, and as I was searching for a letter, such a thing could not have escaped my attention, as perhaps would have been the case if I had been looking for some other object; as then I might not have paid any attention to a slip of paper. The letter was fully four by two inches, so by no means a small object.

“Moreover, it was the company that had decided upon Mr G. Gebhard as the person who should be the recipient of a letter; and as I knew what was weighing on my father's mind at the time, it was I myself who had suggested that he should ask for an answer on that special object, when he said he would.

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“Let us consider this phenomenon from a sleight-of-hand point of view.

“Suppose several letters had been prepared beforehand, addressed to different persons, treating of different [Page 222] subjects. Is it possible to get a letter to an appointed place by a sleight-of-hand trick ? Quite possible ; it only depends what place it is, and if our attention is drawn beforehand to such a place or not. To get that letter behind that picture would have been very difficult, but might have been managed if our attention had for a moment been directed to another place, the letter being thrown behind the picture in the meantime. What is sleight-of-hand ? Nothing else but the execution of a movement more or less swift, in a moment when you are not observed. I draw your attention for a short while to a certain spot, say, for instance, my left hand, my right is then free to make certain movements unobserved ; as to ' the quickness of the hand deceives the eye' theory, it is entirely erroneous. You cannot make a movement with your hand so quickly that the eye would not follow and detect it, the only thing you can do is either to conceal the necessary movement by another one which has nothing to do with what you are about, or to draw the attention of the looker-on to another point, and then quickly do what is required.

“Now, in this instance all our attention had been drawn to the picture, before ever the question was put as to what we should like to have, and was kept there all the while; it would have been impossible for anyone to throw a letter without being observed. As for the letter having been concealed behind the picture beforehand, this, is out of the question altogether, it could not have escaped my attention while I repeatedly searched for it. Suppose the letter had been placed on the top of the frame, and my hand had disturbed it passing along without my knowing it, this would have caused the letter to drop down instantly, whereas, about thirty seconds passed before it put in an appearance. Taking all circumstances together, it seems to me an impossibility to have worked this phenomenon by a trick.

“The day after this had occurred, I went into Madame's room about noon ; but seeing that she was engaged I retired to the drawing-room, where we had been sitting the night before, and just then the idea struck me to try that picture again, in order to make perfectly sure that [Page 223] the letter could not have been concealed somewhere behind it, without being detected. I was alone in the room, and during my examination of the painting nobody entered it; I fully satisfied myself that a letter could not have escaped my attention, had it been concealed behind the picture. I then went back to Madame's room, where I found her still engaged with the same woman. In the evening we were again sitting together.

“ 'The Masters watched you today, and were highly amused with your experiments. How you did try to find out if that letter could not have been concealed behind the picture.'

“Now I am positively certain, first, that nobody was in the room at the time I tried the picture ; and secondly, that I had told no one in the house of my experiment. It is impossible for me to explain how Madame could have found out my movements, except through her clairvoyance. . .

RUDOLPH GEBHARD.

“ELBERFELD(Cologne), September, 1884.”

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More than a year later, when a report was issued by the Society for Psychical Research, in which discredit was cast on a great many phenomena recorded in connection with Mme. Blavatsky, but for the most part not mentioned in the course of this memoir, it was suggested in regard to Mr Gebhard's story, of which the Society had received a somewhat briefer account than that given above, that Mr Gebhard did not seem to have contemplated the possibility of a confederate having been present who might have thrown the letter without being observed — not a very forcible suggestion in regard to an incident occurring in the presence of several persons all watching for its occurrence, and in a private room with only members of the family and intimate guests present. However, on that subject, Mr Gebhard writes to me under date 18th January 1886, as follows:— [Page 224]

“ELBERFELD, 18th *January* 1886.

“MY DEAR MR SINNETT, —

Many thanks for your kind letter, with enclosures, which I received yesterday morning. Considering the very weak way the S.P.R. report has met my letter to Hodgson regarding the letter phenomenon in Elberfeld, I think it may be some use to point out that (1) an account of the phenomenon was written by me a very few days after the occurrence, a copy of which I found this morning; (2) in this first account I have very seriously considered the possibility of the letter having been thrown by a confederate; but having, I think, conclusively shown that such a thing was out of the question, I never came back to it in later reports. The two reports absolutely tally in the main points, the only two differences being that in the first report I give the space between picture and wall as 6 in., in the second as 8 in. Secondly, the size of the letter is given in the first instance as 4 in. x 2 in in the second report as 5 in. x 2½ in. (the latter is the right size, as I have taken exact measure of the letter today). The second report is even somewhat more detailed than the first one, owing, as I think, to questions which I was repeatedly asked by people to whom I related the incident, and which I wanted to guard against from the outset.

“I made this morning rather a curious discovery, and am only sorry that I did not make the same trial before. Taking the identical letter, I got up on the piano, and threw it behind the picture, but the letter stuck between the picture and the wall, and repeated trials showed me that the picture, being very heavy, rests with the bottom part so closely to the wall that not even a letter can fall between it and the wall. I lifted up the picture several times and let it fall back again, but the effect was always the same. I am more than ever at a loss to explain, because, to my best knowledge, the letter fluttered from behind the picture on to the piano.”

The close of Mme. Blavatsky's European visit was overshadowed by a disagreeable incident which gave rise to widely ramifying results. [Page 225]

A magazine at Madras — an organ of the Christian missionaries at that place — the *Christian College Magazine* by name, published a series of letters purporting to have been written by Mme. Blavatsky to a certain Mme. Coulomb, who had lived with her in India for some years, first at Bombay and then at Madras. Mme. Coulomb and her husband formerly kept a hotel at Cairo, where Mme. Blavatsky had made their acquaintance, to her sorrow, in the days of her abortive *Société Spirite*. Years afterwards, the Coulobms turned up in India in great straits, and were hospitably sheltered by Mme. Blavatsky at Bombay. They eventually settled down as members of her household, Mme. Coulomb looking after the

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housekeeping in return for her board and lodging, and her husband being supposed for a long time to be looking out for work. The arrangement was altogether of a very informal kind, but it continued longer than many such arrangements established to begin with on a more permanent basis. In progress of time, however, the kindly feelings on both sides, out of which it may be supposed the arrangement took its rise, gave place, on Mme. Coulomb's part at all events, to sentiments of a very different sort. The whole matter but for its after consequences would be too ignominious to discuss, but without even now going into details, which could only be treated, if at all, at a length altogether disproportionate to their importance, it may be explained that Mme. Coulomb supplied the editor of the magazine with a series of letters apparently from Mme. Blavatsky to herself, some of which, if genuine, would have shown her to have employed Mme. Coulomb and her husband as confederates in a long succession of fraudulent phenomena.

