

Inauguration of the European Headquarters

by Besant, Keatley, Mead, Sinnett and Wolf

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At Headquarters

Theosophical Society (Blavatsky Lodge)

Opening of the New Lecture Hall, 19, Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, N.W.

Thursday, July 3rd 1890

Mrs Besant in the Chair.

[Page 3] ON the above date the new meeting hall of the Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society was inaugurated with a crowded meeting. The chair was taken by the President of the Lodge, Mrs. Besant, at whose side on the platform sat Madame Blavatsky, to whose noble example and unceasing, self-denying labour these Headquarters of the Society in Europe owe their existence. Every seat, every inch of standing room, was occupied, and a number of late arrivals found themselves compelled to stand outside and follow the proceedings as best they could through the door and windows.

The new hall will seat some 300 people with comfort, and is appropriately hung with curtains of Oriental silk, while the panels of the walls and ceiling have been decorated with symbolical paintings by one of the Fellows of the Lodge, Mr. Machell, to whom the thanks of all Theosophists are due for his good work.

MRS. BESANT:

Friends, we have met here this evening, as all of you well know, in order to open this new hall as the regular place of meeting of the Blavatsky Lodge, in immediate connection with the European headquarters of the Theosophical Society, which will very soon be ready for occupation. The hall in which we are met tonight has been raised, as I dare say many of you will be aware, by the subscriptions of Theosophists in England and in Europe. We trust that it will gradually become widely known as a centre for Theosophical work of every description, and we most earnestly hope that all Theosophists will feel that in this centre they [Page 4] have a real home, that they can come here and be sure of a welcome; whether they come here for the mere companionship of their brothers and sisters in belief, or whether they come for advice in difficulty, or for instruction in the study in which all of us are interested. Tonight our special work will be to listen to certain speeches in celebration of this first opening of our hall, and it will be my duty to call upon the speakers one by one to address you. The first whom I shall have the pleasure of asking to speak in our new hall is a Theosophist whose name is known all over the world, Mr. Sinnett — (cheers) — whose books, I believe, have been to very many the gateway of Theosophy. Then I am glad to tell you that we have present amongst us visitors from the Continent and from America. We

have a visitor from the Lodge of Sweden, and another from the Belgian Lodge, another from America, another from Spain, and we shall listen to all of these telling us something of Theosophical work, each in his or her own land. Then we welcome back again amongst us tonight one who is familiar to many of you, Bertram Keightley — (loud cheers) — from his work in America. For some months past he has been in that country spreading Theosophy with the greatest success, and he will tell us, to whom he has returned home, something of his American experiences. At the close of those speeches I shall venture myself to trouble you with a few words as a conclusion to the meeting, contenting myself now with simply declaring this hall open for Theosophical work, and with expressing a wish that it may prove a true centre of brotherhood, a true centre of study and therefore of progress, that many of the men and women coming to this hall may learn a truth which otherwise might have been hidden from them, and learn to enter on that path of upward progress which it is the one aim of Theosophy to open to every child of man. I now call on Mr. Sinnett to address the meeting.

MR. SINNETT:

Madame Blavatsky, ladies and gentlemen, — The great interest of what we have to do this evening, of seeing this hall inaugurated, turns upon something very much larger than the immediate work we have in hand, because this is the first building which has been expressly erected — the first in Europe, at all events — for the purpose of spreading Theosophical teaching — the knowledge of that great doctrine which we call esoteric wisdom. It is perfectly certain that that great knowledge is destined in the future to be the religion of the world. When we say that, we do not speak merely with a hopeful air concerning the work on which we are ourselves engaged, the future of the Theosophical Society, or anything of that kind. But we speak from the depths of the knowledge concerning the progress of nature which we have derived from Theosophic study; and it is not a mere conjecture, it is not a mere hope or aspiration, it is just as certain as the rising of tomorrow's sun that the [Page 5] knowledge which we in this room are at present the only people in London engaged in studying in this way, will ultimately become, as I say, the grand pervading influence all through the western world, as it has been in past ages all through the eastern. Now, really that gives a very great depth of solemnity to the occasion that we are concerned in celebrating this evening. This Society is not a "sect", as it has a hundred times been said; it is simply a nucleus, around which we hope may develop that knowledge which must come to the world in progress of its cyclical evolution, and when I say that, I know I am probably addressing many people to whom a little further elucidation of this idea may be convenient. We have all read a good deal concerning the evolution of races and the progress of humanity according to the great cycles which are worked out in the way described in the Theosophical literature with which you are all familiar. But sometimes people are apt too much to regard that racial progress as a sort of automatic undertaking which goes on like the works of a clock, quite irrespective of the human activity concerned with it. Now, it is true in one sense that that great evolution which is destined to come on to humanity in the future, is something which is practically inevitable, practically certain, but it is certain because it is certain that there will always be a sufficient body of people engaged in the practical effort to advance this knowledge and to promote this study. When we talk of the development first of all of our own fifth race and afterwards of that great perfected, relatively perfected, humanity of the sixth race, which at some very distant time will inhabit the earth; we often talk of it as coming on by virtue of laws as unimpassioned as those which govern the movements of the planets; but that really is not the case. The reason why it is perfectly certain the sixth race will be in possession in the fullest measure of the esoteric knowledge with which we are concerned is because it is first of all certain that vast numbers of people during the progress of these races will be working at the task of spreading these ideas, of comprehending them themselves and welding them to the progress of humanity. Now, there we have, as I say, a really solemn thought to deal with in