When the magazine containing the letters was received [Page 226] in Europe, Mme. Blavatsky wrote the following letter on the subject to the *Times*. It appeared on October the 9th :—

Sir, —

With reference to the alleged exposure at Madras of a dishonorable conspiracy between myself and two persons of the name of Coulomb to deceive the public with occult phenomena, I have to say that the letters purporting to have been written by me are certainly not mine. Sentences here and there I recognize, taken from old notes of mine on different matters, but they are mingled with interpolations that entirely pervert their meaning. With these exceptions the whole of the letters are a fabrication.

“The fabricators must have been grossly ignorant of Indian affairs, since they make me speak of a 'Maharajah of Lahore', when every Indian schoolboy knows that no such person exists.”

With regard to the suggestion that I attempted to promote the 'financial prosperity' of the Theosophical Society by means of occult phenomena, I say that I have never at any time received, or attempted to obtain, from any person any money either for myself or for the Society by any such means. I defy anyone to come forward and prove the contrary. Such money as I have received has been earned by literary work of my own, and these earnings, and what remained of my inherited property when I went to India, have been devoted to the Theosophical Society. I am a poorer woman today than I was when, with others, I founded the Society. —

Your obedient Servant,

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

“77 ELGIN CRESCENT, NOTTING HILL, W.,

“ October 7.”

The same paper also contained on the same date a letter from Mr St George Lane Fox:—

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“Sir,

In the *Times* of September 20 and September 29 you publish telegrams from your Calcutta correspondent referring to the Theosophical Society. As I have just [Page 227] returned from India, and am a member of the board of control appointed to manage the affairs of the Society during the absence from India of Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky, I hope you will allow me through your columns to add a few words to the news you publish. First, then, these Coulombs, who, in conjunction with certain missionaries, are now trying to throw discredit on the Theosophical Society, were employed at the Society's headquarters at Adyar as housekeepers, and the board of control, finding that they were thoroughly unprincipled, always trying to extort money from members of the Society, discharged them. They had meanwhile been constructing all sorts of trap-doors and sliding panels in the private rooms of Madame Blavatsky, who had very indiscreetly given over these rooms to their charge. As to the letters purporting to have been written by Madame Blavatsky, which have recently been published in an Indian 'Christian' paper, I, in common with all who are acquainted with the circumstances of the case, have no doubt whatever that, whoever wrote them, they are not written by Madame Blavatsky. I myself attach very little importance to this new scandal, as I do not believe that the true Theosophic cause suffers in the slightest degree.

“The Theosophical movement is now well launched, and must go ahead, in spite of obstacles. Already hundreds, if not thousands, have been led through it to perceive that, for scientific and not merely sentimental reasons, purity of life is advisable, and that honesty of purpose and unselfish activity are necessary for true human progress and the attainment of real happiness.

Your obedient Servant,

ST G. LANE FOX, F.T.S.

“ LONDON, *October 5.*”

A good deal of anxiety was nevertheless felt among some persons who had been greatly interested in the reports of Mme. Blavatsky's occult achievements in India, as to how far the letters might be genuine, and, finally, the Society for Psychical Research decided to [Page 228] send out to Madras one of their own members willing to undertake the investigation on the spot of all the transactions to which the letters referred. Mr Richard Hodgson, the gentleman in question, went out to India in November 1884, and stayed there till the following April. On his return he gave his Society a report that was altogether unfavorable to Mme. Blavatsky, and the committee of the Society appointed to inquire into the character of the phenomena “connected with the Theosophical Society” reported in their turn to a meeting of the Society held on the 24th of June, that the letters were genuine in the opinion of the experts, and that they sufficed to prove that Mme. Blavatsky “has been engaged in a long-continued combination with other persons to produce by ordinary means a series of apparent marvels for the support of the Theosophical movement.”

Meanwhile Mme. Blavatsky had returned to India. On the arrival at Madras of the steamer in which she came, a delegation of native students of the Madras colleges went on board to welcome her. The meaning of the demonstration turned upon the fact that the current charges against her had originated in the letters alleged to be written by her, and published in a magazine professedly identified with one of the

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colleges. Conducted to a public hall where a large number of natives were assembled, the student delegates read her the following address:—

“In according to you this our heartiest of welcomes on your return from the intellectual campaigns which you have so successfully waged in the West, we are conscious we are giving but a feeble expression to the 'debt immense of endless gratitude' which India lies under to you. [Page 229]

“You have dedicated your life to the disinterested services of disseminating the truths of Occult Philosophy. Upon the sacred mysteries of our hoary Religion and Philosophies you have thrown such a flood of light by sending into the world that marvelous production of yours, the *“Isis Unveiled”*. By your exposition has our beloved Colonel been induced to undertake that gigantic labor of love — the vivifying on the altars of Aryavarta the dying flames of religion and spirituality.

“While at one quarter of the globe you had been with all your heart and soul addressing yourself to the work of propagating eternal Truth, your enemies on this side have been equally industrious. We allude to the recent scandalous events at Madras, in which an expelled domestic of yours has been made a convenient cat's-paw of. While looking upon such futilities with the indignant scorn which they certainly deserve, we beg to assure you that our affection and admiration, earned by the loftiness of your soul, the nobility of your aspirations, and the sacrifices you have made, have become too deeply rooted to be shaken by the rude blasts of spite, spleen, and slander, which, however, are no uncommon occurrences in the history of Theosophy.”

That the revered Masters whose hearts are overflowing with love for Humanity will continue as ever to help you and our esteemed Colonel in the discovery of Truth and the dissemination of the same, is the earnest prayer of, —

Dear and Revered Madame, your affectionate Servants,

“STUDENTS OF THE COLLEGES OF MADRAS.”

The address was signed by more than three hundred students.

During a great part of the time spent by Mr Hodgson at Madras, Mme. Blavatsky lay on a sick-bed, dying as her friends believed, and as she herself supposed, her restoration to comparative health in the end constituting in itself one of the not least surprising “phenomena” connected with the story of her life. She wrote to me towards the close of this period: — [Page 230]

“I am compelled to write to you once more. My own reputation and honor I have made a sacrifice of, and for the few months I have yet to live, I care little what becomes of me. But I cannot leave the reputation of poor Olcott to be attacked as it is by Hume and Mr Hodgson, who have become suddenly *mad* with their hypotheses of fraud more phenomenal than phenomena themselves. I, with a thousand other Theosophists, protest against the manner and way the investigations are carried on by Mr Hodgson. He examines only our greatest

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enemies, thieves and robbers like -----, and being shown by him some letters received by him, as he assures Hodgson, seven years ago from America, Hodgson copies some paragraphs from them that he believes the most damaging, and builds on that the theory of my being a *Russian spy*. . . . *You know* how I tried to conciliate the Hindus with the English. How I did all in my power to make them realize that this government, bad as it seemed to them, was the best they could ever have. I defy to find a respectable, trustworthy Hindu who will say that I ever breathed a disloyal word to them. And yet because of a certain paper stolen from me by -----, and that the missionaries have shown to him a paper, partially or wholly written in cipher, Mr Hodgson has publicly proclaimed me a Russian spy.”