connection with this evening's work. A time will come when students of advancing knowledge will look back to its earliest beginnings, and I venture to say with absolute confidence that in a not very remote future this evening's work will be spoken of as a little point, a little seed out of which a stupendous harvest will then have been developed. Well, over and above that, we have to remember that during the progress of that development any of the persons concerned with the humanity of our own period have it within their power to anticipate the development I am speaking of, and to rise by abnormal processes of effort and by extraordinary achievements of [Page 6] their own into that condition which will ultimately be attained by the great bulk of humanity then surviving on earth in the sixth race. Now, equally as far as the progress of that sort of individual and relatively sporadic development is concerned, the great movement which our undertaking this evening signalizes in a very peculiar way has been providing for that progress. Until the Theosophical movement began, the occult progress, which it was open to individuals in this world to achieve, was still a possibility for all, but a possibility of which relatively very few had heard. It was inevitable in an earlier condition of humanity that only to a very few should the influence of this possibility be conveyed, because only in regard to a very few was it at all possible to conceive that their inherent qualities would have enabled them to take advantage of those opportunities. But, as we all know, the progress of humanity within a comparatively recent period has been such as to render it necessary, in the estimation of those who really direct this great undertaking, that a larger opportunity shall be afforded to all mankind, than hitherto, to enter on that path with which all Theosophic students are familiar. Now, the work of the Theosophical Society has been to open the door widely to the path of occult progress. That door formerly was a very straight and difficult gateway, and very few people, relatively, knew of its existence. Now the Theosophical Society was distinctly designed to set wide open that door to enable vast numbers of people to realize what were the possibilities lying before them, and in that way to provide opportunities for all mankind, which could not but be associated with a certain risk for many of mankind, but in regard to which it was absolutely necessary that some more liberal treatment should be conveyed to the generation with which we are concerned. Now, there you see we really have before us two great movements of humanity that we are dealing with here. The first that I spoke of is greatly the more important in its larger aspects; the second is perhaps one which will interest many persons actually in this room for the moment more intensely, because it concerns their own future; but I will not speak so very much of that now, though I thought it was necessary to allude to it in dealing with the purposes to which this building was dedicated. I want to dwell more on the larger aspects of this undertaking, and to get people to realize what it is we are concerned with when we talk about the progress of Theosophy. The point I want particularly to emphasize is that this progress of humanity is essentially welded with and is a part of, and a consequence of what we call the progress of Theosophy. Now, I am not venturing to say, and I do not want you to understand me as saying, that the progress of humanity depends upon the progress of this particular society we have [Page 7] formed and belong to. Supposing this society to cease to exist and fail altogether in its purposes, other energies will be directed to the great end in view; other people will be concerned with the propagation of this great teaching; but it is quite certain that somebody must do it, and therein lies the peculiar combination of certainty with individual free will which runs so much into this great question, the spiritual evolution of mankind. No one person is appointed specifically to carry out the purposes of nature; but anyone who realizes that he has it within him to subserve the purposes of nature may enlist, as it were, in that undertaking and become one of the great forces, bringing about the highest evolution of mankind in the remote future. Now there, although the idea is to a certain extent overwhelming in some ways, and, if it were dealt with except in a spirit, as it were, of the most intense reverence, might seem overweaning on our part, the truth of the matter is, it does lie in our hands at present, and depends on whether or not we wisely carry out the task on which we have entered, whether we shall in future be regarded as the people who have been the pioneers in carrying out the purpose of Nature. It is not a question of working on this or that idea; it is not a question of our society helping forward a movement which may be beneficial to mankind in a tentative way, — it is, in regard to this matter of spreading Theosophical truth, a question whether we shall or shall

not make ourselves a part of the great natural force which is perfecting the government of the world and guiding the evolution of mankind. Up to a certain point, the evolution of mankind is really an automatic process. Up to a certain point, it follows laws which no one individual concerned with their development has very much to say to. Up to the development through the lower kingdoms of nature, up through the animal kingdom into the lower races of mankind, the process is, as it were, automatic. It is due to an inevitable force which no one individual is concerned with; but when mankind attains through the operation of these forces to that position in nature in which the full characteristics of humanity are developed, the rest of the progress of the race, just as much as the rest of individual progress, depends entirely upon the exertions of the race, as it does, in regard to the individual case, on the exertions of the individual. Those exertions it is our privilege to begin in this age of the world. It is a beginning very remote from what will be its culmination, for we are launched on an undertaking the magnitude of which is dazzling to the imagination when we allow ourselves logically to reason out the inevitable conclusions — inevitable, I say, because even supposing we failed in the purposes we have in view, supposing we do not unite this undertaking we are engaged in this evening with the great and continuous efforts which will be made — nevertheless, after all, this is the [Page 8] first great undertaking of the kind that has been made in Europe, and must inevitably be looked back upon in the future as the beginning of the great Theosophical development of mankind. That text is one which is a very profound and interesting thought on which one might enlarge in a great variety of ways, in many more ways than I shall have time to trouble you with this evening. But there is one ramification of the idea, one ramification of the thought, on which I think it is very well worth while, at this most important and interesting moment, to say a few words. The question that we have to deal with as Theosophical pioneers is this: Will the great evolution, the great spiritual evolution which must come on, which we are concerned with and beginning to set on foot, will that be worked out in hostility to, or in conjunction with, the religions that already exist in the world. Now, I don't think anyone, from the mere ordinary point of view, and without the foresight that can only be commanded by extraordinary faculties — I do not think any ordinary person can definitely solve that problem as yet. It may be, it is clearly possible, that this great spiritual evolution, which is inevitable, may follow one of two lines; it may be that the churches representing the creeds that they are concerned with at present, will so obstinately cling to their own narrower view of life and nature, and will be so heavily weighted by their own encumbrances of worldly interest and so forth, that they will never weld themselves with the advance of Theosophic thought until a time comes when Theosophic thought has got so far beyond them that it will be hopeless for them to overtake it. It may be that the intellect of humanity will be cultivated to appreciate esoteric teaching in that degree outside the churches — that the churches will never any more have anything serious to say to the matter, that they will gradually fade and wither, and that somehow or another the world will gradually be inspired with a comprehension of the higher laws which govern spiritual evolution, and will take, as it were, their religion in the abstract and work with it in the abstract, conveying to the less instructed and less capable of the community some vague and broad principles of ethics and morality which will suffice, as it were, as rules of conduct. This is one line along which evolution may possibly proceed, but there is another which, in some respects, we ought to hope for more, and that other line will be one according to which the churches themselves will gradually be purified and inspired with this teaching which we are now endeavouring to set on foot. Of course it is an absolute commonplace of Theosophical teaching and speaking to say that all the great religions of the world are identical at their foundations, and that is equivalent to saying that it is possible, by paring away their errors, misconceptions, and so forth, to reduce any one of them to a perfect statement, a perfect presentation of [Page 9] esoteric truth. Now, in the religion we are concerned with in Europe, there has been such a heavy incrustation of error, such an encumbrance of misconception, such a burden put upon it by the worldly influences that have governed its progress, that it is rather difficult to see how it can entirely cleanse itself from all that. But I do not myself think it is impossible to look forward to such a process, and I think while it is in any way to be hoped for that the churches will reform themselves from the interior by a true assimilation of Theosophical teaching, that this is the end toward