Recurring to this a little further on she says:—

“They (meaning the missionaries) took it to the Police Commissioner, had the best experts examine it, sent it to Calcutta for five months, moved heaven and earth to find out what the cipher meant, and now gave it up in despair. It is one of my Zenzar MSS. I am perfectly confident of it, for one of the sheets of my book, with numbered pages, is missing.”

Zenzar is a mystic language, with a peculiar character of its own, used by the initiated occultists of Tibet.

Mme. Blavatsky remained for a time at a hotel near Naples, when she reached Europe on her return after her illness, and thence wrote to my wife on the 21st of June, in reply to a letter of sympathy.

“The sight of your familiar handwriting was a welcome one indeed, and the contents of your letter still more so. No. . . . I never thought that *you* could have believed that I played the tricks I am now accused of, neither you nor any one of those who have Masters in their *hearts*, not on their brains. Nevertheless, here I am, and stand accused without any means to prove the contrary, of the most dirty villainous deceptions ever practised by a half-starved medium. What can I do, and what shall I do ? Useless to either write to persuade, or try to argue with people who are bound to believe me guilty, to change their opinions. Let it be. The fuel in my heart is burnt to the last atom. Henceforth, nothing is to be found in it but cold ashes. I have so suffered that I can suffer no more. I simply laugh at every new accusation.

“‘Notwithstanding the experts,’ you say. Ah! they must be famous those experts who found all the Coulombs' letters genuine. The whole world may bow before their decision and acuteness, but there is one person at least in this wide world whom they can never convince that those stupid letters were written by me, and it is H. P. Blavatsky.

“Now, look here, and I want you to know these facts. *To this day* I have never been allowed to see one single line of those letters. Why could not Mr Hodgson come and show me one of them at least ? . . . Pray, tell me, is it the legal thing in England to accuse publicly even a street sweeper in his absence without giving him the chance of saying one single word in his defense ; without letting him know even of what he is precisely accused, and who it is who accuses him, and is brought forward as chief evidence ? For I do not know the first word of all this. Hodgson came to Adyar, was received as a friend, examined and cross-examined all whom he wanted to; the boys (the Hindus) at Adyar gave him all the information he needed. If he now finds discrepancies and contradictions in their statements, it only shows that,

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feeling as they all did, that it was (in their sight) pure tomfoolery to doubt the phenomena of the Masters, they had not prepared themselves for the scientific cross-examination, may have forgotten many of the circumstances. . . .

“Here I am. Where I shall go next, I know no more than the man in the moon. Why they should want to keep me still in life, is something too strange for me to comprehend; but their ways are, and always have been, incomprehensible. What good am I now for the cause ? Doubted and suspected by the whole creation except a few, would I not do more good to the T.S. by dying than by living ? ”

Two months later she moved on from Italy to a quiet little town in Germany, where I visited her last autumn (1885). In the interim the Psychic Research Society had held its meetings, at which the Committee “appointed to investigate phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society”, had reported that the Coulomb letters were really written by Mme. Blavatsky, that the “shrine” at Adyar was elaborately designed to subserve treachery and false manifestations, and that the marvels related of the occult power of the Mahatmas were deliberate deceptions carried out by and at the instigation of Mme. Blavatsky. In August she wrote to me: —

“... Trust and friendship, or distrust and resentment — neither friends nor foes will ever realise the whole truth; so what's the use. . . . The only difference between Coulomb-Patterson-Hodgson charges now and those previous to the Adyar scandal is this: Then the newspapers only *hinted*, now they affirm. Then they were restricted, however feebly, by fear of law and a sense of decency; now they have become fearless, and have lost all and every manner of decency. Look at Prof. Sidgwick. He is evidently a gentleman and an honourable man by nature, fair minded, as most Englishmen are. And now tell me, can any outsider (the opinion of the Fathers of S.P.R. is of course valueless) presume to say that his printed opinion of me is either fair, legal, or honest ? If, instead of bogus phenomena, I were charged with picking the pockets of my victims, or of something else, the charging with which, when unproved, is punishable by [Page 233] law, if not wholly demonstrated, would Prof. Sidgwick, you think, have a leg to stand upon in a court of justice ? Assuredly not. Then what right has he to speak publicly (and have his opinion printed) of my *deceptions, fraud, dishonesty, and tricks* ? Shall you maintain that it is fair of him, or honest, or even legal, to take advantage of his exceptional position and the nature of the question involved to slander me, or, if you prefer, I shall say, to charge me thus and dishonor my name on such wretched evidence as they have through Hodgson ? . . . Can you blame, after this ----- and other Russian Theosophists for saying that the chief motive of their wrath against me is that I am a Russian ? I know it is not so, but they, the Russians, like-----, and the Odessa Theosophists, cannot be made to see the cause of such a glaring injustice in any other light.

“Please read . . . about their disclaiming any intention of imputing wilful deception to poor Olcott. Following this there comes the question of envelopes in which the Mahatma's writing was found — which *might* have been previously opened by me or others. Letters from the Masters received at Adyar when I was in Europe ' might' have been in all cases arranged by Damodar. The disappearance of the *Vega* packet ' can be easily accounted for ' by the fact of a venetian door near Babula's room — a door, by-the-by, which was hermetically covered and nailed over (walls and door) with my large carpet, if you remember. But we shall suppose that the *Vega* packet was made to evaporate fraudulently at Bombay. How then shall Mr Hodgson, Myers & Co. account for its immediate instantaneous reappearance at Howrah, Calcutta, in the presence of Mrs and Colonel Gordon and of our Colonel, if the said Colonel is so obviously immaculate that the Dons of S.P.R. felt bound to offer him public excuses. One thing is

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obvious : either Colonel Gordon or Mrs Gordon or Colonel Olcott was, one of them, at that time my confederate, or they, the gods of S.P.R., are making fools of themselves. Surely, as -----says, no sane man with sound reasoning, acquainted with the circumstances of the Vega case, or the broken plaster portrait case, or Hübbe Schleiden's letter, received [Page 234] on the German railway while I was in London, and so many other cases, shall ever dare to write himself down such an ass as to say that while I am a full-blown fraud, and all my phenomena tricks, that the Colonel is to be charged simply with ' credulity and inaccuracy in observation and inference.' ”

In a tone of bitter mockery, after some scornful language concerning the intelligence of the S.P.R. inquirers, she goes on to leave her “scientific friends” to assume that *Isis Unveiled*, and all the best articles in the *Theosophist*, as every letter from both Mahatmas, whether in English, French, Telegu, Sanscrit, or Hindi were written by Mme. H. P. Blavatsky. She is willing to have it believed, that for more than twenty years she has bamboozled the most intellectual men of the century in Russia, America, India, and especially in England. Why, *genuine* phenomena, when the author herself of the one thousand *bogus* manifestations on record before the world, is such a living incarnated phenomenon as to do all that and much more. . . .

“Why should I complain ? Has not Master left it to my choice to either follow the dictates of Lord Buddha, who enjoins us not to fail to feed *even a starving serpent*, scorning all fear lest it should turn round and bite the hand that feeds it; or to face Karma, which is sure to punish him who turns away from the sight of sin and misery, or fails to relieve the sinner or the sufferer. . . . Am I greater or in any way better than were St Germain and Cagliostro, Paracelsus, and so many other martyrs whose names appear in the Encyclopedia of the nineteenth century over the meritorious title of charlatans and impostors? It shall be the Karma of the blind and wicked judges, not mine.

“... I can do more good by remaining in the shadow, than by becoming prominent once more in the movement. Let me hide in unknown places, and write, write, write, [Page 235] and teach whoever wants to learn. Since Master forced me to live, let me live and die now in relative peace. It is evident He wants me still to work for the T.S., since He does not allow me to make a contract with ----- [mentioning a foreign publisher, who had offered her very favourable pecuniary terms] to write exclusively for his journal and paper. He would not permit me to sign such a contract last year in Paris when proposed, and does not sanction it now, for He says my time shall have to be occupied otherwise. Ah ! the cruel wicked injustice that has been done to me all round. Fancy the horrid calumny of the *C.C.M.* [*Christian College Magazine*], whose statement that I sought to defraud Mr Jacob Sassoon of Rs. 10,000 in that Poona business has been allowed to go uncontradicted even by ----- and -----, who know as well as they are sure of their own existence that this special charge, at any rate, is the most abominable lying calumny.

“Who of the public knows that after having worked for and given my life to the progress of the Society for over ten years, I have been forced to leave India a beggar depending on the bounty of the *Theosophist* (my own journal, founded and created with my own money) for my daily support. I made out to be a mercenary impostor, a fraud for the sake of money, when thousands of my own money earned by my Russian articles have been given away, when for five years I have abandoned the price of “*Isis*” and the income of the *Theosophist* to support the Society. . . . Pardon me for saying all this and showing myself to be so selfish, but it is a direct answer to the vile calumny, and it is but right that the Theosophists in London should know of it.”

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The assurances mentioned above that her time would be “otherwise occupied” in her German retreat than in writing stories and social articles for Russian magazines has been very fully vindicated. Within the last three months of 1885 she began to receive the occult “inspiration”, or whatever it may be called by people more or less acquainted with the circumstances of her higher life, [Page 236] required for the production of the long-promised book on “*The Secret Doctrine*”. This book was foreshadowed by notices in the *Theosophist* as far back as the beginning of February 1884. It was then proposed that the work should be “a new version of *Isis Unveiled*”, with a new arrangement of the matter, large and important additions, and copious notes and commentaries” ; and Mme. Blavatsky's intention in the first instance had been that it should be issued in monthly parts, beginning in March 1884, or, provided so early a date could not be managed, in June. Mme. Blavatsky's visit to Europe, however, in the spring of that year interfered with the undertaking, and in Europe the multifarious claims made on her time stood fatally in its way. Then, in the summer of 1884, the “Coulomb scandal” exploded, and, with all its exasperating consequences, operated to render it impossible for her to begin a task claiming steady and prolonged devotion, concentration of purpose, and something like tranquillity of mind.

“*The Secret Doctrine*” was still untouched in September 1885, when my wife and I saw her in Germany. We found her settled in an economical way, but in comfort and quietude, cheered just then by the companionship of her aunt, Mme. Fadeef, to whom she is warmly attached. She was naturally seething with indignation at the wrongs she had suffered at the hands of the S.P.R. committee, even though the cruel and calumnious report by Mr Hodgson, on which they professed to have based their conclusions, had not been finally perfected. On the whole, however, she seemed in better health and spirits than we expected, and some premonitory symptoms indicated that the preparation of “*The Secret Doctrine*” might shortly be set on foot.

A month or so after our return to London in October [Page 237] I received a note from Mme. Blavatsky, in the course of which she wrote: —

“I am very busy on *Secret D*. The thing at New York [meaning the circumstances under which “*Isis Unveiled*” was written] is repeated — only far clearer and better. I begin to think it shall vindicate us. Such pictures, panoramas, scenes, antediluvian dramas, with all that! Never saw or heard better.”

Early in December I received a letter from the Countess Wachtmeister, then staying on a visit with Mme. Blavatsky. The Countess is an English lady, though bearing a foreign title, herself gifted with clairvoyant faculties of a high order, lifting her entirely out of the reach of the clumsy scraps of materialistic evidence with which the denser-minded enemies of the Theosophic cause were so busily assailing her trusted and esteemed friend. She wrote: —

“*The Secret Doctrine* contains a translation of ----- [certain occult writings of which the world at large knows nothing]. The public at present will have but a faint idea of its real meaning, but as years roll by it will penetrate deeper into the hearts of men.”

And again, a fortnight later, she wrote: —

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“I consider it a great privilege to be allowed to witness the marvelous way in which this book is being written.”

A few days later some indiscreet or wantonly mischievous person sent Mme. Blavatsky a copy of Mr Hodgson's famous, or, as Theosophists think, infamous, report, published in the *Proceedings of the Psychical Research Society*. The Countess wrote: —

“We have had a terrible day, and the ----- [using a familiar name for Mme. Blavatsky] wanted to start off [Page 238] to London at once. I have kept her as quiet as I could, and now she has relieved her feelings in the enclosed letter.”

For a whole fortnight the tumult of Mme. Blavatsky's emotions rendered any further progress with her work impossible. Her volcanic temperament renders her in all emergencies a very bad exponent of her own case, whatever that may be. The letters, memoranda, and protests on which she wasted her energies during this miserable fortnight were few, if any, of a kind that would have helped a cold and unsympathetic public to understand the truth of things, and it is not worth while to resuscitate them here. I induced her to tone down one protest into a presentable shape for insertion in a pamphlet I issued in the latter part of January, and for the rest, few but her most intimate friends would correctly appreciate their fire and fury. Her language, when she is in fits of excitement, would lead a stranger to suppose her thirsting for revenge, beside herself with passion, ready to exact savage vengeance on her enemies if she had the power. It is only those who know her as intimately as half-a-dozen of her closest friends may, who are quite aware through all this effervescence of feeling that if her enemies were really put suddenly in her power, her rage against them would collapse like a broken soap-bubble.

Mr Hodgson's report was not actually published till December 1885 — having in the interim apparently undergone additions and amendments. This delay and subsequent preparation of the document on which the committee of inquiry based their decision was deeply resented by Mme. Blavatsky's friends as showing a disposition to make out a case against her. When at last it appeared, it occupied 200 pages of small print, and a [Page 239] minute criticism of its contents would naturally require a considerably greater space. To attempt that here, therefore, is out of the question. The report consists mainly of circumstantial evidence calculated to throw suspicion on the phenomena Mr Hodgson endeavored to investigate, and of a very elaborate comparison of various handwriting designed to show that the letters I had received in India during my acquaintance with Mme. Blavatsky — as I believed (and believe still) from two of the “Mahatmas” or secluded proficient of occult science spoken of in this volume as “the Masters” exercising spiritual authority over Mme. Blavatsky — were really written by her and one other person in the ordinary way and passed off on me for what I supposed them. I shall most conveniently indicate the character of the report by quoting the introductory passages of a pamphlet [*The Occult World Phenomena, and the Society for Psychical Research*; George Redway, 15 York Street, Covent Garden.]