which we ought to strive most ardently, and the thing we ought to wish for most intensely. As we know, a very admirable beginning in that direction was set on foot not very long ago by a clergyman who has endeavoured to form a society specially concerned with what he calls the Christian presentation of esoteric or Theosophic teaching. Well, whether such efforts as that are destined to have a great result or not, we cannot tell, but I do think we can discern quite independently and outside the area of such work as I have described, outside the feeling of people who can recognise what Theosophic teaching is and want to weld it with their own ministrations, I think we can quite discern that there are tendencies of thought, and even among people who do not recognise themselves as Theosophists at all, which are distinctly working for that great end, and will prepare men's minds to receive Theosophical teaching. I need not mention names, but everyone must be familiar with some writing or other among persons representing the thought of the clergy in which we do discern distinctly the budding of really Theosophical thinking; and we find all through the literature of our own age, echoed back to us from very many unexpected places, the sound of our own teaching, the influence of esoteric doctrines, and we cannot but hope that our work is destined in that way to graft itself upon existing forms of thought and existing pious aspirations, and to weld itself with the religion of the country in which we stand, and to produce at some distant future a Christianity which shall truly be worthy of the esoteric teaching with which it is perfectly possible that existing forms may be blended. I must not go on tonight very long, because we have many speakers who have much that is interesting to say in connection with the growth and development of the society here and elsewhere; and what I have had to say has had nothing to do with technical matters, nothing to do with our own organization here or elsewhere; but I do think that it is worth while for us, at the outset of such an undertaking as we are concerned with, to take a very broad and abstract view of the whole position, and to realize the importance of what we are doing. We are not concerned with the propagation of anything which could possibly be misrepresented as a new fad, or a new craze or sect. Let [Page 10] us keep ourselves on the abstract plane of influence as much as possible; let us not identify ourselves with any one specific movement or effort of thought, or any one specific phase of evolution, or one specific group of philanthropic ideas. Let us recognise what we have to do. The real task that is set before us is to purify the intellectual conceptions of the world in regard to the laws which govern the spiritual progress of mankind. If we achieve any important results in so gigantic an undertaking, I think we may be abundantly satisfied, and I have always myself felt so overwhelmed with the magnitude of that effort, that, individually, I find it quite a sufficient task to do what I have been able to do towards elucidating and clearing the misconceptions that prevail in the world in regard to spiritual evolution, in regard to those things which are so vaguely and mistily spoken of by people who deal only with religious emotions and are concerned almost exclusively with the idea of spiritual growth and not at all with the accurate perception of the causes which are guiding that growth and which have to be worked with, and understood, in order that that growth may prosper and lead up to the largest result that can be attained. With that very general, broad, and abstract statement of the case I shall leave the subject itself. I will only say in conclusion, how very heartily and with what very great pleasure I stand here this evening on an occasion of so much importance, beside Madame Blavatsky, with whom I have been so closely associated in all I have endeavoured to do in connection with Theosophical work for these last eleven years. It was as far back as 1879 when I first had the pleasure of knowing her, and from that time to this the influence she has brought into my life has been one of ever-growing and increasing force, one which can never come to an end. I only wish for all of you that the advantage you have gained in knowing her may lead to as much interior contentment with its results as has ensued in my own case; and I do not think that on an occasion of this kind, in a room the existence of which is due to her influence and her energy, I should like to put on the top of that good wish anything of lesser importance, anything which is less calculated to move my own feelings, and, I hope, evoke a response from yours. (Cheers.)

MRS. BESANT:

I have now the pleasure of calling one of our members on the other side of the Atlantic, a visitor from America, from the City of Philadelphia. I call on Mrs. Wolf to address the meeting.