The Report which has been addressed by Mr R. Hodgson to the Committee of the Psychical Research Society, 'appointed to investigate phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society,' is published for the first time in the December number of the *Proceedings* of that Society — six months after the meetings were held at which the Committee concerned announced its general adherence to the conclusions Mr Hodgson had reached. In a letter addressed to *Light* on the 12th of October, I protested

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against the action thus taken by the Psychical Research Society in publicly stigmatizing Mme. Blavatsky as having been guilty of ' a long-continued combination with other persons to produce, by ordinary means, a series of apparent marvels for the support of the Theosophic movement,' while holding back the documentary evidence on the strength of which their opinion had been formed.

"In a note to the present Report (page 276) Mr Hodgson [Page 240] says: " I have now in my hands numerous documents which are concerned with the experiences of Mr Hume and others in connection with Mine. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society. These documents, including the K.H. MSS. above referred to, did not reach me till August, and my examination of them, particularly of the K.H. MSS., has involved a considerable delay in the production of this Report.' In other words, Mr Hodgson has employed the time during which his Report has been improperly withheld in endeavoring to amend and strengthen it so as to render it better able to bear out the committee's hasty endorsement of the conclusions he reached before he obtained the evidence he now puts forward.

"But even if the committee had been in possession — which it was not — of the Report as it now stands, its action in promulgating the conclusions it announced on the 24th of June, would have been no less unwarrantable and premature. The committee has not at any stage of its proceedings behaved in accordance with the judicial character it has arrogated to itself. It appointed as its agent to inquire, in India, into the authenticity of statements relating to occurrences extending over several years — alleged to have taken place at various parts of India, and in which many persons, including natives of India and devotees of occult science in that country were mixed up — a gentleman of great, of perhaps too great, confidence in his own abilities, but at all events wholly unfamiliar with the characteristics of Indian life and the complicated play of feeling in connection with which the Theosophical movement has been developed in India during recent years.

" Nothing in his Report even as it now stands — amended with the protracted assistance of more experienced persons unfriendly to the Theosophical movement — suggests that even yet he has begun to understand the primary conditions of the mysteries he set himself to unravel. He has naively supposed that everyone in India visibly devoted to the work of the Theosophical Society might be assumed, on that account, desirous of securing his good opinion and of persuading him that the alleged phenomena were genuine. He shows himself to have been watching their demeanor [Page 241] and stray phrases to catch admissions that might be turned against the Theosophical case. He seems never to have suspected what any more experienced inquirer would have been aware of from the beginning, that the Theosophical movement, in so far as it has been concerned with making known to the world at large the existence in India of persons called Mahatmas — very far advanced in the comprehension of occult science — and of the philosophical views they hold, has been one which many of the native devotees of these Mahatmas and many among the most ardent disciples and students of their occult teaching, have regarded with profound irritation.

" The traditional attitude of mind in which Indian occultists regard their treasures of knowledge, is one in which devotion is largely tinged with jealousy of all who would endeavor to penetrate the secrecy in which these treasures have hitherto been shrouded. These have been regarded as only the rightful acquirement of persons passing through the usual ordeals and probations. The Theosophical movement in India, however, involved a breach of this secrecy. The old rules were infringed under an authority so great that occultists who found themselves entangled with the work could not but submit. But in many cases such submission has been no more than superficial. Anyone more intimately acquainted than the

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agent of the S.P.R. with the history and growth of the Theosophical Society would have been able to indicate many persons among its most faithful native members, whose fidelity was owing entirely to the Masters they served, and not to the idea on which they were employed — at all events not so far as it was connected with the demonstration of the fact that abnormal physical phenomena could be produced by Indian proficients in occult science.

" Now for such persons the notion that European outsiders, who had, as they conceived, so undeservedly been admitted to the inner arcana of Eastern occultism, were blundering into the belief that they had been deceived — that there was no such thing as Indian occultism, that the Theosophical movement was a sham and a delusion with which they would no more concern themselves — was enchanting in its attractions ; and the arrival in their [Page 242] midst of an exceedingly self-reliant young man from England attempting the investigation of occult mysteries by the methods of a Scotland Yard detective, and laid open by total unfamiliarity with the tone and temper of modern occultism to every sort of misapprehension, was naturally to them a source of intense satisfaction. Does the committee of the S.P.R. imagine that the native occultists of the Theosophical Society in India are writhing at this moment under the judgment it has passed? I am quite certain, on the contrary, that for the most part they are chuckling over it with delight. They may find the situation complicated as regards their relations with their Masters in so far as they have consciously contributed to the easy misdirection of Mr Hodgson's mind, but the ludicrous spectacle of himself which Mr Hodgson furnishes in his Report — where we see him catching up unfinished sentences and pointing out weak places in the evidence of some among the Indian chelas, against whom, if he had better understood the task before him, he ought to have been most on his guard — is, at all events, one which we can understand them to find amusing.

" I regard the committee of the S.P.R. — Messrs E. Gurney, F. VV. H. Myers, F. Podmore, H. Sidgwick, and J. H. Stack — much more to blame for presuming to pass judgment by the light of their own unaided reflections on the raw and misleading report supplied to them by Mr Hodgson, than he for his part is to blame, even for misunderstanding so lamentably the problems he set out naturally ill-qualified to investigate. It would have been easy for them to have called in any of several people in London, qualified to do so by long experience of the Theosophical movement, to report in their turn on the *prima facie* case, so made out against the authenticity of the Theosophical phenomena, before proceeding to pass judgment on the whole accusation in the hearing of the public at large. We have all heard of cases in which judges think it unnecessary to call on the defense ; but these have generally been cases in which the judges have decided against the theory of the prosecution. The committee of the S.P.R. furnish us with what is probably an unprecedented example of a judicial refusal [Page 243] to hear a defense on the ground that the *ex parte* statement of the prosecutor has been convincing by itself. The committee brooded, however, in secret over the Report of their agent, consulted no one in a position to open their eyes as to the erroneous method on which Mr Hodgson had gone to work, and concluded their but too independent investigation by denouncing as one of the most remarkable impostors in history — a lady held in the highest honour by a considerable body of persons, including old friends and relations of unblemished character, and who has undeniably given up station and comfort to struggle for long years in the service of the Theosophical cause amidst obloquy and privation.

" She is witnessed against chiefly for Mr Hodgson, as anyone who will read his Report will see, in spite of his affected indifference to their testimony, by two persons who endeavour to blacken her character by first exhibiting themselves as engaged in fraud and deception, and by then accusing her of having been base enough to make such people as themselves her confederates. These are the persons whom his

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Report shows Mr Hodgson to have made principal allies of his inquiry. It is on the strength of writings obtained from such persons that the committee of the S.P.R. chiefly proceeds in coming to the conclusion that Mine. Blavatsky is an impostor. And this course is pursued by a body of men who, in reference to psychical phenomena at large (which the designation of their Society would suggest that they are concerned with), decline all testimony, however apparently overwhelming, which comes from spiritualistic mediums tainted by receiving money for the display of their characteristics. I am not suggesting that they ought to be careless in accepting such testimony, but merely that they have violated the principles they profess — when the repression of unacceptable evidence is at stake — in a case in which, by their disregard, it was possible to frame an indictment against persons — whom I am not justified in assuming that they were prejudiced against from the first, but whom, at all events, they finished by condemning unheard.

" And going further than this, they have not hesitated [Page 244] to publish, with all the authority their proceedings can confer, a groundless and monstrous invention concerning Mme. Blavatsky, which Mr Hodgson puts forward at the conclusion of his report to prop up its obvious weakness as regards the whole hypothesis on which it rests. For it is evident that there is a powerful presumption against any theory that imputes conscious imposture and vulgar trickery to a person who, on the face of things, has devoted her life to a philanthropic idea, at the manifest sacrifice of all the considerations which generally supply motives of action to mankind. Mr Hodgson is alive to the necessity of furnishing Mme. Blavatsky with a motive as degraded as the conduct he has been taught by M. and Mme. Coulomb to believe her guilty of, and he triumphs over the difficulty by suggesting that she may be a Russian political agent, working in India to foster disloyalty to the British Government. It is nothing to Mr Hodgson that she has notoriously been doing the reverse; that she has frequently assured the natives orally, by writings, at public meetings, and in letters that can be produced, that with all its faults the British Government is the best available for India, and repeatedly from the point of view of one speaking *en connaissance de cause* she has declared that the Russian would be immeasurably worse. It is nothing to Mr Hodgson that her life has been passed *coram populo* to an almost ludicrous extent ever since she has been in India, that her whole energies and work have been employed on the Theosophic cause, or that the Government of India, after looking into the matter with the help of its police when she first came to the country, soon read the riddle aright, and abandoned all suspicion of her motives. Mr Hodgson is careless of the fact that everyone who has known her for any length of time laughs at the absurdity of his hypothesis. He has obtained from his guide and counsellor — Mme. Coulomb — a fragment of Mme. Blavatsky's handwriting, picked up, it would seem, some years ago, and cherished for any use that might ultimately be made of it — which refers to Russian politics, and reads like part of an argument in favor of the Russian advance in Central [Page 245] Asia. This is enough for the Psychical Researcher, and the text of this document appears in his Report in support of his scandalous insinuation against Mme. Blavatsky's integrity. The simple explanation of the paper is, that it is evidently a discarded fragment from a long translation of Colonel Grodekoffs Travels in Central Asia (or whatever title the series bore) which Mme. Blavatsky made at my request for the *Pioneer* (the Indian Government organ), of which I was at that time editor. I will not delay this pamphlet to write to India and get the dates at which the Grodekoff series of articles appeared in the *Pioneer*. They ran for some weeks, and must have appeared in one of the latter years of the last decade, or possibly in 1880. By applying to the *Pioneer* printers, Mr Hodgson could perhaps obtain, if the MS. of this translation has been preserved, several hundred pages of Mme. Blavatsky's writing, blazing with sentiments of the most ardent Anglophobia. It is most likely, as I say, that the pilfered slip of which he is so proud, was some rejected page from that translation; unless, indeed, which would be more amusing still, it should happen to have fallen from some other Russian translations which Mme. Blavatsky, to my certain knowledge, once made for the Indian Foreign Office during one of her visits to Simla, when she made the acquaintance of some of the officials in that department, and was

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employed to do some work in its service.

” I venture to think that if Mme. Blavatsky had not been known to be too ill-supplied with money to claim redress at the costly bar of British justice — if she had not been steeped to the lips in the flavor, so ungrateful to British law courts, of Psychic mystery, the committee of the S.P.R. would hardly have thought it well to accuse her, in a published document, of infamous conduct which, if she were really guilty of it, would render her a public foe in the land of her adoption and an object of scorn to honorable men — at the flippant suggestion of their private agent in desperate need of an explanation for conclusions which no amount of pedantically ordered circumstances could render, without it, otherwise than incredible.” [Page 246]

Mme. Blavatsky contributed to this pamphlet a Protest in her own name, which ran as follows:—

“The 'Society for Psychical Research' have now published the Report made to one of their Committees by Mr Hodgson, the agent sent out to India to investigate the character of certain phenomena, described as having taken place at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in India and elsewhere, and with the production of some of which I have been directly or indirectly concerned. This Report imputes to me a conspiracy with the Coulombs and several Hindus to impose on the credulity of various persons around me by fraudulent devices, and declares to be genuine, a series of letters alleged to be written by me to Mme. Coulomb in connection with the supposed conspiracy, which letters I have already myself declared to be in large part fabrications. Strange to say, from the time the investigation was begun, fourteen months ago, and to this day, when I am declared guilty by my self-instituted judges, I was never permitted to see those incriminating letters. I draw the attention of every fair-minded and *honorable Englishman* to this fact.

“Without at present going into a minute examination of the errors, inconsistencies, and bad reasoning of this Report, I wish to make as publicly as possible my indignant and emphatic protest against the gross aspersions thus put upon me by the Committee of the Psychic Research Society at the instigation of the single, incompetent, and unfair inquirer whose conclusions they have accepted. There is no charge against me in the whole of the present Report that could stand the test of an impartial inquiry on the spot, where my own explanations could be checked by the examination of witnesses. They have been developed in Mr Hodgson's own mind, and kept back from my friends and colleagues while he remained at Madras abusing the hospitality and unrestrained assistance in his inquiries supplied to him at the headquarters of the Society at Adyar, where he took up the attitude of a friend, though he now represents [Page 247] the persons with whom he thus associated — as cheats and liars. These charges are now brought forward supported by the one-sided evidence collected by him, and when the time has gone by at which even he could be confronted with antagonistic evidence and with arguments which his very limited knowledge of the subject he attempted to deal with do not supply him. Mr Hodgson having thus constituted himself prosecutor and advocate in the first instance, and having dispensed with a defense in the complicated transactions he was investigating, finds me guilty of all the offences he has imputed to me in his capacity as judge, and declares that I am proved to be an arch-impostor.

” The Committee of the S.P.R. have not hesitated to accept the general substance of the

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judgment which Mr Hodgson thus pronounces, and have insulted me publicly by giving their opinion in favor of their agent's conclusions — an opinion which rests wholly and solely on the Report of their single deputy.