MRS. WOLF:

I have been asked to say something about Theosophy in America. I can only tell you that we have a mixture of educated and uneducated; the usual number of cranks who do not think anything especially, and come in only to set the whole society by the ears, by talking obsession and kindred subjects; and a fair proportion of well-balanced people, with clear-cut ideas, who know what they think. The latter class is a great blessing. [Page 11] A great many come in through curiosity, believing all kinds of unbelievable things. They think there is some marvellous revelation to be made upon the initiatory visit, and they sit in breathless expectation, as if they were at a dark *séance*. Well ! the miracle does not come to pass, and eventually they drop out. What has most forcibly impressed me, during my active association with the Theosophical Society in America, is the difficulty of making people understand the purposes of the Theosophical Society, and the practical ethics of the Theosophic life. This is uphill work; for the general clamour is for phenomena, and for talk about astral experiences; and people are blinded to the practical truths of Theosophy by the desire for uncommon personal powers, and vainly imagine they will get them by unreasonable mummery. They think they are Theosophists, because they encourage these feelings, instead of studying to purify their passions, and so escape from their clouds of ignorance. As I have said, they are usually attracted into the society through curiosity; and too often they really know no life beyond the plane of their own sensations. They want to be taught Theosophy, but they want to *dream* it, and not *live* it. These are the people who, quite unintentionally, hurt Theosophy in the sight of the world. And I regret to say this applies mostly to women. A woman naturally indulges her tendency for mysticism, and in America it needs to be sternly resisted if Theosophy is to serve any purpose in elevating woman, and giving her strength and confidence in her own interior development. I am strained to confess that the men who express an interest are not such a difficult matter to deal with. They are mostly of the student classes — lawyers, medical men, archeologists, and the like — and they are ready to take a great proportion of science and delving into Eastern lore, with a very slight seasoning of phenomena. The growth of Theosophic interest among scientific men just within three years has been so subtle that you now hear such terms as "Kama", the "aura", the "astral influences", the "occult conditions" of man, used by many of our great professors of physics, while addressing medical graduates from the platform of medical universities. But we have been obliged to stamp out what might be called a species of *fetish worship* — the placing of an object above a principle. Therefore we see, in our lodge, the necessity, despite all sorts of opposition, of exerting our best energies to place the movement on an absolutely unsectarian basis. It is not an easy matter for those who are searching after *truth* to remember that truth is toleration; that it is liberty; that it is *virtue*; that it is daring; that it is *fortitude*. It is not an easy matter for those who want to steer their little barque upon the high current of spirituality to avoid the snag of selfishness. It is not an easy matter for those who aspire [Page 12] to great results to place their only reliance in unflinching concentration of purpose, and the eloquence of a higher consciousness. In short, it is not an easy matter for any mortal in the Western World to first realize, and then recognise and bow to the absolute law — that *spirituality* accepts no apology from indolence.

MRS. BESANT:

We will now call upon our visitor from Spain, but he himself is not sufficiently familiar with our language to make the statement as to the position of the Theosophical Society in Spain. He is present with us, but not being himself able to speak, he has asked Mr. George Mead to read his statement for him, fearing that his, as he calls it, "broken English", would be rather trying in so large a meeting as this.

MR. MEAD, representing the Spanish delegate, said:

Mrs. Besant, ladies and gentlemen, — Perhaps Spain is one of the most difficult countries in Europe for the introduction of Theosophy in an organized manner. Most of you are aware that at this moment in Spain there exists an extreme clericalism and an equally extreme materialism. The barque of Theosophy has to be steered between this Scylla and Charybdis, and the tiller requires careful management. If Spanish Theosophists had been willing to ally themselves with the Freemasons and Spiritualists, they would speedily have had a large Theosophical Society in that country on paper, but would certainly not have had a solid movement directed by real conviction of the great truths of Theosophy. We have, therefore, judged it better to refrain from any combination with existing societies for the present, until Spain has learnt in some measure what Theosophy is. To this end thousands of pamphlets have been printed and distributed among the universities, schools, libraries, and clubs of Spain and her Colonies. And though we shall have to wait for the harvest of the corn which will sprout from this seed, we shall eventually establish Theosophy in Spain on a foundation which can never be shaken; for the Spanish people are serious with regard to things which they hold sacred and loyal to a high ideal, as their past history has proven. I can, therefore, give you every hope that, though Theosophy will spread slowly in Spain, it will spread surely; and we need not be too anxious about this, for Theosophy is for all time.

MRS. BESANT:

Travelling northwards through Europe we shall make our next stoppage in Holland, and I call on a visitor from Holland, Madame de Neufville, to address us.

MADAME DE NEUFVILLE:

Mrs. Besant, ladies and gentlemen, — I have the pleasure to inform you that, although the members of the Theosophical Society in Holland and Belgium are as yet but a handful, they have not been idle. We have already translations of important articles in Theosophical journals, and also of extracts from Theosophical works. These are being printed and will be widely distributed. Moreover, [Page 13] efforts are being made, not without success, to get articles on Theosophical subjects into the public papers. Of the future we have every hope, for when once a centre is organized in Europe, whereby the scattered members and lodges on the Continent can be put *en rapport* with each other, and help given to the efforts of individual members, Holland and Belgium will be found capable of responding to the call of the Theosophical Society, perhaps even more than other Continental countries. In the first place the English language, in which the major part of modern Theosophical literature is written, is widely understood in these countries; and where there is an ignorance of English, existing works and translations in French

can supply the lack of any native literature on the subject. We have, therefore, great hopes that with the help of our English and French brethren, we shall soon have a distinct activity in the Netherlands, which will speedily grow into a strong Theosophical movement, and give the world a new proof of the well-known industry and seriousness of your friends the Dutch people.

MRS. BESANT:

Our next visitor comes to us from Sweden, where we have a lodge, the largest of the lodges on the Continent, and although it has only a few months of existence behind it, it numbers one hundred members, so that we trust that in Sweden very soon Theosophy will be really a working power in the land. I now call on our Swedish delegate to address us.