" Wherever the principles of fairness and honorable care for the reputation of slandered persons may be understood, I think the conduct of the Committee will be regarded with some feeling resembling the profound indignation of which I am sensible. That Mr Hodgson's elaborate but misdirected inquiries, his affected precision, which spends infinite patience over trifles and is blind to facts of importance, his contradictory reasoning and his manifold incapacity to deal with such problems as those he endeavored to solve, will be exposed by other writers in due course — I make no doubt. Many friends who know me better than the Committee of the S.P.R. will remain unaffected by the opinions of that body, and in their hands I must leave my much-abused reputation. But one passage in this monstrous Report I must, at all events, answer in my own name.

" Plainly alive to the comprehensive absurdity of his own conclusions about me, as long as they remained totally unsupported by any theory of a motive which could account for my life-long devotion to my Theosophical work at the sacrifice of my natural place in society in my own country, Mr Hodgson has been base [Page 248] enough to concoct the assumption that I am a Russian political agent, inventing a sham religious movement for the sake of undermining the British Government in India! Availing himself, to give color to this hypothesis, of an old bit of my writing, apparently supplied to him by Mme. Coulomb, but which he did not know to be, as it was, *a fragment of an old translation* I made for the *Pioneer*, from some Russian travels in Central Asia, Mr Hodgson has promulgated this theory about me in the Report, which the gentlemen of the S.P.R. have not been ashamed to publish. Seeing that I was naturalized nearly eight years ago a citizen of the United States, which led to my losing every right to my pension of 5000 roubles yearly as the widow of a high official in Russia; that my voice has been invariably raised in India to answer all native friends that bad as I think the English Government in some respects — by reason of its unsympathetic character — the Russian would be a thousand times worse; that I wrote letters to that effect to Indian friends before I left America on my way to India, in 1879; that everyone familiar with my pursuits and habits and very undisguised life in India, is aware that I have no taste for or affinity with politics whatever, but an intense dislike to them; that the Government of India, which suspected me as a spy because I was a Russian when I first went to India, soon abandoned its needless *espionage*, and has never, to my knowledge, had the smallest inclination to suspect me since — the Russian spy theory about me which Mr Hodgson has thus resuscitated from the grave, where it had been buried with ridicule for years, will merely help to render his extravagant conclusions about me more stupid even than they would have been otherwise in the estimation of my friends and of all who really know me. But looking upon the character of a spy with the disgust which only a Russian who is *not* one can feel, I am impelled irresistibly to repudiate Mr Hodgson's groundless and infamous calumny with a concentration of the general contempt his method of procedure in this inquiry seems to me to merit, and to be equally deserved by the Committee of the Society he has served. They have shown themselves, [Page 249] by their wholesale adoption of his blunders, a group of persons less fitted to explore the mysteries of psychic phenomena than I should have thought — in the present day, after all that has been written and published on the subject of late years — could have been found among educated men in England.

" Mr Hodgson knows, and the committee doubtless share his knowledge, that he is safe from

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actions for libel at my hands, because I have no money to conduct costly proceedings (having given all I ever had to the cause I serve), and also because my vindication would involve the examination into psychic mysteries which cannot be dealt fairly with in a court of law; and again, because there are questions which I am solemnly pledged never to answer, but which a legal investigation of these slanders would inevitably bring to the front, while my silence and refusal to answer certain queries would be misconstrued into 'contempt of court.' This condition of things explains the shameless attack that has been made upon an almost defenseless woman, and the inaction in face of it to which I am so cruelly condemned."

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

"Jan. 14, 1886."

I am glad to be permitted to insert here the following letter from the Countess Wachtmeister, summing up the general impressions of her long visit to Mme. Blavatsky at Würzburg:—

" DEAR MR SINNETT,—

Last autumn, having left Sweden to spend the winter in a more congenial climate, and hearing that Madame Blavatsky was suffering, ill and lonely at Würzburg, I offered to spend some time with her, and do what I could to render her position more comfortable, and to cheer her in her solitude. My acquaintance with H. P. Blavatsky was a very slight one. I had met her casually in London and Paris, but had no real knowledge or experience in regard to herself or her character. I had been told a great deal against her, and [Page 250] I can honestly say that I was prejudiced in her disfavour, and it was only a sense of duty and gratitude (such as all true students of theosophy should feel towards the founder of a society, which, notwithstanding all its drawbacks, has been of great benefit and service to numbers of individuals), which caused me to take upon myself the task of alleviating her troubles and sorrows to the best of my ability.

"Having heard the absurd rumors circulating against her, and by which she was accused of practicing black magic, fraud and deception, I was on my guard, and went to her in a calm and tranquil frame of mind, determined to accept nothing of an occult character and coming from her without sufficient proof; to make myself positive, to keep my eyes open, and to be just and true in my conclusions. Common sense would not permit me to believe in her guilt without proof, but if that proof had been furnished, my sense of honor would have made it impossible for me to remain in a society, the founder of which committed cheating and trickery, therefore my frame of mind was bent on investigation, and I was anxious to find out the *truth*.

" I have now spent a few months with Madame Blavatsky. I have shared her room, and been with her morning, noon, and night. I have had access to all her boxes and drawers, have read the letters which she received and those which she wrote, and I now openly and honestly declare that I am ashamed of myself for having ever suspected her, for I believe her to be an honest and true woman, faithful to death to her Masters and to the cause for which she has sacrificed position, fortune, and health. There is no doubt in my mind that she made these sacrifices, for I have seen the proofs of them, some of which consisted of documents whose genuineness is above all suspicion.

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” From a worldly point of view Madame Blavatsky is an unhappy woman, slandered, doubted, and abused by many; but looked at from a higher point of view, she has extraordinary gifts, and no amount of vilification can deprive her of the privileges which she enjoys, and which consist in a knowledge of many things that are known [Page 251] only to a few mortals, and in a personal intercourse with certain Eastern adepts.

” On account of the extensive knowledge which she possesses and which extends far into the invisible part of nature, it is very much to be regretted that all her troubles and trials prevent her giving to the world a great deal of information which she would be willing to impart if she were permitted to remain undisturbed and in peace. Even the great work in which she is now engaged, *The Secret Doctrine*, has been greatly impeded by all the persecutions, offensive letters, and other petty annoyances to which she has been subjected this winter; for it should be remembered that H. P. Blavatsky is not herself a full-grown adept, nor does she claim to be one; and that, therefore, in spite of all her knowledge, she is as painfully sensitive to insult and suspicion as any lady of refinement in her position could be expected to be.