MADAME CEDERSCHIOLD:

Mrs. Besant, ladies and gentlemen, — I have the great pleasure of informing you that although Theosophy was not known in Sweden two years ago, we have now a large and very active lodge at Stockholm, numbering upwards of one hundred members. Many translations of Theosophical works have been and are being made into Swedish, and although the Press of the country is severely silent about us, we are surely and steadily spreading Theosophical ideas by means of individual effort, which is by no means the least practical method to pursue. Visitors to Sweden may now see familiar Theosophical works on our bookstalls, and we have every reason to be satisfied with the victory Theosophy has so far gained in that country. For when it is remembered that the first adherents to Theosophy in Sweden had to depend on their knowledge of a foreign language for their information on the subject, we have very great hopes that now that we have translations of some of our best works on Theosophy, a rapid spread of Theosophical opinions will ensue. Moreover, seeing that the mind of the Swede is serious, and his heart faithful to a cause which he once espouses, in such a soil it cannot be but that Theosophy should take deep root, and I hope the time is not far distant when your Swedish brethren will be able to return your courteous invitation to your beautiful new headquarters, by [Page 14] welcoming in their turn some of you to a Swedish headquarters of the Theosophical Society.

MRS. BESANT:

Now I call on our brother Bertram Keightley to tell us something of the work he has been doing in America, and the progress that there he has seen.

MR. BERTRAM KEIGHTLEY:

H.P.B., Mrs. Besant, ladies and gentlemen, — It is generally supposed that Englishmen do scant justice to their American cousins. Tonight, however, I find myself in the very agreeable position, for an Englishman, of having to defend America and Americans against what seems to me an exaggerated and over-severe criticism which has been passed upon them by my sister Mrs. Wolf. To begin with, the picture which she has conveyed, especially to the strangers among you, of the membership in America

as interested mainly in the study of phenomena, as hanging around after astral magic, and losing themselves in the investigation of marvellous phenomena, has, in my opinion, but slight foundation. (Laughter.) Perhaps I may claim to have a fairly intimate acquaintance with the Theosophists in America, although I am an Englishman, for I count it an honour to say that I am personally acquainted with almost all the members of the Theosophical Society in America, with the large majority at any rate, and amongst them all I do not think there are 2 per cent, who are interested in the phenomenal aspect of occultism. I have heard less talk of phenomena, less talk of excursions in the astral body, I have noted less interest taken in the phenomena recorded by Mr. Sinnett there than I have in England. On the contrary, the lodges and the members of the society in America devote themselves with great energy and seriousness to a study of the philosophy, and especially the ethics, of Theosophy. Mr. Sinnett, in the very admirable remarks with which he opened our proceedings this evening, spoke of Theosophy as being inevitably the religion of the future. Anyone who returns, as I do, from a visit to America can confirm that from actual experience. Here in England the old religious traditions have still very great force. There is not yet, to anything like the same extent on this side of the Atlantic, that breaking up of old dogmatic and sectarian prejudices, that melting away of the barriers and boundaries which separate various classes of men from each other, the disappearance of which is a marked characteristic of the America of today. This is due to several causes. To begin with, you have to remember that America at the present moment is the habitat, is the home of a new race. Streams of humanity from all parts of Europe, representing all the various sub-races, families and stocks of the Caucasian or Aryan races in Europe, have run together in America and fused to form a new race. You find there a new people, [Page 15] the blood basis of which is Teutonic, consisting of the English, German, and Scandinavian races, but tintured by a large admixture of Celtic and Latin elements. The consequence of this is that the native-born American has naturally what may be termed an unstable or supersensitive physiological constitution, that is to say, he is organized in such a manner as to be much more sensitive to the subtler forces in nature than the average European. To that you must add also the very marked influence of the American climate, which is so great that you will see a phlegmatic German of purely lymphatic temperament transformed after 15 or 20 years' residence in America into a representative of the nervous temperament. You will, indeed, hardly find anything throughout America but variations of the nervous temperament, in other words, a temperament susceptible to, and readily influenced by, those subtler forces in nature, the recognition of which constitutes the first step beyond the morass of absolute materialism which threatens to overwhelm us in Europe. Besides that, you have the mixture, as I pointed out, of various sects, creeds, and denominations of all kinds, not only those represented in England, but with many others. Moreover, the communication and interchange of thought and feeling amongst people is much greater in America than it is in England, owing to two facts: first because the barriers in society, the barriers separating class from class, are much less marked in America than here, and then also owing to the restlessness which is a part of the nervous temperament of which I have been speaking. The amount of circulation, so to speak, of going to and fro which the Americans as a race do, is so great, that every man almost inevitably is brought into intimate contact with ideas and thoughts very different from those in which he was brought up. The consequence thereof is that there is a general rubbing out and softening down of the barriers of sectarian prejudice. You can see a marked instance of it in the recent move which the Presbyterian organization in America has made towards the revision of their creed in the direction of a more liberal basis, and a similar tendency extends throughout all other religious denominations in America; in fact, it is hardly too much to say that, broadly speaking, religion, as a dogmatic form of belief in America, is rapidly dying out, that the barriers of dogmatism are breaking down, that there is a great decay in what our forefathers would term religion; while the thought of the people as a whole is becoming more vague and indefinite, and the old religious ideas are losing their power. Besides this you have a great deal of intellectual ferment going forward; new ideas are taking root; new discoveries in science and psychology are being made; the public is very interested in such questions, and ideas spread rapidly; accordingly, the minds of men are open to the reception of new views of nature and new [Page 16] truths regarding the