“*The Secret Doctrine* will be indeed a great and grand work. I have had the privilege of watching its progress, of reading the manuscripts, and of witnessing the occult way in which she derived her information. I have latterly heard among people who style themselves 'Theosophists', expressions which surprised and pained me. Some such persons said that 'if it were proven that the Mahatmas did not exist, it would not matter,' that theosophy was nevertheless a truth, etc., etc. Such and similar statements have come into circulation in Germany, England, and America; but to my understanding they are very erroneous, for, in the first place, if there were no Mahatmas or Adepts — that is to say, persons who have progressed so far in the scale of human evolution, as to be able to unite their personality with the sixth principle of the universe (the universal Christ), then the teachings of that system which has been called 'Theosophy,' would be false; because there would be a break in the scale of progression, which would be more difficult to be accounted for than the absence of the 'missing link' of Darwin. But if these persons refer merely to those Adepts who are said to have been active in the foundation of the 'Theosophical Society,' they seem to [Page 252] forget that without these Adepts we would never have had that society, nor would *Isis Unveiled*, the *Esoteric Buddhism*, the *Light on the Path*, the *Theosophist*, and other valuable theosophical publications ever have been written; and if in the future we should shut ourselves out from the influence of the Mahatmas and be left entirely to our own resources, we should soon become lost in a labyrinth of metaphysical speculation. It must be left to science and speculative philosophy to confine themselves to theories and to the obtaining of such information as is contained in books. Theosophy goes farther, and acquires knowledge by direct interior perception. The study of theosophy means, therefore, *practical development*, and to attain this development a guide is necessary who knows that which he teaches, and who must have attained himself that state by the process of *spiritual regeneration*.

“After all that has been said in these 'Memoirs' about the occult phenomena taking place in the presence of Madame Blavatsky, and how such phenomena have been a part and parcel of her life, occurring at all times both with and without her knowledge, I need only add that during my stay with her, I have frequently witnessed such genuine phenomena. Here, as in every other department of life, the main point is to learn to discriminate properly and to estimate everything at its true value. —

Yours sincerely,

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“ CONSTANCE WACHTMEISTER, F.T.S.”

This letter has already been printed in an American newspaper devoted to Theosophy, where it appears with the following remarks appended to it by Dr Franz Hartmann:—

“ KEMPTEN, BAVARIA, May 10, 1886 —

I have read the above statement written by the Countess Wachtmeister, and I fully agree with every sentence contained therein. I myself, like my friend the Countess, have passed through a state of incredulity and doubt before I arrived at knowledge. I have often been perplexed, and had to [Page 253] grope in the dark, but I can now say without any hesitation, sincerely and truthfully, that those who desire an explanation of the great commotion that has taken place within the sphere of the ' Theosophical Society' will have to look for it deeper than in any desire of deception on the part of Madame Blavatsky. The accusations of Mr Hodgson and others are only based upon external appearances and upon superficial reasoning. To recognize, then, the truth requires not only sharpness and wit, but the power of *intuition*, which a scientist who reasons merely from the plane of illusions cannot be expected to possess, and which he would not be permitted to use, even if he possessed it, because by doing so he would act in contravention to the laws upon which material science is based. This power of *intuition* is ' the cornerstone,' which the (material) builders have rejected so often, and which they will continue to reject. It is the power whose possession is required to arrive at *spiritual knowledge*, which is the highest of all sciences, and its development is the first law on which progress in *practical occultism* depends. Let those who desire to arrive at the truth develop this power and make it alive in their hearts, and they will obtain a guide and a *Master* whose voice they will know and whose words they will not doubt, and whose hand will lead them out of the illusions of the senses and out of the meshes of theoretical speculation into the bright sunlight of the eternal truth. Let the members of the Theosophical Society stop and think before they spit on the way that has led them up higher and brought them nearer to the God that is slumbering in the paradise of their souls, and let us all be thankful to those *Children of Light* who have awakened us from our sleep and called our attention to the fact that the morning is dawning. Let us listen to their teachings, grasp their doctrines with our understanding, and test them upon the touchstone of reason, and as we assimilate them we will ourselves grow stronger and greater. When the *Paraclete* arrives he will be attracted to those temples on whose altars he finds his own fire burning; but the unfaithful, the sceptic, and the distorter of the truth will see nothing but the smoke that rises [Page 254] from his own brain. The owl loves the darkness, but the eagle mounts towards the sun.”

The mental suffering Mme. Blavatsky went through while the insults of the S.P.R. Report were still recent outrages, need not be displayed in too minute detail to unsympathetic observation, and all the more is it unnecessary here to go step by step over the stories to Mme. Blavatsky's prejudice told to Mr Hodgson by the Coulobms and absurdly accepted as evidence by the committee of the S.P.R. Certainly the appearance of these Memoirs has been precipitated by the attack on Mme. Blavatsky instituted by the S.P.R. I should have preferred to have kept them back until, by the accumulation of more information, the story of her life could have been told more completely. But even as that story is here told, I look forward with very great confidence to its recognition by all thoughtful readers as an indirect refutation, more effective than any wrangling over the circumstances which clouded Mr Hodgson's understanding at Adyar, of the monstrous and unprincipled assertion put forward by the Psychic Research Committee that she is an “impostor”. The Society which that committee represents is probably not destined to a very prolonged existence. It rose like a rocket on a brilliant stream of fire that might have carried it high into

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the heavens, but a misdirection of its course turned it back to earth almost instantly, and the force which should have borne it aloft now buries its head more deeply in the sand. But the literary fruits of Mme. Blavatsky's life will long survive the recollection which this generation will retain, of the efforts made to disparage the interest of those physical wonders she has so often been concerned in working and which really constitute the least important circumstances of her career. For the tales of wonder with which Mme. [Page 255] Blavatsky has thus been associated, though they have filled this volume so largely, are really no more than the foam on the surface of the current that has been set flowing through human thought, in our time, under her auspices.

NOTE FOR THE PRESENT EDITION

THIS imperfect biography was originally published in 1886, several years before Mme. Blavatsky's laborious life came to an end. The Countess Wachtmeister, who spent a great deal of time with her during her stay at Wurzburg and afterwards at Ostend has left an interesting record relating to this period. The Theosophical Society was then in a state of obscurity, the consequence of the attack described in the preceding pages; but Mme. Blavatsky continued to work steadily at her great book, *The Secret Doctrine*, and in the year 1887, at the request of many friends, came to London, staying for a time at Norwood, and afterwards at 17 Lansdowne Road, Notting Hill. Here she soon found herself almost overwhelmed by crowds of visitors, and it was at this period that Mrs Besant made her acquaintance. Eventually she moved to a house in the Avenue Road, St John's Wood, and there she used to be present at large meetings of the "Blavatsky Lodge" of the Theosophical Society, founded in her honor soon after her arrival in London. She died there on the 8th of May 1891, surrounded by loving friends. The end came rather suddenly as she was sitting in a chair by her bedside. Her doctor had [Page 256] left her that morning under the impression that she was not any longer in immediate danger.

Those who are desirous of learning more about the later years of her life will find abundant information in the Countess Wachtmeister's book entitled *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, and in a collection of papers by many of her friends and pupils, put together shortly after her passing. [In Memory of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. By some of her pupils. With portrait. Theosophical Publishing Society.]