origin and destiny of man. You have only to look at the history of America, throughout this, century, to see how constantly new forms of religious faith have been making their appearance here, there, and everywhere, from the Mormons onwards, to be sure of the fact that America is a seething caldron, out of which a new race must and will arise, not only in blood and temperament, but in thought and feeling, and especially in religious ideas. It was into that caldron that, 15 years ago, the seed of Theosophy was first thrown, the Theosophical Society having been founded, as you all know, in New York. For a number of years, little or nothing was done. From 1875 to 1886, practically for ten years, the seed lay dormant. Probably, in 1886, there were not more than a score or two of Theosophists throughout the country; now there are 36 branches of the society, and its members may be counted by hundreds if not thousands. The growth of the society is even more remarkable now than it has ever been, for since the beginning of 1890 not less than 10 new branches have been formed in America, including a total of considerably over 100 members in new lodges. One branch was originally organized with 31 members, the Sacramento branch, and so it is all over the country; and further, the interest in Theosophy is diverging southwards from the narrow band which it has previously occupied, stretching across the Continent. Up to within the last few months practically all the branches of the society and all its activity lay within a narrow belt extending between New York and San Francisco; but latterly there has been an awakening of interest in the southern States, an entirely new field of activity. A branch has just been formed in New Orleans, and other branches are talked of in the southern States, so that Mr. Judge hopes in the course of the next twelve months to be able to record a great growth and spread of Theosophical thought and interest in that field. So much for the general aspect of affairs. From what I have said as to the breaking down of old religious distinctions you will see that Theosophy has its greatest future in America, for people's minds there are much broader, freer, and less dogmatic than they are here in Europe. They are more ready to take up new ideas, and especially they are eagerly in search of broad general principles. It is a tendency, I think, throughout America for people to seek to grasp some general principle, to occupy some intellectual standpoint which shall enable them to co-ordinate and comprise in one grasp a large number of facts, and there is no other line of thought besides Theosophy which enables all the phenomena of religious thought and feeling, all the various phases of the religious interpretation of nature, as it has been manifested throughout the past history of humanity, to be classed and comprehended in one purview, as does Theosophy. For Theosophy unites, combines together, [Page 17] and explains in their intimate vital connection with each other, all the religions which humanity has ever heard of or known. (Hear, hear.) Thus, then, I regard America as the great future field of Theosophy, and I think it is not too much to prophesy that within 100 years of the present moment there will be practically no other form of belief in America besides Theosophy. I believe that all the old dogmatic religions and creeds will gradually disappear, or so modify their conceptions and their teaching, in accordance with Theosophical ideas, that they will be indistinguishable from what we now know as Theosophy. Whether they retain the name or not is a matter of entirely secondary importance; in fact, I have heard it said by many people that the best attended religious preachers, the clergymen who exercise most influence over their congregations, are men who not only study Theosophical literature, but preach Theosophical doctrines without the label. (Hear, hear.) The growth of the society in America is most gratifying; the seriousness with which Theosophical study is taken up in all parts of the country is most encouraging. As Mrs. Wolf has pointed out, there is in the society a large element of people whose preliminary training and education render it very difficult for them to grapple with the scientific aspect of the subject, or to familiarize themselves with the abstruse philosophical and other technical terms which, we employ. For that reason I regard it as of the very utmost importance that, with as little delay as possible, a large elementary literature on the subject of Theosophy shall be called into existence and rendered accessible in a cheap form to everybody. I think we shall find that when we are in a position to supply that demand, the growth of the actual membership of the society in America will be incalculable. At the present moment there are hundreds of thousands of people in America who are Theosophists in their belief and in their lives who are not yet members of the Theosophical Society, because they do not know of the existence of such an

organization, because, although the attitude of the Press has gradually changed as compared to what it was four or five years ago (since now, when they speak of Theosophy, at any rate they speak of it with a certain amount of respect, and endeavour to the best of their ability to make correct statements concerning it); still, Theosophy as an organisation, and as a definite system of thought, is at present unknown to the vast majority of the American people. A little is being done to bring its leading ideas under the notice of the world at large by the plan of sending leaflets, tracts, so to speak, broadcast as far as possible, stating the main outline of such ideas as Re-incarnation and Karma, and so forth. But what we need is an intermediate, elementary literature connecting the bare simple statement of ideas, such as can be conveyed in a brief four-paged tract, with such books as "*The Key to Theosophy*" and "*Esoteric Buddhism*", and [Page 18] I hope that those who are interested in the progress of Theosophy will bear that in mind and endeavour to contribute to bring about its realization. With regard to what I did myself in America, I suppose I must say something, although it may sound rather egotistical. I may state, then, that I lectured in most of the towns in America where the society has branches. Starting from the East, I lectured in New York, Boston, Washington, Baltimore, Chicago, Sacramento, Muskegon, Milwaukee, Lathrop, and in the south of California; in fact, I went right across the Continent, and I was very much surprised at the extent of interest manifested in the subject. Of course the branches of the society are not sufficiently rich to advertise lectures to any considerable extent, and yet on every occasion I had a good audience — an audience running from one hundred to three or four hundred people; and I must say this, that I never failed to meet with great courtesy and an attentive hearing from everybody. As a rule, the questions which were asked at the conclusion of the lectures showed an unusual degree of intelligence and understanding of the subject dealt with. That was particularly the case throughout California. California seems to be the centre of development for the American race as a new race, and it struck me very much, indeed, there to find that, speaking to a general audience, it was possible to take up and handle a purely metaphysical subject, to pursue a consecutive and rather abstruse train of metaphysical reasoning, without wearying an audience or losing their attention. Not only that, but to find that audiences hearing these things for the first time understood and comprehended the drift of what was said. Now, I think that is very remarkable, because you must remember that there is not in American towns the same degree of culture, in the west at any rate, as you would find in a large town in England. The general average of education is perhaps higher, but there is not the same amount of actual culture that there is in England. Perhaps in some ways that is an advantage, because in England our culture leads us to look up to academical orthodoxy too much. We question first and ask: "What do the so and so say about it?" "What do Huxley and Tyndall say about this? Has the gentleman who is talking to us got a University degree?" You do not find that with an American audience. They do not ask who you are or what diploma you have; but they say: "What have you got to tell us, and how much is your argument worth?" So that if you can make out a case on the basis of fact and reason you are sure of an attentive hearing, and you are sure of producing a certain amount of effect on people's minds, because among Americans there is more natural tendency to think for themselves than I have observed as existing in England. There is one thing, however, which more than another impressed itself on my mind during my trip to America. I have heard [Page 19] it very frequently said that our ideal of universal brotherhood, upon which Theosophy is based, which is the very being itself of Theosophy, was, after all, only a catchword; that it had no real existence; that Theosophists were always quarrelling among themselves — rather more so than other people. Now, this trip of mine to America has taught me one thing: it has revealed to me more than I realized before, more than I could have thought in any way possible — the reality of Theosophical brotherhood. I landed in America without personal acquaintance with a single person there except Mr. Judge, and I travelled through the whole of the country. Wherever I went I found myself as much at home, not only as if among friends, but as much as among my own blood relations, as much as I should have been if I had stayed at 17, Lansdowne Road. From the time I set foot there I was with my own brothers. I could not have received greater kindness, help, and assistance in every way, if every man I was with had been my own born brother. Not only that, but there was a closeness of intellectual

sympathy, a depth of mutual friendship, a comprehension of each other's aims and purposes, an extraordinary feeling of old acquaintance, old and tried friendship, which I found with numbers of the members in America, such as leaves on my mind a feeling of astonishment. I could not have believed it possible to have been so intimately attracted to and united with people I had never heard of or met before, at the first meeting, as I found to be the case throughout that trip. For it was not as if I stayed a long time with people. It was generally a stay of two or three or four days, and yet before I had been twelve hours in a place I would find half a dozen or more people of that branch with whom I was as intimate as if I had known them all my life, proving to my mind two things — first of all, the closeness of the bond which Theosophy establishes between men of different nationalities, and, in many cases, different education, and different social standing, different ways of looking at things and thinking of them, and, furthermore, the truth of the doctrine of Re-incarnation. For remember it was not everybody who stood in this close and intimate relation. Some of the people with whom I was most thrown were comparatively speaking strange to me for a longer or shorter time, while others seemed from the very beginning to be old friends, so that in that particular respect I learnt a great deal; but above everything it was the realization of the strength and closeness of the bond of Theosophy as uniting men to one another, as binding their hearts, their feeling, their friendship to each other, which has remained in my mind as the key-note of my trip to America. (Cheers.)

MRS. BESANT:

Listening to the speeches which have been delivered [Page 20] from this platform tonight, I have found myself repeating over and over again the words of Mr. Sinnett at the beginning of the real importance of this meeting as a starting point for new progress. For always in Theosophy it is to be remembered we are dealing with causes rather than with effects; so that, wherever earnest and thoughtful men and women are gathered together, made brothers and sisters by one great ideal and by one common hope, there where the thought is founded on truth, where the intellectual basis is sound, so that the emotion will be guided along the right road, in every such movement there is not only hope, but there is certainty of a change in the world's aspect; for the forces that work for change are the forces at once of intellect and of enthusiasm, and where those are joined together as an animating spirit, progress is the inevitable result. Here also, tonight, we have listened to voices from many countries, proving to us by the most practical of all proofs that this Theosophy that we speak of is in very deed a universal philosophy, and that whether people come to us from America or from Europe, whether they speak in one language or another, there is the unity of thought that underlies everything; there is the same hope of growth and of a real spiritual evolution. And not only so, but one cannot but feel, in meeting in this hall for the first time, that the very meeting and the erection of the building mark a very long step in advance. For so many, many years in the past she who, though her voice be silent tonight, is the inspiring spirit of this gathering and of the Theosophical movement — (loud applause) — for so many years those who chose her, and who sent her to bear their message, met only with difficulty — difficulty almost impossible to overcome; but at least tonight we may say to her that this is some fruit of the work that has been so bravely and so patiently performed — (hear, hear) — and that here, at least is a platform that none can touch, a centre where none can interfere, where she can give those instructions that she alone is fitted to give in Theosophy, and where she will always, we know, find pupils anxious to listen to the teaching and to take advantage of this great opportunity which in this last part of the century has come to us all. We would fain hope that from this meeting some slight echo at least may sound in that far-off land to which all our eyes and all our thoughts are turned, telling those who have sent her hither that we are not unmindful of the opportunity, that we are not indifferent or careless to the message; that at least there is one here and one there, at least there are some present in this room tonight, who hope that in days to come and even now their feet

may be set in the path that the Masters have travelled before us, and that in time, no matter after how long a struggle, or how many lives may intervene, there may be some who, [Page 21] starting here, may pass onwards through the centuries until they too shall reach that crown which at present has only come to a few of our race. Those of you who have looked back at all at the history of the progress of human thought will have noticed that at the close of every century there has been, as it were, a gateway opened to those who had eyes to see. Look back to the close of the 18th century, to the close of the 17th, of the 16th and 15th, and you will always find that close marked by an outburst of psychical and spiritual activity, an outburst we all know that has had comparatively small result, but which has never passed wholly without some fruitage, which has always won here and there a listener to the message that each century has been sent. We at the close of this 19th century stand in this position of special responsibility, that to us, as to those that went before us in the centuries past, has come the opportunity and the choice, a choice that if it be wrongly made means that no more progress for us will be practicable; but a choice that wisely exercised means the opening of an unending progress, of a progress that shall only grow the more useful and the more brilliant as year after year of human life is added to those who have chosen their path aright. To all who come to a meeting like this a special responsibility must also come; for each who has a choice put before him life is never the same afterwards as it was before. Either you must close your ears to the message and so make harder the hearing in the future, or, opening your ears, the message must pass into your life and mould your life as every true message must do; for that which does not touch the life is useless and idle, and it is only where life is moulded by thinking that the thought is worthy to endure. And the work that, to us within the society, lies before us is one that grows in weight and grows in responsibility, for the position of the Theosophical Society here, as in every land, is a somewhat strange one, warmly welcomed by the few, ignored by the great majority, bitterly hated by a very, very large number. So that the life of the Theosophist must always, for the present, be a life of struggle, as, indeed are all lives that are in any sense worthy to be lived, but, above all lives, that of the Theosophist is one of struggle. Like the builders of old that are spoken of, who in one hand held the trowel, and in the other the sword, so every Theosophist on one side must be able to apply his wisdom to the building up of life, and, on the other hand, must have the sword ready to defend the ground that has been won. For here as elsewhere, the Theosophical Society stands between two opposing hosts, and each host hostile to itself; on one side a Materialism that scoffs at all science of the spirit, at all yearnings after the unseen and the intangible; on the other side, a superstition oftentimes [Page 22] more degrading than the Materialism, because in itself it is fundamentally the same — the effort to turn things of the spirit into things of the sense, and to degrade all that is loftiest into the crudest thoughts of anthropomorphic religion. And so to us standing equally opposed to both these hosts we must strive to keep the ground we have won and to carry on our attacks on either hand; but there is this difference between us and all other armies that may be encamped on an enemy's ground, that to us those who today are enemies, tomorrow will be friends; for in every human being around us, be he friendly or hostile, be he hating or loving, in every such human being we see concealed our hidden brother, and the blows that we strike that seem to be at him are not in truth at that brother which is hidden, but they are aimed only to break through the thick crust of ignorance and hatred, so that, breaking it, the human spirit within may come out free and find his heritage awaiting him of progress and of liberty. So that right through, if with one hand we carry the sword, it is wreathed with the olive branch, and we only strike in order that we may free; we only carry on controversy in order that peace may be the outcome in the end. To each member of the society there is a special duty, a duty nowhere in his or her path through life to be ever ashamed of acknowledging the Society to which they belong, always ready to say frankly the faith that is in them, never, coward-like, shrinking from a confession that perhaps may be the very word wanted by the stranger to lead him also into the path of thought and of progress. A duty also that the life shall be worthy of the creed; for let men say what they will, there is no enemy that can injure us, provided we are true to that which we believe. (Loud cheers.) If we are frank in our speech and noble in our lives, our lives will preach Theosophy far more eloquently than any tongue can possibly do; and to each of us living, as I have said, amongst many

who are anxious to prove that Theosophy is no better than any other religion, to us there comes especially the duty to show that the higher creed means nobler life, and that that light which has shone upon us from the East is a light which means service to humanity as well as intellectual vision of the unseen. And so we come back, as we always must at our meetings, to that central object of our society, the brotherhood of man, that it is to be the nucleus of a Universal brotherhood, and a brotherhood of life and not of lip alone. Does anyone suppose that those whom we acknowledge as Masters won their places by idleness, by indifference, or in sloth ? Every human being must tread the same path. There is no royal road upward to that splendid evolution which some few of our race have passed through. Each step of the way has to be trodden; each separate difficulty [Page 23] has to be overcome; each begins at the bottom of the ladder, and, rung by rung, must mount slowly to the top. There are no wings which will carry you from foot to summit. It is effort, continually repeated, which alone can raise you to that height. And so declaring tonight our Hall open, and hoping that many of you will come here to learn something of that Philosophy which, to many of us, has become the greatest truth and the central motive of life; hoping that, for tonight we only say to you that everyone who has tried what Theosophy means has found it to be a light and a help and a strengthener. Those of you who know little of it have no right to judge it, and we only ask that before you judge you will endeavour to learn, that you will put aside prejudice and listen to the voice of reason and of thought, asking none of you to accept before you have investigated, but also warning you not to reject unheard, lest in rejection of that which you do not know, you may have rejected the most precious jewel which mortal can find within his reach. (Applause.)

There is one word I am reminded that I ought to have spoken here, and that, with your permission, I will speak before we leave this Hall. Many of you will have noticed the paintings that we have here on some of the panels. There are others which will come a little later on. We owe those to an Artist-Theosophist, Mr. Machell — (cheers) — and I am sure you will feel that in helping to beautify the Hall, he is doing a really useful service to the Theosophical Society. (Cheers.)

(This terminated the proceedings.)

[Page 24] [WE republish the two following articles from the Theosophist, in connection with foregoing report of the proceedings at the inauguration of the new headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Europe, for two reasons. First, that strangers into whose hands this pamphlet may fall, shall have an opportunity of learning something more as to what Theosophy is than is conveyed in the speeches made on that occasion ; and secondly, in order to emphasize the fact that, for the first time during many centuries, the extreme East and extreme West are united in a common movement — a joint effort for the spiritualization of Mankind.]